

A Linguo-Mythological Space of the Toponym "Siberia" in Contemporary Slavonic Linguistic Consciousness

¹Irina Sovetovna Karabulatova, ²Elena Alexandrovna Fedorova
and ¹Flyora Sagitovna Saifulina

¹Kazan Federal University, Tatarstan street, 2, 420021, Kazan, Russian Federation

²Zavodoukovsky branch of Tyumen State University, Factory Street, 4,
Tyumen region, 627144 Zavodoukovsk, Russian Federation

Abstract: The article deals with the problem of apprehension of Siberia as a particular mythological space in linguistic consciousness of the Slavs. The researchers study the etymological roots of toponym transformation. They try to understand why Siberia acts as a sacral place with complex network of associative fields. The authors consider the problem, why Siberia is perceived as an analogue to Tartarus, a peculiar purgatory and alongside with that, a place of obtainment of superhuman powers and abilities. At the same time, the researchers show the ways of formation of toponymical synopsis in language consciousness of the Russians.

Key words: Siberia • Myth • Onim • Chronim • Slavo-russian Linguistic Consciousness • Tartarus • Name Transformation • Toponymical Synopsis • Toponymical Legend • Toponymical Story

INTRODUCTION

In due time P.A. Florensky fairly noticed, that "it is possible to write the whole book about history of any word" [1: 326]. The global character of toponym "Siberia" for human civilization is conditioned by poly-aspect associative space of chthoticity in society. In classic cognitive modeling, the investigation of any conceptual category begins with formation of knowledge structure of frame type and in our case, as a toponymic synopsis (toponymic script). First of all, such tendencies, as "Beginning" and "End", "Life" and "Death", "Purgatory" and "Transfiguration" are strongly marked here. The main ideas of such type are presented in cognitive theory of metaphor [2, 3]. The result of such analysis is the possibility to make a conclusion about typical ways of understanding of these categories in apprehension of the toponym "Siberia".

The toponym "Siberia" takes a special place in eschatology of European and Russian perception of environment, as it refers to specific space and mythological world of the human Spirit. There are no doubts, that the main peculiarity of interpretation of the

beginning and end in orthodox world view is that these categories are apprehended here as not the abstract meanings, but as 1) definite names-God's names (Beginning, End, Eternal, Endless etc.) and also 2) notional components of specific situations-realias, mythologems, evens etc. (creation of the world, Parousia, or the Second Coming of Christ, Judicium, Kingdom etc.)

Here is expressed the fundamental property of the word, its intension to function "as a spirit work in the material of articulated sound", its central role in language as [4]. A word is a "concentration method" of meaning [1: 163] and, for the other, is the meaning itself [1: 252], it is "the pronounced word that resumes the internal yearning for reality" [1: 291]. B. Kroze determined a dictionary as "a cemetery of hugger-mugger embalmed dead bodies" [5: 176], what is true in relation to the real word.

In transitional epoch, the problem "What is Siberia?" is raised again. This toponym of uncertain origin still bears mythological, utopian and really-historical implications. In Russian confabulated consciousness, the toponym "Siberia" is ambivalent: it is the edge of Death and Cold, killing everything alive and it is also the energy

source of the universe. In other words, "the toponym presents a convoluted myth" [6: 118]. The toponymic associations are the key words of onomamyth of the region, golographically representing a topo-object in linguistic consciousness of the native-speaker, juxtaposing the toponymic synopsis in this way. In this toponymic synopsis the associates act as the key words of one or another series of toponymic script in whole. "A multidimensional variative network of creation a toponymic myth" develops here [6: 97]. Besides this word, a key word, there are the other ones, which open another "entries" to this cultural space. Myths represent the efficient way of affect on the mass consciousness; it is not for nothing, that the American scientists confirm the necessary to attract the data of related sciences (not only of humanitarian sphere) in order to obtain the objective data with regard to experience of one or another verbal fact, as the imagination plays a significant role in formation of different discourses [7].

A myth is one of the peculiarities of onomastic discourse. We carried out a number of associative experiments in order to see the differences of apprehension of the toponym "Siberia" in modern Russian linguistic consciousness. The experiments were carried out among the youth of Zavodoukovsk city of Tyumen region; there were interrogated 150 people in total, aged from 18 to 25 years. The experiment showed a great role of imagination in etymologization of the toponym and creation of toponymic myth. The poly-aspect character of mega-conceptual phenomenon of the toponym "Siberia" predetermined the synergetic approach as the basic one in our work.

V.V. Nalimov, proposing a concept about so-called continual streams of consciousness, judged from the concept that both the world of life in its widest manifestation and the human consciousness are presented in front of us as a text [8]. That is why, considering the associative chains of toponyms, we see several variants of possible toponymic legends, realized as different toponymic synopsis. We assume that the associates of the toponym "Siberia" are the key words of the toponymic synopsis, realizing one or another variant of the toponymic myth, essential in the specific ethnolinguoculture. In our opinion, the toponymic legends are based on the associative perception of toponyms. At that, the toponymic stories are based on real events. Folk etymologies of a definite toponym are inserted into the structure of topomyth, allowing the name to stay maximally long in the operative memory of native-speakers. A toponymic myth is one of the peculiarities of onomastic discourse.

Verbal associations are obtained in the process of psychoanalytical session or special experiment. The unit of psycholinguistic analysis is the associative structure, *i.e.* two objects with the connection between them are assumed: Siberia → wealth; Siberia → dark; Siberia → cold etc. For one stimulus word (S) it is possible to obtain the whole chain of reaction words (RR), where all the preceding reactions become the additional stimulus for the following ones, for instance:

Siberia: a) cold, winter, evening, rich in minerals, mysterious, fabulous, secrete, unexplored, unknown, unpredictable; b) frosty, gloomy, severe, pitiless, kind, pacify, dark, dirty, windy, obscure, marshy; c) white-winged, snow-white, crisp snow, icy, snowy, snow-covered, white; d) tomentous, forest, acerate, thick, taiga, green, cedarn, timbered; e) splendid, vast, natural, beautiful, rich, large, great, powerful, fabulous, wide, magnificent, unattractive, wild, cool; f) lonely, replete, faraway, remote, empty, industrious, inhomogeneous, populated, food, familiar, native, forgotten, international, different, crowded, Russian, impregnated, quiet, habitual.

The intermediate stimuli direct the process of associations; at that, in the chain, strictly speaking, the intermediate words are associatively connected, but not the first and, for instance, the last one: Siberia → forest... fluffy... thick... cedarn. The core includes the units, specific in meaning, which provoke the image easily: Siberia → cold, frosty, great.

In the onomastic discourse, we understand a myth as the non-critically perceiving stereotypes of public consciousness. A concept of charm, proposed by Jane Bennet as the some experience of existence, is interesting in this context [9]. The play is carried out by means of attraction of different human analyzers [10]. Underneath the myth creation lays the phenomenon of symbol fetishization: Siberia → cold → darkness → death → afterworld → unreal power. In the later interpretation the fetishization is considered as historically conditioned kind of public consciousness. In the newest interpretations, the myth is understood as non-critically perceived view, connected with functional imaging of the brain [11: 3].

Siberia is associated as a specific mythological space, where the actuality, long-forgotten by the civilized world, is the reality, where the world edges come in touch with each other, where the heroes live and act. For instance: the Siberian is not the one, who was born in Siberia, but the one who wraps up; the Siberian is not the one, who lives in Siberia, but the one who wraps up; the Siberia is a mother and the Ural is a father; to send to Siberia; to be strong as the Siberian; Siberian health, Siberian husky, Siberian bogatyr etc. A departure or road to Siberia in

public consciousness is equal to the travel to sacral world of Death, to another world, that is why the use of word "Siberia" as a toponym is connected with the denotation of a prohibited world, closed place, remote place with strongly marked negative connotation. Such correlation of the toponym Siberia in public linguistic consciousness with the sacral area moves the Siberia itself to the reality of exorcism, fairy-tale and myth. That is why the books of supposedly "Siberian healer Natalia Stepanova" and all possible advertisement in the Mass Media of hereditary healers from Siberia (grandmother Agafia, grandmother Vera etc.) are very indicative and popular. It is considered that supposedly only in Siberia the original knowledge is preserved, that there are hidden resources and sacral "places of power", that special people live there etc. It is not for nothing, that the maximally confabulated image of wizard is the image of Siberian man Grigory Rasputin, who was able to influence on the fate of Tsar family and Russia in whole.

Besides, in Russian linguistic consciousness there is a contradiction: Rus - Siberia, which is a response of dichotomy of Rus and Siberia as Tartarus. Thus, "the Tatar land" takes a special place in exorcism, as it is located on the opposite pole, being in contradiction to all Russian; it is a habitat of all "enemies assailants, hefty Tatars and evil Tatars". On ancient maps, the territory, located behind the Ural (Riphean) Mountains, was denoted as Tartarus. It is known, that an essential component of mythic coordinates of European civilization is ("Tar-tar"), or ("Tar-tarary"). A Tartarus-a borrowing from Greek language, was considered to be the bottom of underworld-Acheron, representing a dark abyss in the depth of space, sometimes it was identified with Acheron. The whirls always roar around the Tartarus, it is surrounded by three layers of darkness and iron wall (or three copper walls). The iron (or copper) gates of the Tartarus present the creation of Poseidon. These iron gates can be referred to the Ural Mountains. The habitation of Nix (Night) was located in the Tartarus. The Tartarus of Hesiod is personified and it is considered the first of four gods. Thus, in ancient tradition the Tartarus was described as some area, located in the depth of space, lower than Acheron - the nether world; it is not simply fenced off by the iron/copper wall, but also it is surrounded by the three rows of night. Even gods are afraid of the Tartarus, as everything, that comes there, disappears irrevocably, because there is no road to come back [12]. In contemporary Russian language the expression "to fall to the Tartarus" means to disappear and to die. It is this last, metaphoric meaning that is

implemented in hoodoo texts, fasteners, exiles and damnations etc. The description of Tartarus repeats the information from myths, for instance, Russian exorcism [12].

It is difficult to imagine Tartarus, while, thanks to its name, it has distinct boundaries and it is understood by all people. There are no pictures of Tartarus in iconography [13]. However, the single picture of Chaos, represented in *Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, is quite late and very allegorical [13]. At the same time the space, as an accepted category of Russian mental worldview, narrows down all other categories to the space (time, movement, etc.). Tartarus was the name of vast territory of Zauralie, populated with tartareys (tartaras, Tatars). Some investigators consider it to be mythical, a denomination of the state that never existed [14], the others consider it to be the denomination of a specific area [15]. A toponym "Siberia" got a special actualization during the Medieval times, when the Mongolian troops rapidly conquered Europe. In the Medieval world the meeting and comparison of cultures took place in the categories "us-them". The "human", blessed with cross Western area, confronted with allied and enemy Eastern area. A Medieval man perceived its own world (world "universe") as a large "village", however, in his understanding of space there was clear realization of the fact, that the world was not born from nothing, it is the creation of God's hands" [16: 168]. That is why the Slavonic world in whole (including the European one) was shocked by the fact, that there is said nothing about the Mongolians in the Bible.

However, it shall be recognized that the Medieval world quickly coped with this stress, as the worldview of that epoch differed by integrity, namely: the symbol of events of sacred history was seen in each event of the earth history. The invasions of foreigners, natural disasters were in one line in order of importance for the Medieval man, as it was considered, that everything is repeated from the beginning of time and everything is God's will. In order to justify the horrible expectations and inevitable disasters, it was required to find their prototype in the past, thus, the ancient history assimilated together with the modern one in front of the godlike eternity. Then to establish connections with the Tartars, a Franciscan mission was sent the nuncios James was the first to ask the "Tartar Tzar" the questions of Western civilization. Archbishop Peter, when responding to the question about origin of the Tartar, refers to the "Revelation" of Pseudo-Methodius, who prophesied that

by the end of times, there would come those, who were exiled by Gideon and they would captivate the whole land from the East to Euphrates and from Tigre up to Euxine (the Black Sea), apart from Ethiopia [17: 16-46]. This revelation of Pseudo-Methodius got the peculiar essence for the events of the 12th century. The English sources of that times claimed, that "the incredible army of atheistic Tatars" was called by Moabites, who escaped in high antiquity from anger of Biblical Gideon "to the utmost regions of the East and North and settled in awful place and desolate desert, called Etrev. They had twelve chiefs, the leader of whom had the name Tartarkan. They were named the Tartars from him (...). Coming from behind the mountains with innumerable hordes, they conquered the Turki, Babylonians and sent their chiefs against Rus, Poland and Hungary [18: 180-182]. Thus, thanks to fatidic words of Pseudo-Methodius, the Tartars got their place in sacred history of Western (Christian) civilization.

This relation to the Tatars is well traced in Russian folklore. For instance, in Russian lullabies a little child had to sleep, otherwise "the Tatar-unorthodox puts a girl to the pocket, pulls the girl's hair and the girl cries in bad voice" [19: 145]. It is not for nothing, that the Tatar land itself is situated on another pole of values, than the Russian one. It is considered that the Tatar land is a habitat of enemies of the Russian land. The invasion of Asian nomads was explained and justified in accordance with godlike archetype of heaven punishment. It is not the peculiarity of time, considering, that it is the Novgorod first chronicles, that describe the Tartars/Tatars as the bearers of another culture, another religion and the Tatars' cruelty strengthened in Russian consciousness the image of deep enemies.

The Tatars were perceived as a breakthrough of malign forces, closed till the time. Apparently, the consonance of notions-the Tatars-Tartarus-Tataria (Tartaria)-played its role in mythologize. Serapion Vladimirsky blamed the contemporaries, who did not hear the godlike portents of Mongolian invasion: "We do not make penance, until the ungracious people, sent by the God, came; and desolated our land and destroyed our cities and demolished our holy churches, beat our fathers and brothers, did violence to our sisters and mothers. And now, brothers, accepting all this, we are afraid of this terrible punishment and we will become closer to our God with the promise: we will not suffer from the greater wrath of God and he will not cause the bigger punishment to fall on us" [15: 60]. In the consciousness of Russian people the historical event-the Mongolian invasion-immediately became a mythological. That is why even in hoodoo

tradition, there is the information and descriptions of the battles of Russians with the Tatars-non-Christians, warriors, famed for their cruelty, bravery and supernatural invulnerability: "You are the powerful bogatyr, kill the Tatars, destroy all the Tatar land; and I would be safe and sound. I go to the bloody Tatar warrior host, kill the enemies and assailants; and I would be safe and sound" [19: 188].

Thus, the relation to Tartars, Tartareys, Tatars in the Middle Ages was ambiguous. The Tatars/tartars were also perceived in Europe as the descendants of the tenth generation of Israelite, who left for the golden calf and passed into oblivion (Tartarus) and as another Biblical nations, disappeared in the ancient times. In due time there was even a discussion: are the Tatars Jews or not [15]. The most common was the version, that the Tatars are the predicted legendary nations of antiquity Gog and Magog, the coming of whom will announce the end of universe. Thus, the Tatars in the moment of their appearance were perceived in the West as one of manifestations of the God's wrath. The Eastern nations perceived the Tatars in the same way. Rashid-ad-Dinah describes the speech of Genghiz Khan to the citizens of Bukhara in the following way: "Fear me! Because I'm the God's wreath. If there are no great sins on your part, the God would not send such great punishment on your heads!" [cited by 20: 189]. However, in 14th century, in the epoch of close contacts and commercial exchange, in Europe there appear the works, idealizing customs and traditions of nomads of the Tataria [21; 23]. At that time, the emerging news about single God Tartarus pushed to one of the most curious myths of the Medieval West-a legend about mysterious Christian monarch Prester John, whose powerful empire was correlated with not less mysterious Belovodie or Shambala. The myth's content in the past and present is perceived as quite real and the difference between real and supernatural fades.

However, in Slavonic linguistic consciousness Siberia with its geographical and cultural remoteness from the center is still perceived as a mythical world with the preserved connate artifacts of human civilization.

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