

I. RESEARCH ARTICLES

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Aleksandra Starzyńska
(Olomouc, Palacký University, Czech Republic)

SIBIR' (SIBERIA) IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE SYSTEM*

SIBIR' (СИБИРЬ, SIBERIA) belongs to the concepts and words with a special status in the Russian lexis, and so in the Russian worldview. The present study reconstructs the image of SIBIR' on the basis of the Russian language system (more precisely, on the basis of dictionaries) and with the use of the cognitive definition proposed by Jerzy Bartmiński. Discussed is the etymology of *Sibir'* (Сибирь), the lexeme's synonyms, opposites, semantic and word-formational derivatives. The analysis is complemented with a survey of fixed expressions and collocations. Thus we arrive at the cognitive definition that consists of thirty defining features organised into the following facets: category, part, opposition, location, non-physical features, size, appearance, localiser, living conditions, function, feelings and attitudes to Siberia, and the region's inhabitants. In various contexts of the usage of *Sibir'* (and its derivatives) the most conspicuous is the negative valuation of Siberia as a place of exile, harsh climate, and unwelcoming living conditions.

KEY WORDS: cognitive definition, Siberia, language system, Russian

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1. Introduction

The present article is part of extensive research devoted to the reconstruction and comparison of the Polish concept of SIBERIA and the Russian concept of SIBIR' (СИБИРЬ), based on linguistic data excerpted from respective language systems and from texts. The study aims to reconstruct the Russian concept of SIBIR' as it functions in the Russian language system.

A linguistic analysis of the concept is presented in Berezovich and Krivoshchapova (2011), as well as in Krivoshchapova and Makarova (2010), both these papers relying on dialectological dictionaries or dialectological documentation retrieved from questionnaires. Moreover, Berezovich and Krivoshchapova adopt the comparative approach. The reconstruction of the Russian concept of SIBIR' proposed here relates to the notion of the cognitive definition, which, according to Jerzy Bartmiński, “aims to portray the way in which an entity is viewed by the speakers of a language, to represent socio-culturally established and linguistically entrenched knowledge, its categorisation and valuation” (Bartmiński 2009: 67). The application of the principles of cognitive definition directs one to the relevant “mental object” with all its richness preserved in the linguistic worldview (Bartmiński 2009: 67). In order to reconstruct the basic properties of the concept of SIBIR', I rely on the data from a variety of dictionaries of Russian: general-purpose, etymological, phraseological, sociolectal, dictionaries of connotations, toponymic, as well as two comprehensive dialectal dictionaries. Although the data presented in the paper partly overlap with those used in the works of other Russian linguists, this study proposes an explication of the concept of SIBIR' arranged in sections, whose names stand for types of systemic data: etymology, definitions, synonyms, opposites, semantic and word-formation derivatives, fixed expressions, and collocations. In particular, attention is paid to the etymology of the word *Sibir'*. The linguistic analysis presented in the paper results in a simplified facet-arranged cognitive definition of the concept. Facets, i.e. “bundles of characteristics, communicated as stereotypical judgments and arranged in the definition in subcategories” (Bartmiński 2009: 214), are constructed *via* the analysis of linguistic material, which determines their choice and arrangement.

2. Etymology

The first use of the name *Sibir'* in reference to a geographical region was recorded in early Russian documents dating back to 1483. As to the origins and the primary meaning of the term, etymologists are divided: the

majority view is that the name of the region derives from the name of the town located at the mouth of the Tobol flowing into the Irtysh. The town is believed to have been the capital of the Tatar Khanate established around 1200 A.D. in Pryirtysh. The town was captured by the Cossack ataman Yermak around 1581, and annexed to the state of Muscovy (see Vasmer: 616;¹ PreES2: 283; AnES: 493). The origin of the name of the city still remains hypothetical. According to one hypothesis, it derives from the Uralic languages and probably has its origin in an ethnonym referring to a former Finno-Ugric ethnic group (*sipyř/cunypř, seber/ceber, sybyř/cybyř, or savyř/cavyř*). This ethnic group, according to the legends of Siberian Tatars, inhabited the land along the middle reaches of the Irtysh in the southern part of Western Siberia long before the establishment of the Golden Horde² (see AnES: 494; Stateynov 2008: 369–370).

The name *Sibir'* can also be a legacy of Altaic languages and derive from a Hunnic³ ethnonim Σάβειροι (also Σάβειρες, see Vasmer 3: 616). Pavel Šafárik reports:

In the history of Huns we often find references to the Sabirs, or Sebers [...]. Without doubt, the Sabirs (Σάβειροι) were a people of Uralic origin, related to the Huns. It is possible that their trans-Uralic homeland was called *Sibir*. This expression in turn was used by the Russians to refer to remote regions, which is how it gained its extension. (Šafárik 1844: 448)⁴

According to Max Vasmer, the Hunnic ethnonym may also derive from Iranian (Old-Persian) *asabāra-* < **aśua-bāra-* 'riders' (see Vasmer 4: 855–856; AnES: 494; RO: 204) and refers to the region. Still, Vasmer notices that the meaning of *Sibir'* with reference to the whole of Siberia was coined later, having been limited, at the early stage of its use, only to the region's southwestern section, inhabited by nomadic tribes and under Iranian influence (see Vasmer 4: 855–856).

Another interpretation holds that the name *Sibir'* is related to words of Turkish origin, such as the Tobol-Tatar names *Sébér* or *Sévér*, used to

¹ The dictionaries are referred to here in shortened form and listed below the reference section. [editor's note]

² A similar interpretation of the word *Sibir'* is proposed by Evgeniy Pospelov in his Dictionary of Toponyms: "[A]t first *Sibir'* was an ethnic name used to refer to a group of Finno-Ugric peoples (most probably the Khants and Mansi people) that inhabited the southern part of Western Siberia. A part of the people was driven further north by the Tatars, whereas those who remained were assimilated. It was the Tatars who inherited the name *Sibir'* from their predecessors" (PosTS: 383; all translations by A.M.-H.).

³ The Hunnic language (also known as Hunnish) was one of the Altaic languages and is often grouped with Turkic and Mongolian.

⁴ Šafárik's book was published in English in 1937 in Moscow by Izdatel'stvo M.P. Pogodinym; here we use the Polish 1844 translation, rendered into English by A.M.-H. [editor's note]

refer to former inhabitants of Northwestern Siberia, or the Tobol-Tatar *Sëbërqa'la*, which stands for “the fortress of the Sebers”, i.e. their territory (Vasmer 3: 616). The latter is strongly related to the Turkish *sapmak* ‘to get lost’, ‘to err’, as well as with the Tatar *senbir’/сенбирь* ‘the first’, ‘the most important’ (cf. RO: 204). These units, according to the historian Vasily Tatishchev, might have functioned as the basis for the name *Sibir’* – recall that it originally referred to the main town on the Irtysh (cf. Boyarshinova 1960: 133). Moreover, the hypothesis of the Turkish origin of the name gains support from the view that *Sibir’* stands for ‘I move the place of living’ and, as such, is believed to have been used in the sense of ‘nomadic encampments’ (Shchukin 1856: 265). According to yet another etymological hypothesis, *Sibir’* should be viewed as a compound consisting of two words: the Khanty *Sib/Cu6*⁵ ‘stream, river’ or ‘river’s arm’, and *ir/up* (Turkish *jir/ÿup/up*) ‘land’ (RO: 204; AnES: 493).

The majority of etymological interpretations of *Sibir’* stress the relationship between the name itself and the nature of the region in which it is used. Thus, *Sibir’* is derived from the Mongolian *sibir*, as well as from the Kalmyk *šiw*r. Neither of these names has an exact equivalent in Slavonic languages but both refer to ‘thicket, wetlands’ (Vasmer 3: 616), ‘forest massif’, ‘moist soil where trees and shrubs thrive, primeval forest’ (AnES :4894), ‘swamp’, ‘wet plain where birches grow’ (KTS: 380-381). According to other hypotheses, the name may derive either from the Mongolian *shiver/шувэр* ‘a thicket swamp’ (RO: 204; AnES: 494), or the Mongolian *seber/сэбэр* ‘beautiful, magnificent’ (RO: 204; Stateynov 2008: 370). The motivation for the latter to be used as a description of the territory is explained by Stateynov thus: “When the Mongols captured Siberia, they could not get enough of its vast expanses. That gave them the name – *seber*” (Stateynov 2008: 370).

Other etymological interpretations that we can find in onomastic studies are not based on factual data. Nevertheless, they should be mentioned here because all subjective connotations of a term play a role in reconstructing its linguistic view. Instances of such naive interpretations are: (i) examples that link the name *Sibir’* with the Russian noun *sever* ‘north’ (cf. KTS: 380; RO: 204; Boyarshinova 1960: 134–137), (ii) examples where *Sibir’* is associated with *siveryane*, the name of a Slavic tribe, or (iii) etymologies that juxtapose *Sibir’* with animal names, in particular with the Mongolian word *cy6p* ‘dhole’ (a canid that resembles both a dog and a fox), or the legendary dog *Siber* believed to have emerged from Lake Baikal (KTS: 380).

⁵ Khanty is a Ugric language, from the Finno-Ugric language family.

These hypotheses allow one to reconstruct several features of the image of *Sibir'*,⁶ stressing the topography of the region with its characteristic features, i.e. swamps and forests (particularly birch forests). Other characteristics that stem from the etymology of *Sibir'* refer to its northern setting, its beauty, as well as the nomadic tribes and animals that inhabit the region.

3. *Sibir'* in lexicographic definitions (19th–21st c.)

For about 150 years, Russian lexicography has been consistently omitting to define *Sibir'*.⁷ A theoretical explanation of this status quo is such that proper names should be viewed as linguistic phenomena deprived of their own meaning, as opposed to common nouns. Thus, proper names can only signify further linguistic phenomena (cf. Galkina-Fedoruk 1956: 25, Chlebdá 2008: 271).⁸

Therefore, in my study I refer to the entries in specialised dictionaries, where *Sibir'* is defined as ‘the northern part of Russia from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean’ (PreES: 282), ‘a part of the Asian territory of the Soviet Union’ (KTS: 379), ‘the territory from the Urals to the mountain ranges of the Pacific divide’ (SPGN: 419), or ‘the name of a part of Russia’s Asian territory’ (Otin: 309).

These definitions (which are clearly encyclopedic in nature) contain the following aspects of meaning: ‘territory’, ‘part of a larger whole (Russia or the former Soviet Union)’, ‘dependence on that larger whole (politically: on Russia; geographically: strong ties with Asia)’. The definitions also indicate the topography of *Sibir'*: ‘located in Asia’, ‘located in the north’, ‘extending from the Urals in the west to the mountain ranges of the Pacific in the east’.

4. Synonyms

In Russian dialects spoken before the 1917 revolution, *Sibir'* had a pejorative synonym *Sibir'da/Cubupda* (‘scornful’, see SRNG, vol. 37: 264 and

⁶ It has to be noted here that the contribution of these (more or less credible) etymologies is marginal in the reconstruction of the linguistic view of Siberia.

⁷ *Sibir'* as a proper name is not included in Dal, TSRY Ush, SSRLY, OzhsRY, SRY EvRaz, OzhShvTSRY, BTSRY Ku, EfNSRY, or TSRY Shv. What is more, neither the word *Sibir'* nor its derivatives appear SDrevSY (a dictionary of old Russian), KSRY, TSRY Dm, or SNTSRY (dictionaries of contemporary Russian).

⁸ This approach is no longer considered valid. Rather, proper names, in particular those that no longer have toponymic or anthroponymic meaning, are included in dictionaries as entries in their own right: “Many ‘-onyms’ function in discourse not only as ‘pointers’ or ‘identifiers’ but also as ‘descriptions’, ‘valuators’, and ‘characterisers’ that boost the process of verbalisation” (Chlebdá 2008: 271; cf. Galkina-Fedoruk 1956: 25).

SRGS: 296); cf. the following examples from dictionaries: “Let the bear live in Sibirda. . . I’m fed up with it” (SRGS: 296), “Sibirda, oh you Sibirda wide, damn you. . . In thee, Sibirda, people toil” (a song) (SRNG 37: 264). The definitions quoted above trigger pejorative associations and connote such negative features of the region as harsh life, unbearable living conditions, or people’s suffering. The negative characteristics are also preserved in the secondary meaning of *Sibir*’: ‘unbearably hard life; torment’ (Otin: 310–311). The quotations above also point to Siberia’s vast territory.

5. Opposites

Siberia is often juxtaposed with European Russia, an opposition that transpires through numerous oppositions recorded in dictionaries, e.g. *Rus’/Rossiya* ‘Russia’ vs. *Sibir*’ or *russskiy* ‘Russian’ vs. *sibirskiy* ‘Siberian’. In Siberia, the noun *Rus*’ stands for ‘European Russia (in contrast to Siberia)’ (AnES: 467), and the adjective *ruskiy* or *russskiy* (cf. SRY XI–XVII: 259) implies the same. Moreover, there are numerous collocations with the word *ruskiy*: *ruskiy gorod* ‘contrasted with a Siberian city’, *russskiy tovar/russkaya rukhlyad* ‘goods imported from Russia’. The derivative *sibirskiy* (and its phonetic variant *siberskiy*), with reference to commodities, means ‘delivered from Siberia’ (SRY XI–XVII: 121).

6. Semantic derivatives

The secondary meaning *Sibir*’ shows that the term has an evaluative function: it not only denotes a region in physical space but also functions as a vehicle for notions and connotations that document a “national interpretation of the world” (Chlebda 1997: 85). The meaning provided in SUSRY, ‘a symbol of hard labour’ (SUSRY: 624), refers to the history of Siberia, in particular to its political aspect. Siberia is conceptualised here as ‘the place where people serve penal labour (the so-called *katorga*)’. Negative meanings of the word *Sibir*’ found in Russian dialects, e.g. ‘bad’, ‘grief, trouble’ (SRNG, vol. 37: 267), associate Siberia with ‘evil’ and ‘disaster’. Another secondary meaning of the lexeme, ‘swamp, carr’, ‘a scything plot in a boggy, marshy place’ (SRNG 37: 266), relates to the exceptional beauty of Siberia’s swampy landscape. The derivative meaning ‘the wedding feast of wine and vodka that the groom organised in his backyard’ (SRNG 37: 266; SRGS: 296) relates to the image of Siberian inhabitants as people famous for their hospitality. Secondary toponymic names, semantic derivatives of *Sibir*’,

reveal other features of Siberia. Thus, *Sibir'* is the name of the inaccessible area 'outside the Chulym district of Novosibirsk region', cf. "[T]hese hillocks we call *Sibir'*" (SRNG 37: 266). The word *Sibir'* also refers to a sandbar which heads deep into the sea: 'a far-reaching part of a sandbar at the mouth of the Khadzhy-Dere, between the Dniestr and the Dunay' (Otin: 312), so that Siberia is 'a remote region' which became 'the place of political exile and penal labour'. By extension, the name *Sibir'* could also be used with reference to other penal colonies, e.g. as "the name of a small village in the former Belsky district, where [...] the serfs that rebelled against their landlords were often sent" (Otin: 311-312).

7. Word formation derivatives

A polysemous derivative *sibirka/cубурка* denotes 'a semi-dugout hut inhabited by Siberian miners' (SRNG 37: 265), cf. "I was born and grew up in a *sibirka*. Do you think a healthy baby could grow there? It was always stuffy and dark. And so we suffered in the *sibirka*" (SRGS: 296; SRNG 37: 265). The word, along with its further polysemous extensions, e.g. 'a sledge without metal fittings' (SRNG 37: 265; SRGS: 296) or *sibiryachka/cубирячка* 'a big wooden plough with an iron ploughshare' (SRNG 37: 267), confirm harsh living conditions in Siberia and indicate its low level of technological development. Some word formation derivatives illustrate the negative valuation of Siberia portrayed as the place of exile and penal labour. The derivatives add detail to the forms of penalty and complete the description of the concept with new elements, such as prison and settlement: in literary language *sibirka* means 'custody, prison' (Dal 4: 184; TSRY Ush 4: 170; SSRLY: 757-758; SRY EvRaz: 88; BTSRY Ku: 1182; EfNSRY), and *usibirit'/ycубиритъ* means 'send somebody into penal servitude' (Otin: 311). In Russian folk dialects *sibirka* stands for 'Siberian penal labour (*katorga*)' (SRNG 37: 264) or 'tattered clothes of *katorga* prisoners' (SRNG 37: 264; SRGS: 296), *sibirnyy/cубирный* is '*katorga* prisoner' (SRNG 37: 266), *sibiryak/cубиряк* is 'a prisoner sentenced to exile in Siberia to work in a penal colony or to settle down in the region' or 'a former *katorga* prisoner' (SRNG 37: 267). Further derivatives reveal the notion that in the past Siberia was mainly inhabited by prisoners and exiles. However, the definitions of *sibiryak* available in Russian dictionaries tend to tabooise history in that they omit to mention such meanings as '(*katorga*) prisoner', 'exile', or 'victim of forced migration'. Admittedly, these notions do appear in SRNG but the dictionary's definition fails to distinguish between criminal and political

exiles. The lexemes *sibirshchina*/*сибирщина* ‘*katorga*, hard labour and living conditions, ordeal’ (Dal 4: 184) and *sibirbnyy*/*сибирный* ‘unpleasant, heavy, difficult’ (TSRY Ush 4: 170) relate to the sense ‘a place where people live harsh, unbearable lives’. The meaning of *sibirnyy* ‘wretched, experiencing disaster’ (SRNG 37: 266) associates Siberia with constant misfortune.

Other expressions add two new characteristics to the image of Siberia: ‘Siberia is rich in minerals’: *sibirit*/*сибирит* ‘precious stone, rubellite tourmaline’ (Dal 4: 184), and ‘Siberia has an intensely cold climate’: *sibirka*/*сибирка* ‘a north wind’ (SRNG 37: 265), *sibirnyy*/*сибирный* (n.) ‘severely cold wind’ (Vasmer 3: 616; SRNG 37: 266). Thus, the derivatives not only stress the region’s harsh climate but also reflect the way Siberia is conceptualised by inhabitants of European Russia: it is ‘located in the north’, i.e. in the region from where one can expect cold winds. The mental image of the location of Siberia differs from its factual eastern location.

Many derivatives refer to the nature of Siberia in terms of its cold-climate species of flora and fauna: *sibirka* can mean (i) ‘frost-resistant variety of apple-tree and its fruits’ (EfNSRY; SSRLY: 757–758);⁹ (ii) ‘frost-resistant variety of fine-grained wheat originally cultivated in Siberia’ (SRGS: 296; cf. SRNG 37: 265); (iii) ‘early-season variety of the strawberry’ (ibid.); (iv) ‘a variety of buckwheat’, (v) ‘an industrial variety of the potato’ (SRNG 37: 265); *sibirskiye*/*сибирские* can mean ‘a variety of cucumber’ (SRGS: 296); *sibiryachka*/*сибирячка* is ‘a variety of wheat’ (SRGS: 296; SRNG 37: 267); *sibiryok*/*сибирёк* can mean (i) ‘*Caragana frutescens* plant’ (Dal 4: 184); (ii) ‘a variety of Russian peashrub, *Caragana frutex*’; (iii) ‘a grape variety with small berries’ (SRNG 37: 264). As far as animals are concerned, these are mainly domestic animals resistant to the harsh Siberian climate: *sibirka* ‘a species of dwarf horse with thick, heavy fur’ (SRNG 37: 265; SRGS: 296); *sibiryak* ‘the Yakutian horse’ (SRNG 37: 267); *sibiryachka* ‘a species of sheep with long and thick fleece’ (SRNG 37: 267; SRGS: 297). Fur-covered animals are the basis of local trade: *sibirka* ‘a type of squirrel fur, Siberian squirrel’ (SRY XI-XVII: 121); *sibirkovyy*/*сибирковский* ‘fur of the Gliridae species’ (SRNG 37: 265). Both the definition of the lexeme *sibiryok* (see above) and the available illustrative example (“*Sibiryok* grows in the steppe, it is like *chervontsy* [cold-resistant apples], there are no tall ones”, SRNG 37: 264) refer to the landscape of the Siberian steppe.

The dialectal verb *sibiryachit*/*сибирячить* ‘to perform hired work in Siberia’ points to the region being a place of gainful employment (SRNG

⁹ The negative properties of Siberian apples are preserved in the Russian simile *malen'kaya kak sibirskoe yabloko* ‘small as a Siberian apple’ (of a small potato) (BSRNS: 773).

37: 267). The meaning is additionally preserved in the following definitions of *sibiryak*: ‘the nickname of a man who worked in Siberia for a long time’ (BSRProz: 495) and ‘the person who goes to Siberia to work in industry or to hunt’ (SRNG 37: 267).

The image of Siberia as a travel destination for people living in European Russia¹⁰ is encoded in the meaning of *sibiryak* ‘one who travels to Siberia on foot’ (SRNG 37: 267) and possibly also in that of *sibirnyy* ‘travelling from Siberia on foot’ (SRNG 37: 265).

The analysis brings us to the image of Siberia’s inhabitants (*sibiryaki*/сибиряки). Siberia is an ethnically diverse region, an ethno-cultural blend, cf. “Earlier only *sibiryachyo* lived here, now all kinds [of people]” (SRNG 37: 267; SRGS: 297). The changes in Siberian society that have taken place throughout centuries, i.e. the consecutive waves of migration, have contributed to the division of the region’s inhabitants into the indigenous and the immigrant population. In the relevant linguistic material one finds the “immigrant–vs.–local” opposition that corresponds to the “Russian–vs.–Siberian” opposition; cf.: “The locals were Siberia-dwellers” (SRGS: 296); “They came from Russia; all the Siberian people had left, now there are none” (SRGS: 296); “In Myshlyanka there are more Russian people, the Siberians are few” (SRNG 37: 264). However, there is also evidence for blurring these oppositions, as in: “I am a Siberian myself, I drink tea all the time”¹¹ (SRGS: 296), or in the literary context: “Children of the settlers, Siberians do not know the power of the landlords” (Aleksandr Herzen, SSRLY: 758).

The expressions from the standard variety of Russian that denote indigenous inhabitants of Siberia are the following: *sibiryak*/сибиряк ‘a person who lives in and/or comes from Siberia’ (see Dal 4: 184; OzhSRY: 706; OzhShT-SRY: 715, EfNSRY; TSRY Sh: 878; SSRLY: 758), *sibiryachok*/сибирячок (colloquial and diminutive), *sibirets*/сибирец (archaic) (SSRLY: 756; EfN-SRY), *sibiryachka*/сибирячка (fem.), *sibiryaki*/сибиряки (pl.) ‘person(s) living in or coming from Siberia’ (SRY EvRaz: 88; BTSRY Ku: 1182). Siberian

¹⁰ This aspect of meaning is also preserved in the children’s game *sibirskiy poezd* (recorded in Sverdlovsk Region, cf. Berezovich 2007: 195–196, Berezovich and Krivoshchapova 2011: 116), in which the players get to the top of a bough stuck into the ground by putting sticks at its side branches. The top of the bough symbolises Siberia, conceptualised here as the final station.

¹¹ Orig. “Sama ya *sibirka*, *cheldonka*, dyk chai p’yu i p’yu”. *Chaldony*/чалдоны or *cheldonny*/челдоны: ‘indigenous people, the natives of Siberia; the first Russian settlers, old residents of Siberia’; *chaldon*/чалдон or *cheldon*/челдон: ‘a native Siberian, Russian’; *cheldon*/челдон: ‘vagabond, fugitive, convict’, ‘descendant of Russian settlers in Siberia, married to a native Siberian’ (AnES: 639).

dialects of Russian contain other expressions: *sibirichnik*/*сибиричник*, *sibiryak*/*сибiryак*, *sibirity*/*сибириты* (pl.) (SRGS), *sibiryakha*/*сибиряха* (SRNG), *sibirka*/*сибирка*, *sibiri*/*сибири* (pl.), *sibiriyaki*/*сибиряки* (pl.) *sibiriyachyo*/*сибирячьё* (SRNG; SRGS). Expressions that relate to ethnic or religious identity belong to a distinct group and include e.g. *sibiryak*/*сибиряк* ‘indigenous Russian inhabitant of Siberia who is not an Old Believer, either local or immigrant’ (SRGS: 296), *sibiriyaki*/*сибиряки* (pl.) ‘Russian Orthodox Church believers indigenous to Siberia (as opposed to the Old Believers who arrived there through deportation)’ (SRNG 37: 267). These expressions, as well as *sibirskiy*/*сибирский* ‘an Orthodox Church believer, not an Old Believer’ (n.) or ‘belonging to the Orthodox Church’ (adj.) (SRGS: 296), point to the religious divisions of Siberia’s inhabitants into the Orthodox and Old-Believer denominations.

Many derivatives refer to the physical appearance of the Siberian people. In several dialects a person inhabiting Siberia is described as ‘strong, healthy, and inured’ (SRNG 37: 267), capable of surviving in the harsh conditions of the region. Another characteristic feature is the use of dialect: “[We/They] came here and took over the Siberian language” (SRNG 37: 267; SRGS: 296).

Derivatives often carry negative valuation. The dialectal word *sibiryak* is fully pejorative and functions as an insult in the sense of ‘arrogant’ (SRNG 37: 267). Similarly, the word *sibirnyy*/*сибирный*, when used in standard literary Russian, means ‘bestial, terrible, cruel’ (Dal 4: 184; SSRLY: 756; EfNSRY; cf. PreES: 283), and in dialects it means ‘wicked, atrocious, despicable, hideous’ or ‘monster, tormentor’ (SRNG 37: 266). Motivation for these meanings can be sought in the practice of sending exiled criminals for forced settlement in Siberia or for forced labour in the region’s coal mines (cf. PreES: 283). Another possible motivation is the cruelty and prisoner abuse perpetrated by the *katorga* camp personnel. Moreover, the lexeme *sibirnyy* also denotes a person who is ‘risky, roguish’ (an insult, according to Dal 1909: 144; cf. also SRNG 37: 266). Other offensive expressions include *sibiryak*, *sibiryaka*, and *sibirhyy* ‘bastard, rogue’ (SRNG 37: 266–267). The relevant pejorative aspects of meaning include ‘arrogance’, ‘wickedness’, ‘cruelty’, or ‘readiness to take risk or commit crime’.

8. Fixed expressions and collocations

Numerous collocations with the adjective *sibirskiy*/*сибирский* stress the unusual nature of Siberia. They could be botanical names of trees and other plants typical of the region: they produce worse crop than cultivated

plants, usually grow wild (often in the moors) and can have medicinal properties: *sibirskiy kedr*/кедр 'cedar' (Dal 4: 184; SSRLY: 758), *sibirskaya yablonya*/яблоня 'apple tree' (SSRLY: 758), *sibirskiy len*/лен 'flax' (Dal 4: 184), *boyarshnik*/боляришник *sibirskiy* 'hawthorn' (Dal 1: 123), *sibirskiy gorokhovnik*/гороховник 'acacia tree' (Dal 4: 184). There are also scientific names of animals that either live or originate in Siberia, as well as those that have adapted to its harsh climate: *sibirskiy olen'*/олень 'deer', *sibirskiy volk*/волк 'wolf' (Dal 4: 184), *sibirskiy khoryok*/хорёк 'ferret' (TSRY Ush 1: 1177), *sibirskiy kot*/кот (masc.) or *sibirskaya koshka*/кошка (fem.) 'cat' (SSRLY: 758; SRY EvRaz: 88; BTSRY Ku: 1182), *sibirskiy kozyol*/козёл 'goat' (SSRLY: 758). Consider also the names of fishes: *sibirskiy losos'*/лосось 'trout, Baikal pike' (Dal 4: 396), *sibirskiy osyotr*/осётр 'sturgeon' (Dal 2: 719), *sibirskiy sig*/сиг 'whitefish' (SSRLJ: 758), or birds: *sibirskiy aist*/аист 'black stork' (Dal 1: 7), *sibirskiy solovey*/соловей 'nightingale' (SSRLY: 758).

Reference to the harsh climate of Siberia, with its characteristic spells of extremely cold weather, is recognisable in the collocation *sibirskiye morozy*/сибирские морозы 'Siberian frosts' (SSRLY: 758; BTSRY Ku: 1182). On the one hand, *sibirskiy*/сибирский functions as a relational adjective, on the other hand, it is an adjective of quality that means 'very strong, oppressive'. Similar polysemy is observed in the collocation *sibirskoe leto*/сибирское лето 'Siberian summer': "The short but hot Siberian summer is drawing to its close" (SSRLY: 758). Thus, Siberian summer is shorter than in other parts of Russia but it is also hot and intense. Another dialectal expression that relates to the reality of life in Siberia is *sibirskoe mesto*/сибирское место, lit. 'Siberian place', i.e. 'a place with harsh living conditions' (SRNG 37: 266). In a similar vein, consider the collocation *Sibirnaya zhizn'*/сибирская жизнь 'hard, difficult life' (SSRLY: 756).

The collocation *Sibir' nemshyonnaya*/Сибирь немшиённая 'unmossed Sibir' (DalPos), i.e. 'the part of Siberia, uninhabited by Russians, where buildings are not insulated with moss' (SRNG 21: 90), points to the low level of technological development or even backwardness in the part of the region inhabited by Siberian aboriginals.¹²

Other collocations, e.g. *sibirskiye reki*/сибирские реки 'Siberian rivers' (TSRY Ush 4: 170) and *sibirskiy kamen'*/сибирский камень (lit. 'Siberian stone'), 'the Ural Mountains' (SRNG 37: 266, Dal 4: 184), refer to the

¹² The expression also appears (albeit spelt differently) in Ivan A. Khaidukov's essays "Not so distant places of Siberia" (in the magazine *Otchestvennyye zapiski*, no. 7, 1875): "And you you have the unmossed Sibir'!" (after Domanskiy 2003: 86). In his comments, the author provides motivation for the expression: "Cold, not covered or studded with moss. Sibir' is compared to a house uninsulated with moss, a cold one..." (ibid.).

exceptional beauty of Siberian landscape with its rivers and mountains. The Urals are a conventional boundary between Europe and Asia, as well as dividing Russia into the European and the Asian part. South and east of the mountain range there are Siberia and the Far East, whereas European Russia is located to the west of the range. The expression *sibirskiy kamen'* indicates a shift of the border westwards, so that the Urals are included in the territory of Siberia. The collocation *sibirskaya yazva/сибирская язва*, i.e. 'contagious disease of animals (cattle, horses, sheep), sometimes affecting people' (SSRLY: 758; cf. SRY EvRaz: 88; BTSRY Ku: 1182; Dal 4: 184), one that is 'intractable' (TSRY Ush 4: 170), is well documented in many dictionaries of Russian and portrays Siberia as the place of origin of various diseases. Consider also the word *sibirka/сибирка* (Dal 4: 184; TSRY Ush 4: 170; SRY EvRaz: 88; BTSRY Ku: 1182; EfNSRY), which refers to anthrax, another serious infectious disease.

Lexicographic sources also contain expressions that directly relate to living conditions in Siberia, such as the names of traditional Siberian dishes: *sibirskye pelmeny/сибирские пельмени* 'Siberian dumplings' (BTSRY Ku: 1182), *sibiryatskiye shchi/сибиряцкие щи* 'thick soup with vegetables and serials' (SRNG 37: 267). The expression *po-sibirski gostepriimny/no-сибирску gostepriimny* 'hospitable the Siberian way' (BTSRY Ku: 1182), in turn, refers to the exceptional hospitality of Siberian people, their warmth and generosity. The collocation *paleosibirskye yazyki/палеосиби́рские языки* 'Paleo-Siberian languages' (cf. also *paleoazyatskiye yazyki/палеоазиатские языки* 'Paleo-Asian languages') signals the region's linguistic diversity and covers the genetically unrelated languages of the indigenous peoples of Northern and Northeastern Siberia (TSRY Shv: 608). The dialectal collocation *sibirskiy prazdnik/сибирский праздник* 'the day of the conquest of Siberia by Yermak, 26 October' (SRNG 37: 266) recalls a historical fact of conquering Siberia and its further annexation to Russia – the implication being that Siberia has its own history.

SNF and TSRSlen include the saying "A small Tashkent is better than a big Sibir'", defined 'it is better to be content with little but of sufficient in quality than to be tempted by imaginary advantages of something bigger' (SNF: 104), or '(joc.) a preference for something so-so; less is better' (TSRSlen: 206). Tashkent is evoked here as a small, manageable, and controllable territory, as opposed to the vast Siberia, characterised by poor, ineffective management. Moreover, Tashkent was a major industrial and cultural centre under the Soviet rule: it gave shelter to ca. 100 industrial companies and hundreds of thousands of people of various nationalities, relocated and evacuated during the Great Patriotic War; among them were large numbers

of scientists and cultural activists from Moscow, Leningrad, Minsk, and Kiev (cf. Khanova 2011). The saying contrasts Siberia with Tashkent, evaluating the former negatively as a region that is poorly-developed or even backward, unmanageable, and difficult to exploit.

There is also the dialectal expression *Sibiri kusok*/*Сибиря кусок* 'a daring person, ready to take extreme risks' (SRNG 37: 266), which implies that Siberia is a dangerous place, where survival requires courage and risk-taking. Negative characteristics are implied in the dialectal expression *sibirskaya veryovka*/*сибирская верёвка* 'villain, scoundrel' (SRNG 37: 266). The expression *pakhnet Sibiryu*/*пахнет Сибирью* 'it smells of Siberia' means 'there's a danger of prison, hard labour, forced exiled settlement' (Otin: 311) – it relates to Siberia as a penal colony for criminals and dissidents. The collocation *sibirskoye zdorovye*/*сибирское здоровье* 'Siberian health' actually means 'very strong health' (BTSRY Ku: 1182). It is deeply rooted in the Russian language, as is the frequently used *sibirskoye dolgoletye*/*сибирское долголетие* 'Siberian longevity' (ZhR: 57), used as a wishing and toasting slogan. These expressions emphasise two typical characteristics of the Siberian people: (i) good health, resilience, stamina, and (ii) longevity.

The expression *sibirskiy valenok*/*сибирский валенок*, lit. 'Siberian boot', used in informal language and criminal jargon in reference to a person, capitalises on their alleged mental weakness, stupidity, and narrow-mindedness (cf. BSRP: 609; SLBTZh: 222) or else their naivety and ingenuousness (BSRP: 609; SLBTZh: 222). In slang, the expression refers to a 'rough, crude, provincial, and uncultured person' (TSRSlen: 56). Two dictionaries, namely BSRNS and RČFS, provide a simile based on this expression: *tupoy kak sibirskiy valenok* 'dumb like a Siberian boot', which means (i) 'a silly, stupid, and ignorant person' or (ii) 'a soft, compliant, docile person' (BSRNS: 81; RČFS: 59). Moreover, human stupidity is also the basis for the simile *glup, kak sibirskiy tuets/burak* 'stupid as a Siberian *tuets/burak*'¹³ (DalPos; BSRNS: 611). In short, these expressions attribute to inhabitants of Siberia the properties of being stupid, crude, naive, or uneducated.

In a different semantic domain, there is the dialectal expression *sibirskiy razgovor*/*сибирский разговор* 'Siberian conversation', the inseparable attribute of which are cedar nuts: '(hum.) the shelling of cedar nuts that often accompanies or even replaces conversation in moments of leisure' (SRNG 37: 266). It refers to a widely spread habit, which characterises the inhabitants of Siberia as taciturn.

In numerous dialects we also find expressions that distinguish indigenous peoples of Siberia from other groups: *vechnyy (golovnoy) sibiryak*/*веч-*

¹³ A vessel of cylindrical shape made of birch bark (cf. Dal 4: 144, 452).

ный (головной) сибиряк ‘Siberian veteran’ (SRGS: 296), *urodnye sibirjaki/уродные сибиряки* ‘the real [born] Siberians’ (SRNG 37: 267), *žit’ v sibirjakah/жить в сибиряках* ‘be a native Siberian’ (BSRP: 609). These expressions not only emphasise the distinction between indigenous inhabitants of Siberia and migrants, but also stress the importance that the former attribute to regional identity.

Thus, the data retrieved from the Russian language system (more precisely, from a variety of dictionaries published between the 19th and the 21st centuries) allow us to reconstruct the cognitive definition of SIBIR’, composed of thirty defining features.

Simplified cognitive definition of SIBIR’:

[CATEGORY]	[1] territory
[PART OF SOMETHING]	[2] part of a bigger whole (Russia)
[OPPOSITION]	[3] Siberia is distinguished from and contrasted with European Russia
[LOCATION]	It is believed that Siberia [4] is located in Asia, in the north; it is bordered on its western side by the Ural Mountains, while the Pacific Ocean in the east [5] is a distant place, located far away from the centre of the country (Russia); [6] access to Siberia is difficult
[NON-PHYSICAL FEATURES]	[7] Siberia remains dependent on Russia (political dependence); it remains part of Asia (geographical aspect), [8] has its own history, [9] is a linguistically diversified region, [10] has a harsh climate (extremely cold winter, short but hot summer)
[SIZE]	[11] it is a vast region
[APPEARANCE]	[12] it has an exceptional landscape which consists of: [12a] steppe, [12b] swamps, [12c] rivers, and [12d] mountains
[LOCALISER]	Siberia is [13] the realm of nature, with typical species of: [13a] plants and [13b] animals, including [13c] fur animals (the furs of which are an object of trade); Siberia is [14] rich in minerals, [15] is the place where various diseases occur
[LIVING CONDITIONS]	Siberia [16] is characterised by difficult living conditions, [17] is badly managed, [18] is the place where the exploitation of natural resources is difficult, [19] is technologically underdeveloped and often considered backward, [20] is the place where people earn money, [21] has its own culinary tradition
[FUNCTION]	Siberia [22] used to be a penal colony: [22a] the place of penal labour (the <i>katorga</i>), [22b] prison, [22c] exile, [22d] forced settlement; it is [23] a travel destination for European Russians
[FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES TO SIBERIA]	Siberia is associated with: [24] something bad, [25] something hard to bear, [26] something dangerous, [27] misfortune, [28] suffering, [29] tough life

[THE
REGION'S IN-
HABITANTS]

[30] Siberia is inhabited by Siberian people (*sibiryaki*), [30a] divided into indigenous people and migrants; indigenous people [30b] emphasise their regional identity. Physical features: they [30c] are strong, [30d] healthy, [30e] inured, and [30f] live long lives. Social aspect: indigenous people of Siberia are [30g] hospitable and [30h] taciturn. Cultural aspect: indigenous people [30i] use dialect in communication, [30j] are uneducated and [30k] crude. Religious aspect: the people are [30l] divided into Russian Orthodox Church believers and Old Believers. Psychological profile of some Siberian people: [30m] naive, [30n] submissive, [30o] ingenuous, [30p] stupid, [30r] narrow-minded. [30s] Former inhabitants of Siberia were *katorga* prisoners, exiles, forced migrants, criminals. They are described as [30t] arrogant, [30u] wicked, [30w] atrocious, [30x] ready to take risk, even crime-prone.

translated by Agnieszka Mierzwińska-Hajnos

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