Russian place-names of ‘hidden’ or ‘indirect’ Scottish origin (the case of Hamilton – Khomutov)

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In Russia there are numerous toponyms going back to personal or place names of western European origins. This phenomenon resulted from several waves of massive immigration from the West, first to Muscovite Rus’ and later, in greater numbers, to the Russian Empire.

Among the immigrants, most of whom originated from Germany, there was quite a number of Scotsmen – active participants in all the major historical events in both Western and Eastern Europe. The first Scotsmen in Russia, called Shkotskie Nemtsy (literally ‘Scottish Germans’) by locals, belonged to the military class and came to this country either as mercenaries or prisoners of war in the late sixteenth century in the reign of Ivan the Terrible. Most of them were captured during the Livonian War and continued their military service in the Russian troops (Anderson 1990: 37).

In the seventeenth century with the accession of the Romanovs dynasty to the throne, Scotsmen started to arrive in Russia in ever increasing numbers. Some of those who abandoned their motherland, driven by circumstances managed to inscribe their names in Russian history as prominent soldiers, engineers, doctors, architects, etc. Scottish mercenaries and adventurers considered the remote Russian lands to be a place where they could build their career and hopefully make a fortune. Of course, as is well known, Russia was only one of a multitude of destinations which Scotsmen sought to reach.

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw a more abundant influx of Scots due to the Petrine reforms and a high demand for foreign professionals in all fields (Dukes 1987: 9–23; Cross 1987: 24–46). Among the famous names of ‘Russian’ Scotsmen, whose proportion of Scottish blood, in fact, varied considerably, one can mention Yakov Briuss (Bruce) and Patrick Gordon, the generals, Samuel Greig, the admiral, Mikhail Barclay de Tolly, the marshal, Mikhail Lermontov, the poet, and others who are maybe less widely known.

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Their numerous achievements were not the only traces the Scots left in Russia. The toponyms derived from Scottish personal names constitute a humble but still a noteworthy part of Russia's Scottish heritage. As many of the Scots in Russian service were people of higher social rank and accomplishment they were commemorated in the names of their estates as well as in the names of streets of Russian towns and cities. Unfortunately, many of those toponyms vanished in the Soviet time with its passion for renaming.

The villages of Gordonovo, Briussovo and Kàrrovo named after generals Patrick Gordon, Yakov (James) Bruce, and Vasiliy Kar accordingly, the town of Lermontov bearing the name of one of Russia's most appraised lyrical poets, and some not very numerous other names of settlements of various size and geographical position constitute this Scottish toponymical legacy. Besides, there exists quite a number of names of big and small streets – in fact, nearly every town in Russia has a street named after Lermontov whose Scottish ancestor George Learmonth is believed to have appeared in Russia as early as in 1613.

There exists one more strata of place-names whose Scottish origins appear to be less or altogether not obvious. We name this type of source of toponyms as 'hidden'.

They are sure to exist in many regions of Russia and other parts of the former Russian Empire. For example, at least two such names are known to be on the map of Saint-Petersburg. Thus, the isle of Goloday is supposed to be dubbed after Dr. Matthew Halliday, who owned the land there, and the name of Doun'kin pereulok (something like *Doun'ka's lane* or *bystreet*) is derived from someone called *Duncan*. After 1917 the Isle of Goloday was renamed into the Isle of Dekabrists (Ostrov Dekabristov), and Doun'kin pereulok became Krestyanskaya ulitsa (something like 'Peasant street').

In making a new place-name all these Scottish (as well as other foreign) anthroponyms sounding to the Russian ear in an uncommon and bizzare way underwent complete resemantisation in vernacular which connected them with the phonetically closest Russian words. It used to be done with spicy humour and expressiveness, what usually brought about derivatives stylistically and semantically lowered and diminutive if not derogatory. The names above produce a comic effect. Thus **Goloday** (compare with **Halliday**) means something like imperative 2nd person singular 'stay hungry' or 'be starving', and **Doun'ka** (compare with **Duncan**) is a diminutive (and disdainful) form of the Russian feminine

name *Avdotya*. People's imagination strived to see a familiar root in the foreign name. In vernacular the altered foreign surnames used to lose their original appearance nearly altogether resulting in peculiar examples of folk etymology. It seems that the more complicated or bizarre a foreign surname sounded to the Russian ear and the more complex its morphological structure was, the more likely it could undergo a complete alteration.

To the best of our knowledge there have been no works devoted to the Scottish sources of the Russian place-names so far. Meanwhile the contribution of other languages into the Russian toponymy, especially that of German, have already received some attention (cf. Dmitrieva 1987; Sychialina 2008, etc.). Our task is to reveal all the place-names of covert Scottish origins, forgotten and alive and to trace their human and linguistic background. To this end we proceed from a certain historical person or family of Scottish ancestry to available toponymic data after outlining a circle of Russian settlements with which the said individual or family might have had a connection.

Some of the numerous Scottish migrants to Russia were followed by their families and relatives. The resettling might have proceeded gradually or at once. Some very far relations or namesakes might have arrived in Russia on their own. The first migrants' children and further descendents born in mixed marriages got Russified completely retaining only their family names. The names themselves sometimes used to get Russified beyond recognition. Below we will take a quick retrospective look at the history of four place-names with the 'hidden' Scottish background as well as at the personality behind them; we will also briefly discuss some morphological features of the toponyms in question.

A peculiar example of how a Scottish anthroponym might have been reflected in the Russian toponymy is the fate of the surname of Hamilton. Here we deal with the case of the 'hidden' or 'covert' or 'indirect' Scottish origin we have mentioned above.

The Hamiltons are one of the earliest and most famous Scottish names in Russia. It is said that Thomas Hamilton, a cadet of the lordly family, came to Muscovy with his son Peter and daughter 'Avdotya' in 1542. Peter's son Grigory is recorded as a nobleman of Novgorod in 1611. … The family gradually became Russified and produced many outstanding men in military and civil service (Fedosov 1996: 52).

Making a deeper insight into the family history let us notice that, David Hamilton, a knight, was a great grandson of knight Hilbert Hamilton and his wife Isabella, niece of King Robert I. Six generations of family

separate Thomas Hamilton, who moved to Russia in 1542, from that David Hamilton. There are also three more generations from Thomas to Evdokia Grigorievna **Hamilton** (who died in 1672), who was the wife of the Russian nobleman Artamon Sergeyevich Matveyev. Her brother Peter Grigirievich (who died in 1694) and nephew Miena Petrovich (who died in 1696) became **the Khamaltovs** as a result of Russification. Mina Petrovich had six sons and registered them as **the Khomutovs** (cf. Rodovid Project).

The notorious Mary Villimovna **Gamantova** (whose last name is one more transformation of the family-name), the first chamber-maid of honour of the Empress Catherine I, was a Miena Petrovich's cousin. She was beheaded in 1719. Being a mistress of Peter I she was said to have got rid of his baby. Besides them numerous other Hamiltons appeared in Russia.

One can see how the family-name of Hamilton got Russified. We find such modifications of the name Hamilton as, on the one hand – **Khamaltov** later transformed into **Khomutov** and, on the other, **Gamantov(a)**, which seems to be an independent and a very short branch of the family name evolution. The version of **Khomutov** is likened to the Russian **«хомут»** meaning 'a horse-collar'. This family-name sounds very Russian and indeed such Russian surname really exists. It has a somewhat lower-class flavour due to the object – «хомут» *a horse-collar* – which it goes back to.

The alternation of the initial consonant in the Russian reflexes of the family name requires a special remark. In accordance with the Russian tradition the fricative sounds [h] and [x] in Western-European anthroponyms (mostly German, English, Scottish, French, etc.) have been substituted in literary Russian by hard occlusive [g]. Therefore the phonetic appearance of the name may get altogether altered. Thus 'Hardy' becomes *Гарди*, 'Henry' – *Генри*, 'Hans' – *Ганс* and 'Hohenzollern' – *Гогенцоллерн*. Accordingly in modern literary Russian the surname of **Hamilton** has been pronounced as **Gamil'ton** for more than at least 200 years. But, of course, there was no exact rule of pronunciation at the turn of the eighteenth century and the initial glottal fricative [h] was rendered either by Russian closest sound – velar fricative [x] – or by occlusive [g].

We have marked three stages of Russification of the Scottish surname in question. Their pronunciation can be rendered by means of the International Phonetic Alphabet in the following way:

Khamilton* [ˈxamilt^{j}ən] *This is a hypothetical form of the name. We can only guess how the original form could have been corrupted.*

Khamaltov [xəˈmaltəf]

Gamantov [gəˈmantəf]

And finally:

Khomutov [xəmʊˈtof] with complete rethinking of the original stem.

Among the Russian Hamiltons we will further focus on General Mikhail Grigoryevich Khomutov (1795-1864), hero of numerous campaigns and the first Ataman (literally 'Chieftain' and, in fact, Governor-General) of the Don Cossacks, who was not a Cossack by birth himself (see Figure 1). Lt. Gen. Mikhail Grigorievich Khomutov became Ataman of the Don Army in 1848 after his predecessor died of cholera. Khomutov was a far descendent of Thomas Hamilton, the first member of the Hamilton family in Russia, and Miena Petrovich **Khamaltov,** whose children were the first to become Khomutovs in the late seventeenth century. He became the first Ataman of a non-Cossack descent, but he knew life and the needs of the Don Cossacks, as he had served as chief-of-staff (the second person after Ataman) of the Don Army for almost 10 years before his appointment.

Figure 1 – General Mikhail Grigoryevich Khomutov (1795-1864)

The historians are mostly unanimous in characterizing Khomutov as an outstanding organizer and administrator (Karasiov 1901; Kirsanov 1995; Krasnov 2007). Being an intelligent and energetic man, he made a lot of improvements both in the Don Cossack troops and in the region. His contribution was especially substantial in improving Novocherkassk – the regional capital of the Don Cossacks. Common people were said to adore him. At one time his popularity was next to that of Ataman Platov, a hero of the war against Napoleon.

Khomutov's contribution was many-sided. He supervised the extraction of coal, and facilitated the construction of the first railroad in the Don region. He established the city garden in Novocherkassk, arranged water supply, paved the streets, and ordered to build greenhouses for cultivation of rare plants.

Ataman Khomutov had to do very hard work to assemble the Cossack troops almost to a man during the Crimean war. As the top Commander of the regional armed forces he took a very active part in organizing the defence of the Azov and Black Sea coast against the British and French raids as well as organized the transfer of the Cossack troops to Sevastopol. It is peculiar, that he had to fight with his ancestors' compatriots.

Although Khomutov had done a lot for the region and was popular with the locals, we also find some contradictory opinions on the Cossacks' attitudes to him and his legacy. Surprisingly, these opinions have a toponymical dimension. Thus, according to Krasnov, 'Ataman Khomutov was loved by the army; as a result one of the newly founded Cossack villages (the so called *станица*) was named after him as Khomutovskaya village, and in Novocherkassk there appeared a street called Khomutovskiy prospect' (i.e. avenue) (Krasnov 2007: 427).

Another author, Karasiov, on the contrary, writes that '…the Don land, which flattered Khomutov for 20 years, and crawled at his feet, did not thank him anything significant in his life-time. Only after his death, one of the newly formed villages was named Khomutovskaya, but in Novocherkassk, which owes Khomutov so much for all the improvements…only one street on the outskirts of the city…is named as if in mockery, 'Khomutovsky Avenue'' (Karasiov 1901: 588-603). The same facts proved to be treated in an opposite way here.

The way the Scottish anthroponym of Hamilton got reflected in the Russian toponymy is the case of the covert or indirect Scottish origin mentioned here earlier. Of course, local Cossacks and most people of higher

classes around Khomutov knew nothing about the remote Scottish ancestry of their principal. His very Russian surname could mislead anybody. Only few could guess that the family name of **Hamilton** after being transformed into **Khomutov** got reflected in four toponyms in South Russia. Two of them are in Rostov region of Russia and 2 – in the neighbouring Donetsk region of today's Ukraine. They are 1) in Russia – the **stanitsa** (i.e. a Cossack village) **of Khomutovskaya** situated near the Don river estuary and **Khomutovskiy prospect** (avenue) in the town of Novocherkassk in Rostov region; 2) in Ukraine – **the village of Khomutovo** in Donetsk region (South-Eastern Ukraine) as well as the neighbouring natural reserve of **Khomutovskaya steppe** (see Figure 2). In fact, now only three of these toponyms are in use as the urbanonym of Khomutovskiy prospect was substituted in the Soviet time by the name of *ulitsa Bakunina*, i.e. 'Bakunin street', Bakunin being a prominent figure in the Russian anarchist movement.

Figure 2 – The toponyms bearing M.G.Kmomutov's name

A few words must be said about the morphology of the types of Russian family- and place-names involved. Indeed, the morphology of these big groups of proper names manifests a considerable parallelism. Thus, both surnames and place-names may be built by means of formants – *-ov/ (-ev), -in, -inskiy* and some others.

As is known the place-names ending in *-sk* go back to relative adjectives that were used in the Old Russian language as either a full or

clipped form. They were Russian adjectives with the suffix of *–skoy*. Originally this group of adjectives had possessive semantic. Historically the names of cities had the form of a short or clipped adjective (e.g. Kur**sk**, Mtsen**sk,** Brian**sk**). Being substantivized they became proper nouns of masculine gender. While the names of towns and cities often end in *-sk*, the names of rural settlements may have the form of full adjectives of feminine gender (Tikhore**tskaya**, Miliutin**skaya**). Not infrequently trasformation of a rural settlement into a town was accompanied by the change of name endings (e.g. Semikarakor**skaya** (a stanitsa, i.e. a Cossack village) – Semikarakor**sk** (a town)).

We observe interpenetration of personal and place-names which were developing and affecting each other for ages. Such interpenetration of toponymy and anthroponymy as regards word-building patterns they use became possible because of wide use of possessive formants by both of them. The formation of Russian personal and geographical names evolved in connection with changes characteristic of the means expressing the category of possession. Both personal and geographical names resulted from the active process of separation of anthroponymic and toponymic suffixes on the one hand and the relating possessive suffixes of adjectives on the other. There evolved a homonymy of proper name suffixes as well as those of possessive adjectives. Indeed, very often suffixes of surnames and place-names go back to those of possessive adjectives. They function in different strata of lexis and are homonyms. The origins of and interrelation between Russian anthroponyms and toponyms is a separate large topic and here we only will dwell upon the word-building models used in the place-names in question.

Thus, the toponyms like Khomutovskiy/Khomutovskaya are related to all the place-names employing *–sk/-tsk* suffixes (cf. Izborsk, Sestroretsk, Novocherkassk, etc.) and are derived from geographical, ethnic and other names as well as from personal names. Besides, villages had often received their names from churches built in them: Pokrovskoe¸ Troitskoe, Nikol'skoe. Such toponyms also differ in gender and are coordinated with the nouns designating the relating types of geographical objects – settlements, streets, areas, etc.

The toponyms of this type related to the surname of **Khomutov** are as follows:

Stanits**a** Khomutovsk**aya** (feminine gender)
Khomutovsk**iy** prospec**t** (masculine gender)
Khomutovsk**aya** ste**p'** (feminine gender).

The toponym of **Khomutovo** (a village) is built according to another traditional Eastern Slavic (and Russian) scheme known since the eleventh century and employing suffixes – *-ov/-ovo/-ova/-ev*. Their original meaning is either possessive or partitive. Toponyms with these suffixes are coordinated with the corresponding names of types of settlements, e.g. Khomut**ovo** *(selo* – a village) (neuter gender, singular, nominative case); Serpukh**ov** (*gorod* – a town) (masculine gender, etc.). In many cases (but not exclusively) they are derived from personal names – Christian and pre-Christian, nicknames and other types of names.

It is also necessary to make a remark regarding the usage of the terms designating geographical objects in question along with the proper names. Thus rural settlements designated as a *stanitsa* are always built according to the scheme using **–skaya** element (feminine gender) – Khomutov**skaya**, Vioshen**skaya**, Gnilov**skaya**, etc. The names of streets classified as a *prospect* (an avenue) are often formed by means of **–skiy** (masculine gender). This type of naming was especially popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (cf. Nev**skiy** prospect in S.Petersburg, Khomutov**skiy** prospect in Novocherkassk). The toponym of Khomutov**skaya** step' (feminine gender) may go back either to the name of Khomutovo village (originally - Khomutovskiy hamlet) or directly to the personal name of Khomutov as the landowner. The toponyms ending in *–ovo* (neuter gender) usually designate a village (*selo* in Russian) – in our case it is the abovementioned **Khomutovo**. There are, however, examples of towns which grew from rural settlements retaining names with such endings (Miller**ovo**, Guk**ovo**, etc.).

Further we will briefly characterize the settlements and geographical objects bearing Khomutov's name and say a few words on how they were named after him.

1) The stanitsa (i.e. a Cossack village) of **Khomutovskaya** is not very old. Its history only dates back to the mid-19th century. It was established on the lands of Starocherkasskaya stanitsa on the gulch of Mokry Batay (i.e. Wet Batay) in 1842 and was designated as the hamlet of Mokrobataysky at first (Popov 2011). In 1873 it was renamed into Khomutovskaya stanitsa in honour of the late Ataman M.G. Khomutov who died in 1864. It was founded as a roadside settlement to maintain the post-road passing southwards.

The decision to transform the hamlet of Mokrobataysky into the village of Khomutovskaya was adopted by the provision of the Military

Council on January 10, 1873, published in the 'Compendium of government orders on the Cossack troops'.

2) **Khomutovo** (Ukrainian **Khomutove**) is a village in today's South-Eastern Ukraine, located in Novoazovsk area of Donetsk region. Its population amounts to 749 people (2001).

Previously, the village used to be the Cossack hamlet of Khomutovskiy belonging to Novonikolayevskiy area of the Don region. It is known that Ataman Khomutov owned a piece of land in this region – hence the name of the settlement.

3) Near the village there is a natural reserve of **Khomutovskaya Steppe** (Rus. *step'*), which is a surviving fragment of the so called Wild Field, as it was before the development of the vast virgin lands of today's southern Ukraine bordering with the Russian Federation. Before 1917 the so-called **Khomutovskaya toloka** (i.e. pasture) belonged to the Don Army Region and was used as pasture for young horses. As has already been mentioned the name of the reserve preserves the memory of Ataman Mikhail Khomutov. This part of steppe was named after him either directly as the land owner or indirectly – after a neighbouring village also bearing his name.

After the October Revolution and the Civil War, the territory was incorporated in the State Land Fund and continued to be used as a pasture and a source of hay. The reserve was established in 1926 for the conservation and protection of steppe vegetation and fauna. Today, the area of the reserve amounts to 1030 hectares, 90 of which are a strictly protected site, which has never been touched by the plough, and has not been grazed by cattle or reaped for 80 years (Diedova 1987: 20-25).

4) As regards the name of former **Khomutovskiy prospect** in the city of Novocherkassk it may be a good example of the fact that even in today's Russia toponymy is still a controversial issue because of the painful Soviet epoch legacy in this field.

There have been appeals to the city authorities to restore the former name. Thus Rev. Oleg Dobrinskiy, the Dean of the local parish, in 2011 addressed a petition to the city council on giving back historical names to the streets of Novocherkassk, Khomutovskiy prospect (now Bakunin street) being one of them. However, according to the Resolution of the Mayor of Novocherkassk of 2007 entitled 'On approval of the list of streets, alleys, boulevards and squares in Novocherkassk' the name of today's Bakunin street (formerly, Khomutovskiy prospect) will be retained. This resolution is still in force (Novocherkassk City Forum).

It will be of interest to compare the comments on Novocherkassk city Internet forum regarding the restoration of the former street names of the town including Khomutovskiy prospect. They reflect the controversial character of the issue.

These are three excerpts taken from a discussion to be found on the forum.

First participant: 'To decide which names to return and which to retain is a thankless job. We should return all the historical names which used to exist before October 1917.'

Second: 'You see, from your point of view, the correct history of the city ended in October, 1917. In mine opinion, it will continue until the city does not disappear as such….We need to remove what has nothing to do with the city. ***Bakunin street***, for example. Why should we keep it? But ***Khomutovskiy prospect*** is even worse. And as for the original name (if any) – I do not know.'

Third: 'The characters mentioned by you do have something in common with Novocherkassk. For example, the proposed Red general Semen Budyonnyi suggested to flatten Novocherkassk – to raze it to the ground. Others were really quite decent citizens and, therefore, deserve to be commemorated in new street names, but not to rename streets commemorating other worthy citizen. For example, what is wrong with **Khomutov**?' (ibid.).

These examples speak for themselves. They underline the fact that M.G.Khomutov's activity and contribution into the local history are far from been common knowledge and that urban toponymy is still an ideological battle-ground in modern Russia.

However there are still some grounds for optimism as three toponyms containing this outstanding man's name have survived the difficult times while thousands of other place-names suffered from the itch of renaming in the former Soviet Union and disappeared from the map (cf. Nikitin 2001).

In conclusion we would like to add that one can hardly imagine that villages which lie in the South-Russian steppe scorched by fierce sun in summer and left at the mercy of wind and frost in winter, and whose names sound altogether Russian, might have connection with an island country thousands of miles away. Only the first syllable of their name preserves a slight prompt of that.

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