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THE LANGUAGE OF A LOST RUSSIAN REGION IN THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF RUSSIA'S EASTWARD EXPANSION*

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This paper presents the results of a pilot field study of the Russian language of a group of East Siberian old settlers in the context of their ethnic and cultural history and their role in Russian expansion eastward, including Alaska between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From a linguistic perspective, the regional features of the old settlers' Russian language testify to the cultural and historical processes that involved various groups of the Russian-speaking population of Eastern Siberia. This paper aims at comparing these linguistic materials to the data on the Russian language of Alaska found by the authors, which may help clarify the historical processes that shaped the Russian linguistic and cultural landscape of Alaska, the only overseas Russian region. Linguistic data from Siberia are checked against those of Alaskan Russian – a language of intercultural communication in Alaska from the beginning of the Russian America period (mid-eighteenth century) and through to the mid-twentieth century. The research on Alaskan Russian

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is based on the variant spoken in Ninilchik (Kenai Peninsula) that has survived until the present time. The lexical, grammatical, and phonological features of Ninilchik Russian demonstrate both contact features of this idiom and its peculiarities as a variant of Russian. This description is followed by data from the language of the so-called "teamster old settlers" from the Pokrovsk region in Yakutia. It is known that Russian old settlers from Siberia, and especially teamster old settlers, made up a considerable part among the Siberian Russians who were coming to Alaska in the nineteenth century. However, drawing on a comparison of the two sets of linguistic data, the authors conclude that the dialect they speak is quite different from the varieties of Russian spoken in Alaska.

Keywords: linguistic and cultural Russian heritage in Alaska; Russian language of East Siberian old settlers; Creoles in Russian America.

Представлены результаты пилотного полевого исследования русского языка старожилов северо-востока Сибири в контексте их этнокультурной истории и роли в реализации российской экспансии на восток (включая Аляску) в XVIII–XIX вв. Региональные особенности русского языка старожилов рассматриваются как свидетельство культурно-исторических процессов, в которые были включены различные группы русскоязычного населения Северо-Восточной Сибири. Цель настоящей статьи состоит в том, чтобы сопоставить эти данные с имеющимися у авторов данными по русскому языку Аляски, что могло бы пролить свет на исторические процессы, которые сформировали русский языковой и культурный ландшафт Аляски, единственного «заморского» региона России. Языковой материал, полученный в Сибири, сравнивается с аляскинским русским – языком межкультурной коммуникации на Аляске с первых дней Русской Америки (середина XVIII в.) и до середины XX в. Представленные исследования аляскинского русского базируются на том его варианте, который до последнего времени сохранялся в пос. Нинильчик (Кенайский полуостров). Краткое описание лексических, грамматических и фонетических черт нинильчикского русского демонстрирует и контактные черты этого идиома, и его специфику как варианта русского языка. Это описание сопоставляется с данными языка так называемых «ямщицких старожилов» (Покровский район, Якутия). Известно, что представители русских старожилов Сибири, и в особенности ямщицких старожилов, составляли значительную часть тех россиян, которые прибывали в течение XIX в. на Аляску из Сибири. Но на основании сопоставленных в статье языковых данных авторы делают вывод, что диалект, на котором говорят покровские старожилы, значительно отличается от разновидности русского языка, представленного на Аляске.

Ключевые слова: русское лингвистическое и культурное наследие Аляски; русский язык восточносибирских старожилов; креолы в Русской Америке.

What is Alaskan Russian[1]

Alaskan Russian (AR) is a variety of the Russian language that emerged by the end of the eighteenth century as a result of the Russian colonial presence in Alaska. Alaskan Russian became the native language of the people of mixed Russian-native American origin residing in various parts of Alaska. In the nineteenth century, people born in such families were known as 'Creoles' – "the offspring of mostly Russian men and native women" [Smith-Peter, p. 363]. Emergence of this ethnocultural entity, their individual stories, unique position among various ethnic groups in Alaska, their identification as an ethnic group or a social estate in the Russian Empire, and the role of creoles in the history of Russian America have been studied in many historical and anthropological publications, see [Luermann; Miller; Smith-Peter; Oleksa; Grinev, 2011; Федорова] – to name just a few.

Alaskan Russian was spoken throughout the Russian American period and long after, up to the present time. Descendants of Creoles managed to keep their religious, cultural, and linguistic identity for a number of generations, even under the unfavorable conditions of English language domination, long after the Russian period. Together with Orthodox Christianity, Alaskan Russian has been the main component of this heritage [Black, 2004; Шевцов, Гутьерес, с. 10–31].

In Russian colonial times, some contact forms of Russian could be traced in every part of Alaska where Russian presence was noticeable. The best-known locations where Alaskan Russian was spoken most persistently include several villages on the Kenai Peninsula and several villages on the Kodiak Archipelago. The account below is based on the variety of the village of Ninilchik (Kenai Peninsula), where a form of Alaskan Russian has survived until the present time. It is this language variety that we have been exploring since 1997 [see: Кибрик; Bergelson, Kibrik, 2010; Bergelson, Kibrik et al., 2017].

Ninilchik was founded in 1847 as a settlement for the retired employees of the Russian American Company and their families [Arndt; Leman, 1993; Leman, 2006]. After 1867, when Russian interests in Alaska were sold to the USA, for several decades Ninilchik residents had very little contact with the outside world, except for the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church who continued their mission in the Kenai peninsula. This relative isolation created favorable conditions for preserving many features of the nineteenth century Russian variety well into the twentieth century. In 1911, an American, English-language-only school opened in Ninilchik. Still in the 1930s, children were coming to school without any knowledge

[1] The introductory part of this paper providing background information on Alaskan Russian (AR) and relevant aspects of Russian America social life and structure is based on our previous publications (linguistic issues) and work by other scholars (history). Also – see below the section on AR basics.

of English and acquired it there as their second language. A language shift to English ensued after the Second World War. In the twenty-first century, Ninilchik Russian (NR), representing the last spoken variety of Alaskan Russian, is moribund with only a few speakers left. Now all of them are in their eighties and nineties. The next generation of rememberers, having grown up hearing some Russian words at home, are in their 60s and 70s. At present, this idiom has restricted use as the first (native) language of the oldest still living Ninilchik generation. We view Ninilchik Russian (NR) as the current, last and moribund incarnation of Alaskan Russian [see: Бергельсон, Кибрик].

Politically, the Russian expansion eastward developed over centuries, reaching the easternmost edge of Eurasia before continuing into the adjacent part of North America. In that sense Alaska was simply an eastern frontier, a natural development of the persistent vector of Russian political history. In this context and in the light of historical evidence of the migration routes used by the people who were coming to Alaska from Siberia, especially via the Tobolsk – Yakutsk – Okhotsk highway, it may be natural to suppose that Alaskan Russian is likewise a part of the dialect chain of Siberian varieties

In this paper we assume that the advance of the Russian language to the eastern borders of the Russian empire, namely from Siberia to Alaska, was a more complicated and multilayered process than the continuous and unbroken eastward advance of Russians, Russian state structures, and culture. We assess the status of Alaskan Russian (hereinafter AR) vis-à-vis Siberian Russian dialects and Siberian contact varieties in an attempt to specify the place of AR among the varieties of the Russian language. We ultimately propose that AR (as the new data that we present in this paper suggest) cannot be considered one of the Siberian Russian dialects, or varieties. It does not constitute a particular stand-alone Russian dialect either, because its lexicon includes words from several Russian dialects from all over Russia, including many from Siberian dialects, but not only them. It is not a variety of Russian like those spoken by indigenous Siberian people as their non-first language. Though it was often called "the language of Creoles", it is not a creole language, but a regional variety of Russian that is described as a linguistic system at all levels.

Project Stages

Our first encounter with what we now call Alaskan Russian happened in 1997 when two of the authors, Andrej Kibrik and Mira Bergelson, were invited by the activists of the Ninilchik community to help in documenting their native language and, thus, preserve it for succeeding generations. The Ninilchik community were mostly interested in putting together a dictionary of their language, which we agreed to do and started to create a lexical database for the dictionary, while concomitantly describing the phonological system and grammatical peculiarities of this Russian variety [Кибрик; Bergelson, Kibrik]. That work was built upon prior unpublished papers by the Irish linguist Conor Daly [Daly, 1985; Daly, 1986], as well as genealogical research by American

linguist Wayne Leman, a descendant of one of the Ninilchik families [Leman, 1993; Leman, 2006]. Later, in 2008–2009, Wayne Leman joined Bergelson and Kibrik's dictionary project. Two field trips were held in 2012 and 2014, in which the third author of this paper, Marina Raskladkina, also took part.

In our work on the Dictionary – both in its paper version [Bergelson, Kibrik et al.] and its web-based variant [Ninilchik Russian Dictionary] – we wanted to balance the following aspects: lexicon, grammar, and culture; full coverage of the available data and specifics of Ninilchik Russian (NR) as opposed to Continental Russian (CR)[2]; academic rigor and accessibility to non-specialists; NR phonetics, phonological rules, and English-oriented transcription (cf. [Dziczek-Karlikowska] on adapting transcription to habitual graphic conventions). We explicitly stated these principles in the foreword of the Dictionary.

One of the crucial aspects of the work on the NR lexicon was to determine the source of lexemes in relation to Continental Russian, including comparisons with Standard Russian. As we have shown elsewhere [Бергельсон, Кибрик], the NR lexicon has very few borrowings from the Native American languages (Aleut, Alutiiq, Dena'ina) that surrounded the main Russian locations of southwestern Alaska. Out of more than 2,500 records in our Dictionary, less than 15 can be attributed to the Alaskan native languages. At the same time, a significant amount of the NR lexicon does not belong to modern Standard Russian but is instead part of dialects and sociolects characteristic of nineteenth-century Russian. Attributing these words to their dialectal base is an important task both for reasons of purely linguistic description of the NR idiom, which has implications for the reconstruction of a broader Alaskan Russian picture, and for supporting or disproving assumptions about the language of the people who were coming to Alaska from other regions of the Russian Empire.

From an opposite (and complementary) perspective, the historical data about the details of contact between Russians and Alaskan natives in the early years of contact and, later, through the entire nineteenth century, help one understand how Alaskan Russian was formed.

Contact Influences and Dialectal Features

We describe NR (and, more broadly, AR) as a language variety in its own right. The data we are using here come from NR, whose phonetic system, basic grammar, and certain aspects of its lexical system were described in our previous publications. In this section, we provide some NR data needed for understanding possible sources of contact, its results, and dialectal features possibly reflecting contacts at an earlier stage, still in Siberia.

The lexicon and grammar of NR demonstrate properties resulting both from contact with other ethnic groups, but also from diachronic processes characteristic of a language functioning in a closed sociocultural environment. Its lexicon includes words from all strata of Russian society and sev-

[2] We introduce this term – Continental Russian – to refer to the totality of Russian dialects and varieties together with standard Russian in its written and oral forms.

eral Russian dialects from nineteenth-century Russian. With only a few speakers left, all in their late eighties and nineties, it is often hard to distinguish early contact phenomena of the late eighteenth century from the results of language attrition, and the latter from individual variation due to lack of communication in NR in recent decades. Still, some specific features of this almost extinct variety of Russian (and one of the last living examples of the Russian linguistic heritage in Alaska) can be attributed to contact phenomena (Russian-Aleut, or Russian-Alutiiq).

Lexicon. Matter borrowing is very rare: out of around 2500 words registered in the NR dictionary, about 12 words are from the Aleut, Alutiiq, and Dena'ina languages – see (1).

(1) Aleut: *ishkát* 'basket'; Alutiiq: *úmadak* 'salted slightly smoked fish', *ukúd'ik* 'bumble bee', *n'ún'ik* 'porcupine', a. o.; Dena'ina: *kazná* 'lynx', *táyshi* 'dried fish', *k'inkáshl'a* 'crowberry'.

The borrowed words belong to specific domains: the local flora and fauna and types of local food. One word (*kudúk* 'thumb' from Alutiiq) designates a concept that is not lexicalised as one word in Continental Russian. Two borrowed words (*awáy* 'already, now' and *gón'ay* 'always' have developed meanings that convert these Alutiiq lexemes into something in-between discourse markers and grammatical markers expressing aspectual meanings.

Phonology. The only borrowed phoneme is /w/, which replaces Russian /v/ in all words and positions: *wadá* 'water'. This feature is due to contact with Alutiiq, which only has the bilabial phoneme /w/ [cf.: Counceller, Leer].

Phonetic realisations of /x/ and /r/ differ from that of standard Russian. The NR phoneme /r/ is realised as English [ɻ] in most speakers, even though some speakers use a rolling (trill) sound closer to standard Russian [r]. The former realisation of /r/ may be a result of contact with Aleut [cf.: Bergsland, 1994].

The NR phoneme /h/ (e. g. *múha* 'fly') is realised as a pharyngeal-laryngeal fricative [h] in most speakers, although a velar [x]-type sound, as in standard Russian, may be heard too. Either Aleut or Alutiiq contact does not easily explain the [h] realisation.

NR palatalisation patterns are different from that of SR. Before /e/ dental stops, nasals, and laterals are always soft: /d'/, /t'/, /n'/, and /l'/. All other NR consonants are always hard in front of /e/. Examples: *d'en'* 'day', *l'es* 'forest', but *séna* 'hay', *réchka* 'creek, smaller river'.

Word-finally, all labial consonants, all guttural consonants and /r/ are always hard. All other consonants can be either hard or soft: *tsep* 'chain', *puz'ír* 'bladder' (in these words standard Russian has soft final consonants), but *ládan* 'incense' VS *ladón'* 'palm', or *pol* 'floor' VS *p'il'* 'dust'.

In front of /i/ all consonants are palatalised, the only exception being the consonants /l/ and /l'/ that demonstrate a contrast in palatalisation: *r'íba* 'fish', *m'ishónak* 'mouse', *ad'íshka* 'short breath', *puz'ír* 'bladder' (all of these

words have hard consonants in standard Russian, followed by /ɨ/ (ы); but: *balík* 'smoked salmon' VS *bal'ít* 'it hurts'.

Such restructuring is typical of contact situations. The scarcity of the vowel systems both in Aleut and in Alutiiq languages that feature only /i/, /a/, and /u/ phonemes may be responsible for these contact phenomena.

Morphosyntax. At present, there is no evidence of affix or construction borrowing from the Native Alaskan languages into AR. Affixes and constructions different from Standard Russian are attributed to certain dialects of Continental Russian. Almost all cases attested in SR are present in NR, but some oblique cases are more likely to only be found in set expressions, or constructions, remembered by the speakers from childhood. At the same time, because of early contact and creolisation processes, there is a simplification and loss of certain categories, such as case (no genitive and no plural locative forms) and gender (no neuter gender and redistribution of masculine and feminine gender forms in many contexts).

Gender. Gender agreement of adjectives in Alaskan Russian (the Ninilchik variety) changed at the first stage of its formation: non-standard agreement patterns are attested already in the nineteenth century. Because gender agreement is often a typical representation of contact phenomena, and due to its visibility, it became the first object of both NR descriptive studies (early work by Conor Daly) and theoretically oriented studies – see [Steriopolo].

The main tendencies for restructuring the original three-gender system were the loss of neuter and the expansion of masculine. The lexical neuter completely disappeared, e. g. *s'iróy* (masc) *m'ásа* 'raw meat'. These processes lead to quite a stable two-gender system: although some variation between masculine and feminine is attested, it is strongly associated with particular semantic and formal features. Nouns with a final *-a* denoting female persons are feminine (*bába* 'woman'). Nouns with final consonants denoting non-persons and male persons are masculine (*sol'* 'salt'). The following types of nouns exhibit variation: nouns ending in *-ó* (*pt'ícḥiy* (masc) *gn'izdó* 'bird's nest', but *varón'ya* (fem) *gn'izdó* 'raven's nest'), nouns with final consonants denoting female persons (*mayá* (fem) ~ *moy* (masc) *doch* 'my daughter'), nouns with final *-a*, which do not denote female persons (*r'íb'ichiy* (masc) *uhá* 'fish soup' along with *mamáina uhá* 'clam soup', where *mamáina* is a uninflected adjective [see: Кибрик, с. 48–50; Bergelson, Kibrik, p. 307–310 for a detailed description of the Ninilchik gender system]. In the new data obtained from the last speakers, some minor deviations from this system are attested; they can be interpreted as one of the processes accompanying language death. Quite complex is the situation with the feminine gender agreement, having given place to masculine in most cases, but preserved in some other, e. g. *zádnay* (masc) *nagá* 'hind leg (in animals)', *pustóy* (masc) *katúshka* 'empty reel', but still, both *durnáya* (fem) *bába* and *durnóy* (masc) *bába* 'stupid woman'. Naturally, the feminine agreement is better preserved with the female animate head nouns ending in final *-a*, especially for high frequency words and in collocations (*mayá* (fem) *star'úha* 'my wife) –

cf. *iwónay* (masc) *doch mál'in'kaya* (fem) – 'His daughter is young'. Individual and contextual variation is observed in almost all cases of feminine agreement.

Cases. A similar situation with a high degree of individual variation depending on many, not always evident factors, is true for the use of nominal cases in spontaneous discourse.

(2) *Ya moy brát-u kn'íg-u dam*
I.NOM my.M.O brother – DAT.SG.M book – ACC.SG.F give.PFV.FUT.1SG
'I will give a book to my brother'

(3) *Ya magú s'istr-ú tóha kn'íg-u dat'*
I. NOM can.IPFV.1SG sister – ACC.SG.F also book – ACC.SG.F give
'I can give a book also to my sister'

(4) *M'i mnóga r'íb-u kúshal'i .. óchin' mnóga r'ib-a zhár'il'i*
we.NOM much fish – ACC.SG.F eat.PST.PL VERY much fish – NOM.SG.F fry.PST.PL
'We ate a lot of fish… a lot of fish (we) fried'

As the examples in (2) – (4) demonstrate, dative and accusative cases are not quite systematically produced in speech flow – cf. (2) where the gloss '0' is used to designate the absence of a dative case marking. See, also, in (4) two instances of the direct object construction where the first one features accusative, and the second one –a non-marked nominative, that is the loss of case marking.

Syntax. There is a tendency to use the basic SOV word order instead of Standard Russian SVO – see (5):

(5) *…m'i mnóga* ***r'íbu kúshal'i****… óchin' mnóga r'iba zhár'il'i…* *patóm* ***sup d'élal'i****… mnóga sup… patóm balík…* ***máma fs'idá balík d'élala***
'We a lot of ***fish ate***, a lot of fish (we) fried, then (we) ***soup made***, a lot of soup, then salted-fish, mom always ***salted-fish made***

It may be interpreted as an indication to the influence of the SOV Aleut language [cf.: Dryer; Bergsland, 1997]; also, SOV is a preferred word order for the creolised languages [Dryer].

NR has always existed as a spoken language only; it was a monolingual community, where the overwhelming majority were illiterate. For this reason, NR syntax had no interference from the syntax of the written language, which is often the case in the oral discourse mode for languages with a long and elaborate written tradition. In natural discourse use, speakers demonstrate a lot of syntactic fragmentation – cf. (6) and generally do not follow well-formed syntactic structures – cf. (7).

(6) *dóma ízhi pasúd'-i gr'ázn'-iya .. w'ím-ay pasúd'-i ..*
at.home if dishes-PL dirty-PL wash-IMP dishes-PL
'At home, if dishes are dirty, then do the dishes.'

(7) *yíhnay stár-ay dom mnóga igrúshk'-i*
their.NOM.SG old-NOM.SG house. NOM.SG many toy-PL
'There are many toys in their old house.'

Russian Dialects in the Ninilchik Russian Dictionary

Ninilchik Russian demonstrates versatile lexicon that is not part of any traditional, 'established', Russian dialects. This is attested at both phonetic and lexical levels. NR has its own phonological system, rules of palatalisation and vowel reduction that cannot be traced either to a specific Russian dialect, or to Standard Russian (SR). It has very peculiar prosodic contours, which was confirmed by a renowned researcher of Russian prosody, Sandro Kodzasov (personal communication) who listened to our recordings several years ago. The same is true about the lexicon where many words are semantically and morphologically different from their SR counterparts. Certain elements from both the phonetic and lexical systems resemble particular Russian dialects from various Russian geographical areas, and are probably borrowed from there, but no systematic correlations emerge. There are instances of northern European dialects: *kl'un* 'beak', *nazhn'ík* 'sheath', northern Siberian dialects: *shíksha* 'crowberry', both northern European and Siberian: *láyda* 'beach' and *mastalíga* 'shinbone', 'thigh'. non-Siberian dialectal words include *grúpka* 'stove' from Kursk, Orel, Kaluga, Tula – see [СРНГ, вып. 7, с. 156–157]. Also, from the Kursk-Orel area is the word *zhóga* 'heartburn' – see [СРНГ, вып. 9, с. 97]. Verbal forms like *zabúl* 'forget.M.3.SG.PFV' point to the western European dialects of Russian.

The NR sociolectal basis is mixed as well. Vernacular varieties are represented by such words as *galashtán* 'naked person', *kal'i(n)dór* 'Arctic entrance' and such local innovations as *wómarak* 'fainting spell', *pramushn'ík* 'trapper', 'trader', *béyb'ichka* 'baby', 'child', *t'ihastúptsi* 'slippers'.

The Fate of Alaskan Russian as a Post-Colonial Language

After the sale of Russian interests in Alaska to the United States, the local Creole population started to associate the Russian language and culture with their indigenous heritage. This took place because of two processes. The first process is associated with the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church, which in the period between the sale of Alaska in 1867 and the start of the 'gold rush' in the 1890s was the only authority there, continuing its services to the people, actively opening new Russian schools, chapels, and churches [see: Ivanov]. The second process, which ensued the gold rush, was the arrival of American authorities and the introduction of their policy towards indigenous peoples [Dauenhauer]. This policy categorised all coloured people of mixed racial origin as "Natives", which immediately made them second-class citizens. In contradiction to what was stated in the Alaska Treaty of Cession, the American authorities demoted Russian Creoles who enjoyed privileges under Russian rule to the status of Natives [Lain; Oleksa; Bates, Oleksa]. Many of them had made a great contribution to the development of Russian America, working as traders, navigators, and official representatives of the Russian American Company. They continued their service under its successor – the Alaskan Commercial Company (ACC) – as bilingual and trilingual literate individuals who had good contact with, and understanding of, the local Native Alaskans. These

are people such as Nikolai Fomin, Ivan Stafiev, Mikhail Rikhtorov, Alexei Petelin, etc. Late in the nineteenth century, they continued using Russian in their private and business correspondence.[3] Still, AR was doomed, even in the places where Creoles were the predominant population of permanent settlement for a few generations, such as in Kodiak, Afognak, or Ninilchik. Each of these places has its own unique story.

In the 1910s, the first English language school opened in Ninilchik. Before that time, contact with English speakers was sporadic (trading furs, occasional English-speaking miners and prospectors) and the main language, the only family and community language, was AR. By the mid-twentieth century, a language shift took place as a result of schooling, including going to high school in Anchorage or elsewhere, out-of-the-village labour (mostly canneries), and drafting during the Second World War. Thus, the period of AR-English bilingualism was short, and the former borrowed just a few words and calques. Language loss due to the shift to English took place very quickly in the life of one generation. Most of the last speakers of AR in Ninilchik, the generation born between 1920 and 1940, still have a phonetic accent in their English.

Russian and Russians in Siberia and Alaska

The history of Russian America has been studied and described in many publications. It is impossible to give a thorough list of even the most important ones. Some comprehensive publications include [Bancroft; Pierce; История Русской Америки]. The history of the discovery of Alaska, of the early contact and exploration, the details of fur-trade, establishment of Russian-American Company (RAC), its economic and research activities, early atrocities towards and exploitation of the native population, missionary and educational activities of the Russian Orthodox church, Creoles' role and position within RAC – are just a few important topics covered in the literature. The question relevant for this paper is how many *Siberian Russians* were coming to Alaska. By Siberian Russians we here mean two groups of the Russian-speaking population inhabiting Siberia in the period from the mid-eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries – the time of Russian America. Roughly speaking, one of these groups are Russian old settlers [Вахтин, Головко, Швайтцер; Акимов] and – especially [Schweitzer], the other one – representatives of the Siberian indigenous ethnic groups who were in trade or labour contact with Russians [Федорова; Макарова]. In both groups, there were people of a mixed Russian-Siberian ethnic origin, but what is important for this paper is that both groups were speaking Russian varieties either as their main language (Russian old settlers) or as their second (ethnic being first) language. In this rough classification, we focus mainly on the East Siberian territories and those ethnic groups that

[3] We found significant Russian-language data in the library archive of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks with the generous help of Katherine Arndt during our fieldwork in the summer of 2019. These materials are being digitalized by our group. We will present the results and analysis in another paper.

were mostly involved with the movement of resources and people via the Tobolsk – (Yakutsk) – Okhotsk route.

A brief account of the Russian expansion eastward through Siberia and further to what is now known as Alaska is given by S. Fedorova in her comprehensive book on the history and anthropology of the Russian population in the northwestern part of the American continent [Федорова]. Together with biographical dictionaries [Pierce; Гринев], these books provide us with social profiles and individual biographies of the Russian-speaking population of Russian America – individuals who explored Alaskan lands, served in RAC or were in other ways related to it. These social profiles were very diverse: government representatives, navy officers, Siberian Cossacks, merchants, traders, missionaries, sailors, and entrepreneurs. They were coming to Alaska via Siberia – by a cross-country route, or on ships from the northwestern part of Russia. Those people left their traces on the Alaskan land and in Russian and American history in many different ways. We can find these traces in Alaskan Russian as well, in the form of dialectal words and forms – see section 3.6 above. But if a word from Arkhangelsk or Kursk dialects tells us a story of a journey – terrestrial or marine – this is not true for the AR words that point to Siberia. Siberian Russians did not necessarily travel from somewhere in order to then get to Alaska. They might as well have lived in East Siberia for a few generations. We are talking here of a few groups of East Siberian old settlers, who are known under the names of *русскоустьинцы, индигирщики, походчане, затундренные крестьяне, ленские крестьяне, якутяне, сахаляры, камчадалы, ямщицкие старожилы*. Those groups that settled farthest in the north – Russkoye Ustye, or Indigirka old settlers, Pokhodsk old settlers (*русскоустьинцы, индигирщики, походчане*) were located far away from the main Okhotsk highway that led to Alaska. Their Russian language was studied and is relatively well documented since the early twentieth century [Зензинов; Дружинина; Самсонов, Самсонова; Чикачев, 1972; Чикачев, 2017]. It stands apart as a very special Russian dialect.

Teamster old settlers. *Teamster old settlers* (*ямщицкие старожилы*) are quite a different story. They formed a professional group that played a significant role in delivering people and goods cross-country from Irkutsk and Tobolsk to Yakutsk and then to Okhotsk – the main port from which ships would take the RAC working force to Alaska. Their villages eventually grew along the Tobolsk – Yakutsk – Okhotsk highway, and some of them relocated to Alaska to work for the RAC. RAC records keep names of important individuals coming from teamster families of Tobolsk.

Preparing for the 2019 fieldwork in Anchorage, Alaska, we found several family histories in [Sims, Zitnik]. One of them is about Fedor Kolmakov, RAC trader, founder of Aleksandrovsky and Kolmakovsky Redoubts, pioneer of the 1816 and 1818 Russian explorations on the Kuskokwim river. *Fedor had been engaged by the company as one of many men required to haul the wagonloads of supplies for the company,*

from Tobolsk to Ohotsk to Kamchatka and finally to Kodiak [Ibid., p. 18]. Svetlana Fedorova managed to establish that F. L. Kolmakov was a Tobolsk iamschik [Fedorova, 1973, p. 38] (Sims and Zitnik write that they *have learned that iamschik means a coachman, teamster, or driver* [Sims, Zitnik, p. 17]. Another Tobolsk teamster, also employed by the company, was Egor (Gregorii) Vasilivich Netsvetov, future father of a famous Creole Yakov Netsvetov, an Orthodox priest and author of the first Aleut dictionary [Black, 1996]. Ivan Matveevich Komkov (variants – Kamkov, Kamkoff, Kompkoff) was the forefather to all the Kompkoffs of the Alaska Peninsula. His father-in-law, Mikhail Panfilov, was also a teamster from Tobolsk [Sims, Zitnik, c. 94].

Therefore, based on this information, there emerged reasons to investigate the features of the teamster old settlers' Russian. If one wanted to find a close relative of AR among the Siberian variants of Russian, the most logical place would be Pokrovsk, a regional town in the vicinity of Yakutsk, which became, in 1895, the administrative centre for all Lena-based peasants who were performing teamster service from over twenty stations located along the main route to Okhotsk. We conducted a pilot study of their Russian in July 2019 in Yakutsk, where our consultant was Tatyana Mitrofanovna Golovkova (TMG), 89 years old, born in Chekalovo not far from Pokrovsk. Our data come from two hours of a recorded semi-structured interview with her on the topics of family history, language use, and bilingualism in the family and the community.

Old settlers from Pokrovsk. From the historical sociolinguistic point of view, Pokrovsk old settlers belong to those Russian speakers in East Siberia who, while keeping their religion and sociocultural norms, and considering themselves Russians, did not keep their language in the face of massive contact with Yakut speakers [Вахтин, Головко, Швайтцер, с. 45]. Yakut became the dominant language, but then the increasing number of Russians arriving in East Siberia during the nineteenth century reversed the situation. Pokrovsk region teamster families were among those Russian old settlers who regained their Russian due to new contacts with Russian speakers, which, by the beginning of the twentieth century, created Yakut-Russian bilingualism. Our consultant, TMG, said to that point: *Русские по-якутски говорили… научились русскими словами… Бабушката по-якутски говорила… Сахалы хорошо знаем... Якуты луччи знаем* ('Russians started speaking Yakut… (we) learned Russian words... Grandmother spoke Yakut to us… We know Yakut better').

It is not possible to systematically describe the phonology, grammar, or vocabulary of a teamster's Russian, based on the speech of one individual.[4] Still, one can observe a few striking features.

[4] Partly because of that, we render TMG speech with regular Russian orthography, as opposed to AR (NR) examples. In a couple of cases we use Cyrillic letters but render some typical vernacular/dialectal pronunciation of words – see *луччи, шесь*. In the examples below, we only gloss those grammatical features (number and case) that are relevant for the discussion.

Final consonants in the infinitives are not palatalised. *Sh*- and *s*-sibilants are pronounced almost identically as *s*-sibilants. The adjective meaning 'baptised' sounds as [kr'iss'onaj].

In grammar, typical contact phenomena show in the gender and case systems. Within the former, one observes the loss of neuter and the confusion of masculine and feminine genders, as compared to SR, see (8); as for the case system, we did not find genitive and locative cases. Instead, TMG used nominative, see (9) and (10).

(8) a. Бабушка большо**й** был**а** крупн**ый**.
grandma.F big-M was-F massive-M
'Grandma was big.'
b. Мамина дом больш**ая**.
mom's house.M big.F
'Mom's house was big.'
c. Доярк**ом** работал**а**.
Milkmaid-Instr.M worked-F
'(I) worked as a milkmaid.'
d. топлён**ый** масло; мясо вкусн**ый** был.
melted-M butter.N; meat.N tasty-M was.M
'melted butter' 'The meat was tasty.'
e. Он там сзади сидел**а.**
he.M there in-the-back sat-F
'He was sitting back there.'
f. Бог сам**а** знает.
god.M herself-F knows
'God knows him\herself.'
g. Дорога совсем плох**ой**.
road.F completely bad-M
'The road is completely bad.'

The loss of lexical gender for the SR neuter nouns is observed in NR too, as well as in variants of contact Russian spoken by indigenous Siberians whose first/main language is not Russian. However, the confusion and free variation of masculine/feminine agreement both for adjectives and copula is not characteristic of NR.

(9) a. Молодой он **пожарка** работала.
young-M he.M (**at-the**)fire-station.Nom worked-F
'He worked at the fires station when he was young.'
b. Больница не принесли.
(**to-the**-)hospital.Nom (they did-)not bring
'They did not take him to the hospital.'
c. Он **армия** три война ходил.
he.M (**in-the**) army.Nom three war.Nom served.M
'He served in the army in three wars.'

d. один **Якутск** живут
one.M (**in**) Yakutsk.Nom live.Pl
'He lives alone/on his own in Yakutsk.'

While in NR locatives are regularly used with common expressions such as 'in the house', 'in the forest', 'on the sea', examples in (9) show not only the absence of the morphological locative, but also of a locative construction – see (9) b. and c. where SR will have locative (lative) in the accusative case.

(10) a. Там две **дочка.**
there two daughter.Nom.Sg
'There are two daughters there.'
b. Пятнадцать **дети** родила.
Fifteen children.Nom.Pl deliver
'(She) delivered fifteen children.'
c. три **война**
three war.Nom.Sg
'three wars…'
d. Сейчас три **сестра** живут.
now three sister.Nom.Sg live.Pl
'Now (there) three sisters live.'

It is worth mentioning that these phrases were produced by TMG in a spontaneous discourse, and not as a result of elicitation.

The quasi-nominative forms in (9) and (10) highlighted in bold have zero marking, which coincides with the SR nominative form. It does not reflect the lack of the morphological genitive, but the absence of the construction 'numeral plus noun in the genitive case'. This is proved by the plural form of the word *ðemu* ('children', in which case the plural form is more pragmatically common than singular.

Some other peculiarities of TMG's speech include the use of SR dative for constructions where in SR one finds instrumental with a preposition – see (11). This may be attributed to a dialectal feature. In northern and some western European dialects of Russian, plural dative and instrumental coincide [Русская диалектология].

(11) a. Эта морс **ягодкам** **брусникам**
this.F drink.M (is **with**) berries.**Dat.Pl** cranberry.**Dat.Sg**
b. Эта мою булочку попробуйте **повидлам** делала
This.F my.F roll.F.Acc try.Imper (**with** jam.**Dat.Sg** made.F

In TMG's data, the dative form for an instrumental construction occurs also in the singular and without any preposition. This is very different from NR constructions, where the instrumental case is normally used, though not with the SR preposition *s* 'with', but with a complex preposition *sas* 'with' represented in some Siberian dialects.

* * *

We believe that the data of AR and one Siberian Russian variety presented in this paper contributes to the field of contact sociolinguistics. Complex relations between language structure, the historical contexts of its formation, and cultural influences explain differences in the fate of the Siberian and Alaskan varieties of Russian.

The multilayered lexicon of Alaskan Russian calls for an explanation of its dialectal and sociolectal diversity. Such an explanation cannot be obtained on the basis of linguistic information alone but must rest on a reconstruction of the historical processes taking place during several centuries of Russia's eastward expansion. Alaskan Russian did not evolve as a result of a direct linguistic transfer resulting from a relocation of some group of Siberian old settlers to the 'overseas colony'. Even sketchy comparisons of the oral discourse excerpts and the observed dialectal differences point to it. Various groups of Siberian old settlers were socially and culturally rather homogenous within their communities, which is reflected in their socially homogenous sociolects. Russian spoken in Alaska in the times of Russian America, and later, reflects diverse social, regional and ethnic backgrounds of the RAC personnel. RAC policies towards the native population played their role too.

Many linguistic and extralinguistic factors shaped Alaskan Russian, a unique overseas variant of Russian. These factors include the numbers of Russian and non-Russian speakers, the duration of contact, the type of labour and other relations between ethnic groups in Alaska, the Russian state's and Russian American Company's policies, the role of the Russian Orthodox Church – processes similar for both northeastern Siberia and Alaska, but going at a different pace.

Alaskan Russian existed in a few varieties – not only geographically distributed, but also belonging to different social groups: (i) RAC staff and clergy born in Russia and only temporarily on service in Alaska, and (ii) the Creoles, born in Alaska, for whom AR was their first language.

For these two groups Alaskan Russian took different forms. For the first group we observe certain lexical borrowings representing the realities of the region. But for the Creoles, formation of AR started as language contact and continued through acquiring a new culture and later its internalisation. AR, as we can observe in Ninilchik Russian and figure out for the traces of AR in its other locations, developed significant lexical and grammatical innovations. In the postcolonial period, this internalisation made Alaskan Russian, the language firmly associated with the Creole culture, indigenous. It was considered an indigenous language by its speakers – Alaskan residents of mixed origin, and by the new American authorities as well, which was often not to the benefit of its speakers. As such, in the twentieth century Alaskan Russian shared

the fate of Alaskan indigenous languages giving way to English in all spheres, except for symbolic cultural value. This value for its speakers, which is to some extent responsible for the start of our research, carried AR over to the beginning of the twenty-first century as a unique and precious element of the Russian language expanse.

List of abbreviations

AR – Alaskan Russian
CR – Continental Russian
NR – Ninilchik Russian
SR – Standard Russian

Abbreviations in glosses

0 – zero marker
1 – 1st person
2 – 2nd person
3 – 3rd person
ACC – accusative case
DAT – dative case
F (fem) – feminine gender
FUT – future, or nonpast, tense
IMPFV – imperfective verb
M (masc) – masculine gender
NOM – nominative case
PAST – past tense
PFV – perfective verb
PL – plural
SG – singular

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