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## **SELECTED USE OF VIKONYMS AND URBANONYMS IN SHTETLS AND MIASTEČKA(S) AS REFLECTED IN BIEŁARUSIAN LITERATURE**

**Key words:** *vikonyms, urbanonyms, motivating bases, geography, history, literary analyses*

*The motives of Belarusian writers of Christian origin for using biblical vikonyms and urbanonyms of the Old and New Testament such as King David, prophet Moses, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and others have been presented for the first time. This problem has been presented by the author of the article in the monograph 'The Portrayal of Jews in Modern Bielarusian Literature' (550 pages) recently. The article defines the main motivating historic, civil and cultural foundations to encourage Belarusian writers to use biblical vikonyms and urbanonyms. The historic background at the beginning of the article helps you to understand the manner of linguistic links between Shtetls and Miastečka(s) in the past that influenced the state of modern onomastics in Belarus. The limited size of the article made us choose only 3 writers out of 50 mentioned in the monograph such as Jurka Vičbič, Hieorhi Musievič Ryhor Baradulin. The choice is determined by the author's intention to show the writers' motivation in various literary genres.*

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## **ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ВИКОНИМОВ И УРБАНОНИМОВ В ШТЕТЛАХ И МЕСТЕЧКАХ, ПРЕДСТАВЛЕННЫХ В БЕЛОРУССКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ**

**Ключевые слова:** *виконимы, урбанонимы, мотивационные основы, география, история, литературный анализ.*

*Статья впервые прослеживает мотивацию белорусских писателей христианского происхождения в использовании библейских виконимов и урбанонимов Старого и Нового Завета, таких, как Царь Давид, пророк Моисей, Иерусалим, Вифлеем и другие. Это явление было подмечено автором статьи в недавно законченной литературоведческой монографии, The Portrayal of Jews in Modern Bielarusian Literature (550 страниц). Статья определяет основные мотивирующие исторические, гражданские и культурные основы, побуждающие белорусских литераторов к использованию библейских виконимов и урбанонимов. Исторический фон начала статьи поможет понять культуру прошлых лингвистических отношений штетлов и местечек, повлиявших на современную ономастику Беларуси. Ограниченные размером статьи, мы выбрали из более 50-ти авторов из упомянутой монографии только трёх, Юрку Витьбича, Георгия Мусевича и Рыгора Барадуллина. Выбор определен намерением автора статьи показать мотивацию авторов, работавших в разных литературных жанрах.*

Belarus was the only country in the world where Yiddish was a state language (1919–38). In the Bielarusian Soviet Constitution of 1927 (which followed the first Bolshevik Bielarusian Constitution of 1919), Articles 21, 22, and 23 of the primary law (Chapter I) declared the unprecedented equality of the Bielarusian, Yiddish, Russian, and Polish languages in education, public, and government services. Moreover, Belarus was home to the world's largest Jewish population before the First World War (14 percent of Bielarusians were Jewish). Bielarusian Jews spoke and wrote Yiddish for secular purposes but used Hebrew and (Jewish) Aramaic in their religious and scholarly practices. Most spoke Bielarusian, Polish and later Russian while Bielarusian Christians and Muslims (Tatars) of rural Belarus used to communicate in Yiddish. The conclusion of the abovementioned monograph [1] is that Christian Bielarusians born before and after the October revolution didn't just know spoken Yiddish but were rather equally fluent in major concepts and geographical names from both Old and New Testaments.

These facts reinforced by common livelihood in shtetls and miastečka(s) ensured Jewish characters an equal place in Bielarussian literature in its many genres.

Due to a restricted space of the present submission, we will limit ourselves just with some typical use of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and King David's name in single works of three Bielarussian authors: Jurka Vičbič, Hieorhij Musievič and Ryhor Baradulin. This is keeping in mind that each shtetl, miastečka, town and city in Bielarúš used to have at least one street, named after Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and King David (the latter has a town, David-haradok, named after him).

Jurka Vičbič was born in 1905, the year of the First Russian Revolution, in Vialiž, Viciebsk Province. (After the Second World War, Vialiž became the region of Smolensk in Russia; its Russian transliteration is Velizh). Vičbič's short novel *Lšono Haboo Bijrušalajm* (Next Year in Jerusalem, 1936) is one of his major prewar literary works [2]. Its Jewish characters are presented as active participants in Bielarussian society, and it is set in a typical Bielarussian *shtetl*. While written in Bielarussian, the writer intermittently resorts to Yiddish, Polish, Latin, and Russian, reflecting the Bielarúš of that time. The story revolves around Staš (Stanislaŭ Halkievič), Jankiel, his childhood playmate and the brother of Staš's sweetheart, Bluma, their younger sister Gienia, and their kind and religious father Miejer Mojžas, who loves an orphan Staš as his own. Staš, who belongs to the impoverished Bielarussian gentry is an ideal Bielarussian – a deep-thinking scholar of his country's history; he is kind, benevolent, tolerant, and just. Vičbič has this character introduce his novel's time and place inconspicuously: by recounting centuries of Bielarussian history and by naming his home town as Hrajronak. Miejer Mojžas, the observant Jew, teaches Staš some basic Hebrew, therefore he knows well the meaning of the phrase, "The next Year in Jerusalem." Staš communicates with most of Hrajronak Jews in Yiddish. The cart driver who brings Staš home from the train station tells him about the physical abuse that he and his son have experienced. Yet he has no desire to leave for the Holy Land (Canaan and Jerusalem): "And who is a Jew? Hey, some horses work less compared to certain Jews. And yet, Master Stanislaŭ, I love this country, and even if I was offered the chance to go to Canaan, I would never do it. I love Viciebsk, Hrajronak, the Dzvin River, and this road. This is my fatherland; and why do some people say I am a stranger here? My great-great-grandfather, Liejba Harelik, also a cart driver, is buried at the Hrajronak cemetery, and everything here is familiar to me from the cradle" [2, 65]. This Jewish respect to Bielarussian motherland is similar when the story focuses on Hebrew territory, and is told by a gentile narrator: "They are older than Troy and Carthage and senior to Athens and Rome, these Jewish people who have been chosen by God. For a long time they wandered the face of the earth until they found themselves in the wilderness at the foothills of Sinai. And from the top of the mountain, through the tempest's roar, through crashes of thunder and bolts of lightning, Elohim (Almighty) offered the Jews the tablets with His Law. Countless nationalities have been lost, and only Jews wading through floods of blood and tears, torture and catastrophes, have reached modernity. They did not die and will never perish." [2, 99–100]. This excerpt as well as frequent uses of the city of Jerusalem as one of names that has fundamental value for all Bielarussians shows the writer's great respect for multifaceted culture of his beloved country.

Now we move to a book with a self-explanatory title, written in Russian by Hieorhi [George] Sciapanavič Musievič (1931-2014) [3]. Hieorhi Musievič was a Bielarussian historian, journalist, writer, and public figure. Musievič's book brings together and for the first time the unique data about Bielarussian Jewish livelihoods in his area before and after the Holocaust. Even such authoritative sources as *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* [4] and Arad's *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* [5] do not mention the Holocaust in the Bielarussian cities of Kamianiec-Litoŭsk and Vysoko-Litoŭsk, and in places where thousands of local Jews were murdered: Roviec, Piesčany, and Varachoŭski, among others. This book also presents unique information about Jewish livelihoods centuries before the catastrophe. The author begins his treatise at the year 1500, which according to him marked the birth of active Jewish life in Kamianiec-Litoŭsk. He tells the reader that although some sources mention Jews living in the city as far back as 1465, there is no confirmation of their existence there until Šloma Ichielievič, a Jewish merchant from Brest, purchased a house.

Musievič wrote his book mainly for Bielarussian Christians, who in the generations since have been deprived of the knowledge of their common history with Jews. In a short preface, the author provides a concise history of the Jews who lived in ancient Palestine and who lost their lands to the Romans during the first century CE. While doing so, the author mentions the city of Jerusalem many times in each of the sixty-seven chapters. Chapter six, “Agricultural Colonies,” narrates the unique history of Jewish involvement in local farming. The author tells us that though most Jews were not involved in working the land due to the tsarist restrictions, there were three Jewish agricultural colonies with the biblical names of Lotovo, Saravo, and Abramovo. Musievič describes in detail Jewish life in these settlements, giving historic references related to them as far back as 1700. For example, in 1700 there were twenty-four families in Saravo, who initially received about sixty-two acres each from the Russian government. At the beginning of this venture, there was enough land to feed these families. However, as those families grew, the land did not, and many colonists were forced to sell or rent their land and to move to the cities, where they entered their traditional trades. Some engaged in seasonal labour in Europe, the United States, and Canada, and invested in family farms on their return home. Others left their country for Palestine, like Izrael Ahkienazi, who later taught newcomers from Europe how to farm in Israel.

Musievič underscores the role of spiritual education for Jewish children and the role of Jerusalem in their religious upbringing. The colonists, who did not pay taxes to the Jewish communities in the towns, had to take care of this education themselves. “The main element of the colonists’ living, their spiritual life, was religion and the education of their children. That is why the first colonists, as soon as they constructed their huts and agricultural buildings, had erected a *Beit Midrash* [House of learning; House of interpretation], which combined the functions of a synagogue and a religious school.” [3, 14] The author describes in detail the exterior and interior of a typical *Beit Midrash* – its modest straw roof and the festive blue ceiling, decorated with stars and signs of the Zodiac. Jewish law has a requirement to pray towards Jerusalem, therefore every *Beit Midrash* and synagogue had doors which faced east. Even though colonists were eligible for free education in Russian or Polish elementary schools (depending on who was ruling Bielarús at the time), they preferred their own private schools. Colonists who did not have money to pay the school fees would borrow money against future harvests. Colonies existed until 1941, and according to the documents and many oral witnesses that the author has collected and presented, Christians and Jews lived in peace and in mutual respect. In Saravo, for example, Jews lived together with Bielarussian Ukrainians: children played together, adults went to Jewish doctors and lawyers, and until the Nazi invasion there was no trouble among locals of various ethnicities and faiths. At the end of that chapter, the author expresses sorrow about the Jewish sufferings during the Second World War, and laments the loss of decency between ethnicities on which life in Bielarús had long been based.

Abundance of biblical themes and names are fully reflected in works of the Peoples’ Poet, Ryhor Baradulin (1935–2014). Compatriots have loved Baradulin for his comic verse as much as for his “serious” poetry, prose, and journalism. Baradulin’s talent and versatility have filled many voids in modern Bielarussian culture, enriching literary criticism, scholarship, and journalism. His translations into Bielarussian from ten Western languages (in addition to Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, and other Slavic languages) range from Shakespeare to Byron and Brecht. Baradulin also distinguished himself in his superb translations from Yiddish. Baradulin’s literary work in all genres is unsurpassed in any Christian fiction and nonfiction literature in terms of Jewish inspired themes, characters, philosophical ideas and writings about intimate friendships with Jewish Bielarussians of many generations and all walks of life. Baradulin’s book of 2011, *Tolki b habrei byli! Kniha pavahi i siabroŭstva* [6] (If only Jews were here! The book of respect and friendship) has almost an eponymous title to his 2010 essay, *Tolki b habrei byli!* (If only Jews were here!) [6]. The book consists of three parts, and it establishes that besides being inspired by the Old Testament, the writer was as enthusiastic about Yiddish language and culture as he was about his native in Bielarussian.

The first part of Baradulin’s book, entitled “Stvaralniki vysokajie krazy (To Creators of High Beauty) presents twelve essays on sixty-one pages dedicated to Jewish Bielarussians of different times. The second section of the text, titled “Galasy nieŭmiručaha choru” (Voices of an immortal choir), provides some of Baradulin’s translations of leading Yiddish Bielarussian poets into Bielarussian. In quantity (one hundred and

thirty-five pages), quality, and value, it surpasses all the works ever translated from Yiddish by one individual, not just into Bielarussian but into other Slavic languages as well. The rest of the manuscript, titled “Paplečnikam pa duchu, siabram pa žyćci” (To the Spiritual brothers-in-arms and friends in life) are Baradulin’s own poems. It has two parts with the common subtitle “Niezabytajie, viekaviečnajie” (Unforgettable and immortal). The first part has eleven poems, nine of which are dedicated to the Almighty, Jesus Christ, and cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The second part of *Paplečnikam pa duchu, siabram pa žyćci* is Baradulin’s fifty poems paying homage to his personal friends and transcendent associates (five poems are dedicated to Chagall). Both parts of “Niezabytajie, viekaviečnajie” are profoundly philosophical and also deeply personal. By bringing together Israel’s and Bielarussian landscapes and common values, they express Bielarussian unity of people of all faiths and ethnicities.

We don’t have place to enumerate frequency of Baradulin’s utilization of words and concepts connected to names: *Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and King David* throughout the manuscript. Instead we will use as an example some small excerpts from the first section of “Niezabytajie, viekaviečnajie.” There are different genres of verses in the first part of this section. Some, like the first poem, *Viasnovaja Zamaloŭka Na Bierazie Vaŭčenskaha Vosiera* (A Springtime Sketch on the Shore of Vaŭčenskajie Lake) [6, 197–198], shows a familiar domestic landscape and serenity, while others, starting with the second poem, “Nad Jamaj (Over the Pit)” possess highly original philosophical substance and introduce Moses’s biblical name as well as the Old Testament into the narration. “Moses’s great-great-grandchildren/Are resting here” [6, 200]; “The eternity was holding immortal flame / So that Old Testament/With woe and patience / Could transfer light of Torah / Straight into Menorah” [6, 200]. The next, untitled poem, starts: “Shałom, Jerusalem, / Shałom you, sacred place!” and ends with a pure religious ardor “And God is near, / He can hear it all ...” [6, 201]. The next untitled poem, “Z Cykla: *Stanie Viflemam Serca* (From a cycle: And a Heart will turn into Bethlehem)” [8]. Though Bethlehem is in the centre of narration, the poet unites in this city God the Father and God the Son: “We know whose God / Has been hurting for everyone. / And fate is laughing: / There is no other use: / When old, we are all / Turned simply into Jews / Like Jesus Christ / At his birth and youth” [6, 202]. The rest of the poems have similar motifs of God the Father and God the Son, where an action of most of them takes place mostly in Jerusalem but less frequently in Bethlehem, and, in addition, mentions Golgotha (an outskirt of ancient Jerusalem). “Ściana Płaču (Western Wall)” is a good example: “This wall didn’t divide. / It is / Named by the future as / The Western Wall. / The whole world can see this/Lord’s Table. And here everyone thinks: I will drop my sadness / And guilt will turn into innocence” [6, 203]. But the most joyful of them is the poem, titled “Jerusalem.” Here is its first stanza: “Milky Way is like a joyful carpet, / It loves to unwrap skies at midnight / And a soul that travels to Jerusalem’s sight / Won’t be lost in darkness / But grateful to the Almighty for the light” [6, 204].

Soulful, and simultaneously crystal clear poetry of Ryhor Baradulin doesn’t need much comments. In conclusion, however, we shall note that Baradulin is not one of those Christians who just leafs through the Old Testament; he gives it as much or even more consideration than he does to the New Testament. Thus, his inspiration to rewrite King David’s Psalms in Bielarussian bridges the Old Testament poet with the poet of modernity [9]. This project succeeded owing to Baradulin’s sincere religious feelings, clear philosophical ideas, and natural musicality. Second, unlike many, the poet spiritually connects modern and biblical Judaism. Third, and probably, the most important point is that Baradulin fully accepted that Christ was born and died as a Jew – for him, it was a simple fact of his own religious, poetic, and quotidian life. Baradulin had shared sentiments about King David with Mark Chagall: both in their creative lyrics underlined that King David was foremost a poet. Here is what Chagall wrote in his poem translated by Baradulin: “Pamiaci mastakoŭ – achviaraŭ Chałakostu” (To the everlasting memory of artists – the Holocaust’s victims): And King David comes to me / From my pictures. / He holds a lute. / He wants to help me start crying / By playing psalms. / And Moses follows him / He tells me not to be afraid. / He orders you to be content / Until once more he will write / The Tablets for the new world [6, 149]. Indeed, “The Tablets for the new world” is badly needed in our troubled times, and Bielarussian writers as we attempted to demonstrate with example of Jurka Vičbič, Hieorhij Musievič and Ryhor

Baradulin, certainly left an imprint on their future development. The importance of Jerusalem and Vifleem (Bethlehem) in Bielarusian writings has been surpassing any other literature (besides Hebrew and Yiddish). We remember that Bethlehem was not only the birthplace of Jesus Christ but also one of his direct ancestor's, King David, who was crowned in Bethlehem before moving to Jerusalem.

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7. Baradulin, Ryhor. "Tolki b habrei byli!" [If only Jews were still among us]. Habrejski numar [Jewish issue]. ARCHE 3 (2000) : 5–7.
8. Vifleem is the (Jewish) Aramaic word for Bethlehem. This is also the most common transliteration into Eastern Slavic languages. Bethlehem is considered to be the birthplace of King David and Jesus Christ.
9. Baradulin's psalms were set to music by the poet and musician Alieś Kamocki (1958–); Kamocki produced a CD of this fusion in 2000.

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### ОНИМЫ КАК ЭЛЕМЕНТ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ ИГРЫ В ПЕРИОДИЧЕСКОЙ ПЕЧАТИ БЕЛАРУСИ

**Ключевые слова:** языковая игра, антропоним, топоним, гидроним, брендовые номинации.

*В статье анализируется участие онимов различных типов в создании языковой игры. Определены приоритетные способы и специфические приёмы формирования языковой игры в периодической печати Беларуси, выявлены сферы-источники прецедентных выражений. На основе анализа фактического материала установлены антропонимические модели, представленные в заголовочных конструкциях. Материалом исследования послужили русскоязычные печатные периодические издания Республики Беларусь.*

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### ONIMS AS COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE GAME IN BELARUSIAN PERIODICALS

**Key words:** language game, anthroponym, toponym, hydronym, brand nomination.

*The role of different types of onims in the language game creation is analyzed in the article. The priority techniques and specific methods of formation of the language game in the periodical press of Belarus were determined, the scopes of precedent-source expressions were revealed. Based on the analysis of the material under study (Russian-language periodicals published in the Republic of Belarus) the anthroponymic models represented in headlines were established.*