



## Semantic Shifts in the Samoyedic Basic Vocabulary and Their Parallels. 2. Nature

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# Semantic shifts in the Samoyedic basic vocabulary and their parallels. 2. Nature

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This paper is the second part of the series which investigates the cases of semantic shifts and protolanguage polysemy in the basic vocabulary of the Samoyedic languages. This research focuses on the shifts which have analogies in Turkic and Tungusic languages, identified with the help of semantic reconstruction. Special maps were created on LingvoDoc linguistic platform in order to demonstrate areas of similar polysemy and semantic shifts, possibly contact-induced. Using materials from archival and expeditionary dictionaries, the paper proposes a detailed account of the available lexicon of the Samoyed languages within the scope of core lexicon. Our results show 15 semantic shifts in the form of polysemy, semantic evolution and cognates. The present paper investigates polysemy ‘skin, hide’, ‘bark’, ‘hair, wool, feather’ and ‘feather, wing’ in Samoyed, Turkic and Tungusic languages.

## 0 Introduction

The present paper examines the instances of semantic parallels between polysemy in the Samoyed basic lexicon and their contact language families. It is the second part of the series of papers devoted to semantic shifts in the Samoyed basic vocabulary which have parallels in Turkic and Tungusic languages. The principles and methods of this research are rigorously described in the first part of the series (Fedotova 2022) and will not be repeated here. We look only at the instances when Samoyed polysemy has the parallels in other non-related language families.

## 1 ‘skin’, ‘hide’

The polysemy ‘skin’, ‘hide’ appears to be a protolanguage polysemy (possibly syncretism) in Tungusic and Turkic languages and in Selkup and Kamas, semantic evolution in Enets

In the Proto-Samoyed language, the lexeme *\*kopā* ‘skin, bark’ is reconstructed (Janhunen 1977: 73). Due to the fact that this dictionary does not specify the meanings of the given lexemes, and these materials are archival and difficult to access, it is not known precisely on what grounds such a polysemy was reconstructed. Judging by the contemporary dictionaries of the Samoyed languages (see the material below), at the protolanguage level it is possible to reconstruct the meanings ‘skin’ (Nganasan, Selkup, Kamas), ‘hide’ (Nganasan., Enets, Nenets., Selkup, Kamas)

and ‘bark’ (Forest Enets, Selkup). The meaning ‘bark’ is also conveyed in Tundra Nenets and the Forest Enets in the collocations *ня’ хоба* (Tereshchenko 1965: 766), *ня коба* (Sorokina&Bolina 2009: 177), which represents a metaphor ‘skin of tree’. Perhaps this protoform *\*kopã* had a broad meaning of ‘shell of something’, as in the Selkup dialects.

Now let us take a closer look at the meanings of all known lexemes that are related to this protoform. Selkup has the widest set of meanings: Selkup. *qorj* ‘hide, skin; peel, crust; shell’ (Helimski 2007: 274), *қобы, қобе* ‘skin, hide, bark’ (Bykonya et al. 2005: 85), *қоп, қоппэ, қоны, қоныг, қонэ* ‘hide’, ‘skin’, ‘bark’, ‘crust’, ‘box’ (Bykonya et al. 2005: 91), *коб, коби, кобе* ‘skin’, ‘fur’, ‘tree bark’ (Bykonya et al. 2005: 44); *коб* ‘skin, hide’, *кóпъ* ‘skin / skin / animal skin / grain husk’ (LingvoDoc). This noun, according to researchers of the Selkup language, “denotes a shell that is tight, covering something from the outside” (Dubrovskaya 2010: 86).

In the Enets language there is a similar array of meanings: Forest Enets *коба* ‘hide’, ‘fur’, ‘skin’, ‘bark’, ‘peel of something’, ‘crust’, ‘top layer of something’, *ня коба* ‘tree bark’ (Sorokina&Bolina 2009: 177), Tundra Enets. *коба* ‘hide, skin’: *d’aa kôba* ‘turf’, *aja kuba* (= *aja sera*) ‘hide’, *kôbaa* ‘fish skin, skin’ (Helimski Enets Dictionary), also the meaning ‘skin’ is conveyed by the phrases Tundra Enets *aja(?) kôbaa* ‘skin’ [Helimski Enets Dictionary], Forest Enets *ая кобай* ‘skin’ (Sorokina& Bolina 2009: 48), considering *ая* ‘body’ [Sorokina&Bolina 2009: 48].

Nenets preserves a reflex of *\*kopã* with quite a wide range of meanings, but the meaning of ‘skin’ does not occur, while the meaning ‘bark’ and other metaphors are conveyed by collocations: Nenets *хобã* ‘(human) skin, skin (of animal)’, ‘surface’: *ня’ хоба* ‘tree bark’, *я’ хоба* ‘earth crust’, *нянь’ хоба* ‘crust of bread’, mythological *нүв’ хоба* ‘lower heaven (through the holes in which, according to Nenets, the upper golden vault shines through in the form of stars)’ (Tereshchenko 1965: 766).

Nganasan records meanings ‘hide’, ‘fur’ (derived from the previous one?), ‘skin’: *куху* [*кубу*”, *куба*”]; - э́] ‘skin; fur’, *кухуо* [-”, *кухуу*”]; - э́] ‘membrane’, ‘skin (human)’ (Kosterkina et al. 2001: 76), *куху* ‘skin with fur’, *кухуэ* ‘skin’ [Helimski Nganasan dictionary]. In Kamas, the polysemy ‘skin, hide’ is also attested: *kuba* [Donner&Joki: 33].

In the Turkic and Tungusic languages, polysemy or syncretism ‘skin’, ‘hide’ is also pinpointed at the protolanguage and synchronic level: PT *\*teri* / *\*deri* ‘skin, hide’ and the reflexes in Turkish, Gagauz, Azeri, Turkmen, Salar, Karaim, Karachaevo-Balkar, Kumyk, Tatar, Bashkir Nogai, Karakalpak, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Altay, Uzbek, Uigur, Khakas, Tofalar, .Yakut, Chuvash (ESTYA 1980:207-208; Dybo 2013: 470-471) as well as Shor (survey of a native speaker).

For Proto-Tungus *\*nansa* [EDAL: 962-963] ‘skin’, ‘hide’ the protolanguage polysemy is reconstructed based on Evenki, Even., Negidal., Oroch, Udeghe, Ulcha, Orok, Nanai [TMS 1: 583-584]

The map below illustrates the languages where it is possible to combine or not distinguish the meanings of ‘skin (of human)’, ‘tanned skin (of animal)’, ‘skin (of animal)’. Due to the ambiguity of the Russian word *кожа*, used in dictionary definitions, it is impossible to distinguish the first two meanings without contexts or clarifying words, but nevertheless we give here all the words for which the interpretations of ‘skin, skin’ are given.

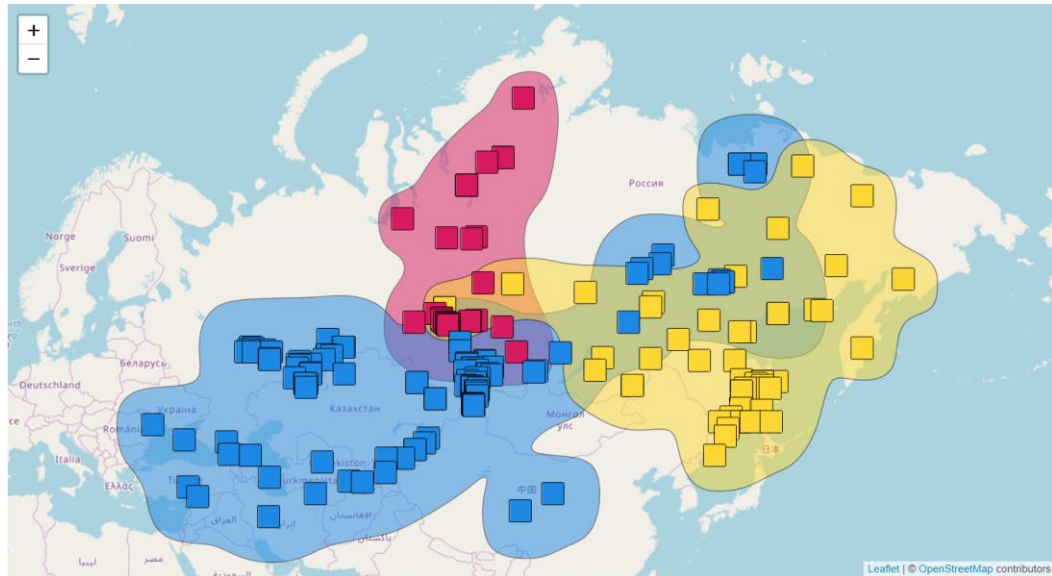


Figure 1. ‘skin, hide’

The Samoyed area (red) extends from north to south from the Taimyr Peninsula to Krasnoyarsk and the Tomsk region. The Turkic area (blue) stretches from Asia in the southwest to the north of Yakutia and covers the entire territory of the distribution of Turkic languages. The Tungusic area (yellow) also occupies the entire area of the Tungusic languages, from Kamchatka in the Far East to the Tomsk region in Western Siberia. The Samoyed and Tungusic areas intersect on the territory of the Krasnoyarsk Krai and the Tomsk Region. Thus, polysemy or syncretism ‘skin, hide’ appears to be a pan-Eurasian polysemy, not restricted to any particular area.

## 2 ‘skin’, ‘hide’ > ‘bark’

semantic evolution in Samoyed and Evenki

Gast and Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2018) describe two macroareas with the ‘skin, bark’ collexification: 1) in South America (14 languages from 11 families) and 2) in Melanesia (7 languages from 2 families). It turns out that Siberia also forms an area of similar polysemy.

Dybo (2013) notes the following feature of the designation of bark in the Turkic languages of this region: "In the languages of southern Siberia, we encountered <...> such a phenomenon: only the names of the bark of specific trees are used (due to economic importance): birch (birch bark) and larch; as a common name for bark, the same word functions as for the skin of a person and an animal (\**ayač tere-si*), and informants tend to believe that such an expression is rather used as a scientific (botanical) term, and not as a common word. In addition, there is a significant opposition of “bark on a tree” vs. “bark as a technological material” = “bark stripped from a tree” (“bark”), similar to the opposition “tree” vs. “wood” (Dybo 2013: 90).

Thus, in the Turkic languages there is a semantic shift or actualization of a broad meaning from PT \**teri* ‘skin, hide’ to ‘bark’ in Altay. *tere*, Khakas *azac mupeze*, literally ‘the skin of a tree’ (used with a clarifying word) (Dybo 2013:98, 470-471), Chelkan. *tere* (from the informant).

In Samoyed languages, a separate word exists for birch bark (Proto-Samoyed *\*təj* (Janhunen 1977: 145-146) < PU *\*tojV* ‘birch bark’ (UEW: 528), the usual designation of the bark is formed by reflexes of the Proto-Samoyed *\*käsä* ‘bark’ (Janhunen 1977: 65). But this meaning also appears in words that go back to PS *\*kopā* ‘skin, hide’: Selkup *коб, коби, кобэ, қобы* ‘skin, hide, bark’, *қоп, қоптэ, қоны, қоныг, қонэ* (Bykonya et al. 2005: 85, 91), *коб, коби, кобе* ‘skin, fur, bark’ (Bykonya et al. 2005: 44), *һоны* ‘hide, skin, bark, peel’ (LingvoDoc). Also, the meaning ‘bark’ is conveyed by combinations of the reflex *\*kopā* and a word denoting a tree or a type of tree, as in the Turkic languages: Selkup *рōтқорј* ‘tree bark’, *рөтқорј* ‘willow bark’, *қā қорј* ‘birch bark’ [Helimski 2007: 274], *нодқон, нодқон* ‘bark (tree)’ [Bykonya et al. 2005: 190], Tundra Nenets *ня’ хоба* (Tereshchenko 1965: 766), Forest Enets *ня коба* (Sorokina&Bolina 2009: 177). In the forest dialect of the Enets language, the meaning of ‘bark’ is fixed and the word *koba* itself is out of collocations, in the Yamal dialect of the Nenets language, it is also possible to use *хоба* ‘bark’ in the contexts like *This tree has hard / dark bark* (from the informant).

In the Tungusic languages, the semantic shift under consideration has not been widely spread and is noted only in three dialects of the Evenki language: Proto-Tungus-Manchu *\*xerekte* ‘skin’, (Even, Negidal, Oroch, Ulcha, Orok, Nanai) > Evenki *эрэктэ* ‘bark’ [TMS 2:467]. There is a separate word for birch bark: PTM *\*kibē* (EDAL: 676; TMS 1:420).

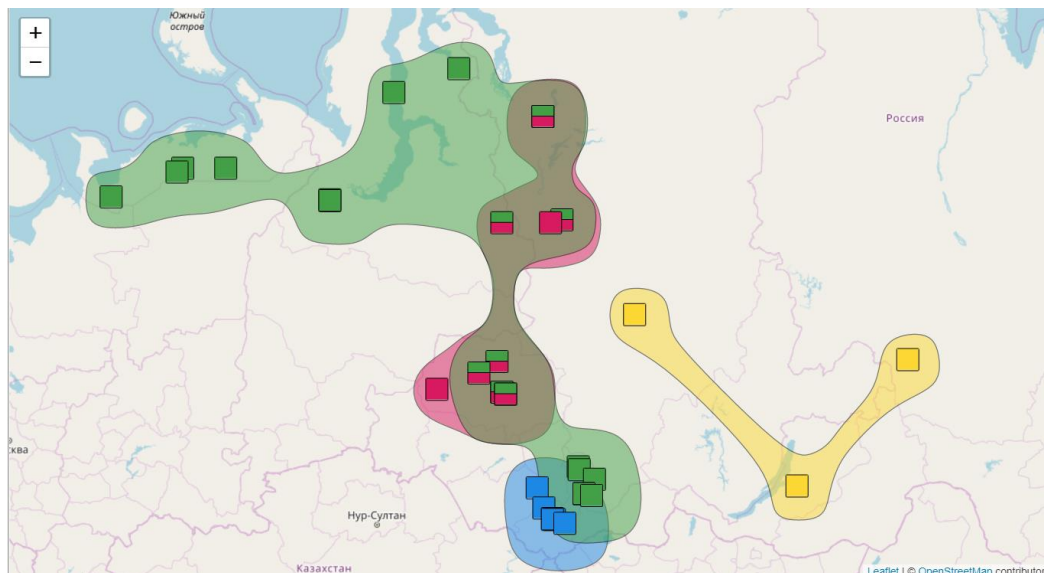


Figure 2. ‘skin, hide’ > ‘bark’

The Samoyed area of ‘skin’ and ‘bark’ (red) has two centers: in the Tomsk region in the south and along the Yenisei River in the north. The Turkic area (blue) is compactly located in the Altai region. Adjacent to these areas are languages (green), in which the meaning ‘tree bark’ is conveyed through collocations. Despite the fact that the addition of a clarifying word in the Turkic languages may be optional (it seems, as in Selkup), it seems reasonable to separately designate an area where different languages, related and unrelated, use a similar phrase to refer to ‘bark’. As can be seen from the size of the green area, collocations are used in a larger area than polysemy ‘skin, bark’. The Tungusic area (yellow) is formed by three disparate points in the Krasnoyarsk Krai, Buryatia and in the south of Yakutia and looks isolated compared to the Turkic-Samoyed area, but, on the other hand, these are three Evenki dialects of the southern group, compared with other Tungus-Manchurian languages and dialects close enough geographically to the center of distribution of the considered semantic shift.

### 3 ‘hair’, ‘wool’, ‘feather’

Protolanguage polysemy or syncretism in Samoyed and Tungusic languages, semantic shift in Turkic

Gast and Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2018) identify four areas of colexification ‘hair, feather’: 1) in Mesoamerica, 2) in South America, 3) in Central Africa, 4) in Southeast Asia and Papua New Guinea (Gast and Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2018: 58). Another large area of combination of these senses is the whole territory of Siberia. As it turned out, in Samoyed, Turkic and Tungus-Manchu languages there are different roots for the designation of the bird's cover feather (Proto-Samoyed \**tər*, Proto-Turkic \**tük*, Proto-Tungus-Manchu \**xin-ŋa*) and the flight feather (Proto-Samoyed \**tuəj*, reflexes of Proto-Turkic \**Kājnat*, Proto-Tungus-Manchu \**dekte-*). In the first instance, the meaning of ‘feather’ can be the realization of the broad meaning of ‘animal or bird hair’ and combined with ‘hair, wool’, and in the second instance it goes with ‘wing’. Separate maps are dedicated to these two groups of meanings.

Guided by archival data, Janhunen reconstructed for the Proto-Samoyed level the lexeme \**tər* with the main meaning ‘hair (on the body)’, also ‘feather’ according to the Nganasan, Nenets, Selkup and Kamas languages (Janhunen 1977: 149): Nganasan *tar*’, *tar*, Tundra Nenets *tar*’’, Forest Nenets *tar*’, Selkup. *tar*. In contemporary dictionaries, the polysemy ‘hair /wool, feather’ is found in the Nenets, Selkup and Kamas languages.

In the Turkic languages, the semantic shift ‘hair’ > ‘feather’ is reconstructed: Proto-Turkic \**tük* ‘bodily hair’ (> ‘wool’, ‘feather’, etc.). "The original meaning, apparently, is ‘bodily hair’, including undercoat in animals (as opposed to \**juŋ* ‘wool (for example, trimmed for spinning) and fluff of birds’) (Dybo 2013: 298).

In the Tungus-Manchu languages, the polysemy ‘hair, feather’ is widespread, going back to the protolanguage polysemy or syncretism: Proto-Tungus-Manchu \**xin-ŋa*- ‘hair, fluff, wool’ (Evenki, Even, Negidal, Ulcha, Orok, Nanai, Oroch, Udeghe), ‘feather, fluff (of birds)’ (Evenki, Even, Orok, Manchu.) (TMS 1:317).

The Samoyed area (red) occupies almost the entire territory of the distribution of Samoyed languages, although not all languages and dialects are included in it: in the north from the Arkhangelsk region (Nenets language) to the Taimyr Peninsula (Nganasan), in the south to the Tomsk region (Selkup language) and the Krasnoyarsk Krai (the extinct Kamas language). The Turkic area (blue) appears as a strip stretching from the north of Eastern Siberia (Yakut) to Southern Siberia (Tofalar, Chalkan, Altay), small compact areas in the Volga region (Chuvash language) and the Black Sea region (Karaim, Gagauz) are also noted. The Tungus area (yellow) occupies a particularly large area in the northeast of China, the Far East and Eastern Siberia, overlaps with the Yakut area in Yakutia and the Samoyed area in the Tomsk region, on the territory of the distribution of the Selkup language. In the south, the Samoyed area borders with the Turkic Sayan languages in the Krasnoyarsk Krai. Thus, two centers of intersection of the areas are identified — the South of Siberia (Tomsk region, Krasnoyarsk Territory — Samoyed, Turkic and Tungusic languages) and Eastern Siberia (Yakut and Evenki languages).

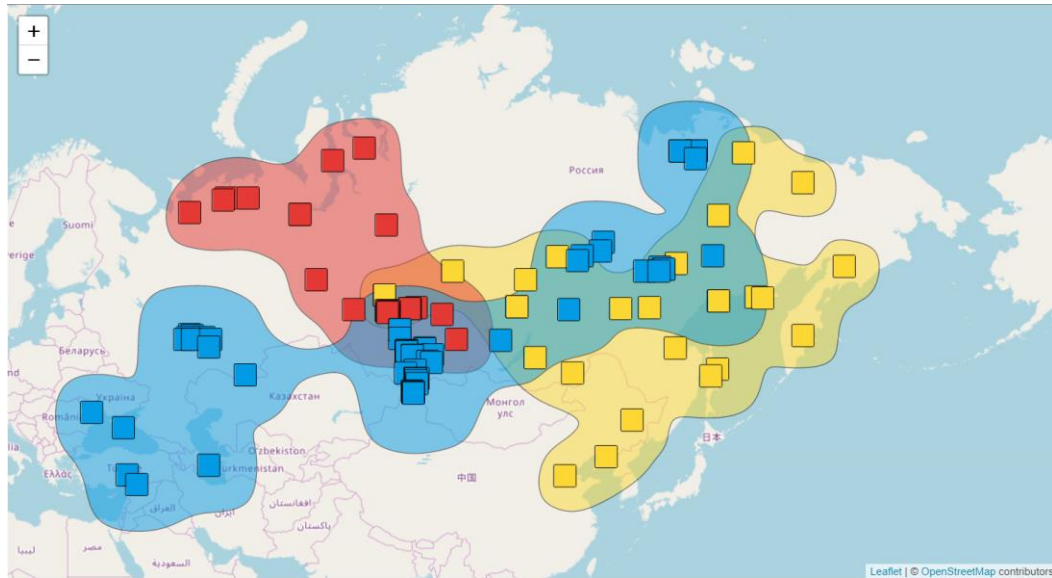


Figure 3. ‘hair’, ‘wool’, ‘feather’

## 4 ‘feather’, ‘wing’

protolanguage polysemy or syncretism in the Tungusic languages, as well as in Mator and Selkup

The differentiation of these senses can be difficult if the bird's flight feather is implied. Since it was not possible to verify these meanings by context in the materials involved in the study, in this map we will rely on dictionary definitions, which, of course, require further verification.

In Samoyed languages Janhunen reconstructs the protolanguage polysemy: Proto-Samoyed *\*tuaj* ‘feather, wing’ (Janhunen 1977: 166), but the meanings of each given word are not specified. In modern dictionaries, the reflexes of this proto-form that have polysemy are found only in Mator and Selkup, so it is unknown whether it is possible to project this polysemy to the Proto-Samoyed level: mator. *my* ‘feather’, *myda* ‘wing’ (Helimski 1997: 367), Selkup. *tū* ‘feather, wing (wing plumage), fin, broom from a bird's wing’ [Helimski 2007: 390]. In the Nganasan language, the meanings ‘wing’, ‘arrow plumage’ are fixed, but the latter, strictly speaking, is not identical to the meaning of ‘bird feather’, therefore the Nganasan language is not marked on the map: *чyo* ‘wing’ [Kosterkina et al. 2001: 217], *чjə* ‘wing’, ‘arrow plumage’ [Helimski Nganasan Dictionary]. In the Nenets and Enets languages only ‘wing’ is attested: Tundra Nenets *mo* (Tereshchenko 1965: 664), Forest Nenets *mo* (Barmich, Vallo 2002: 127), Tundra Enets *tua* (Helimski Enets Dictionary), Forest Enets *mo* (Sorokina, Bolina 2009: 4380). In other dialects of Selkup there is a polysemy ‘wing, fin, wig (of a coniferous tree)’, but there is no ‘feather’: Selkup *my* (Bykonya et al. 2005: 242).

In the Turkic languages, the semantic shift ‘wing’ > ‘feather’ is found in the words which are reflexes of Proto-Turkic *\*Kājnat* ‘wing’. Polysemy is attested in Kumyk. *qanat* ‘feather’, ‘wing’ (Dybo 2013: 260; ESTYA 1997: 252-253), Altay *qanat* ‘wing, Bashkir. *канат* ‘feather’, ‘wing’ (LingvoDoc). The semantic evolution of ‘wing’ > ‘feather’ is assumed for Tatar *канат* ‘feather’, Tubalar *qanat* ‘feather, feathers’ Telengit. *канат* ‘feather’ (LingvoDoc).

In the Tungusic languages, the protolanguage polysemy ‘feather, wing’ is reconstructed: Proto-Tungus-Manchu \**dekte-* (Evenki, Even, Manchu, Nanay, Oroch, Udeghe) [TMS 1: 231].

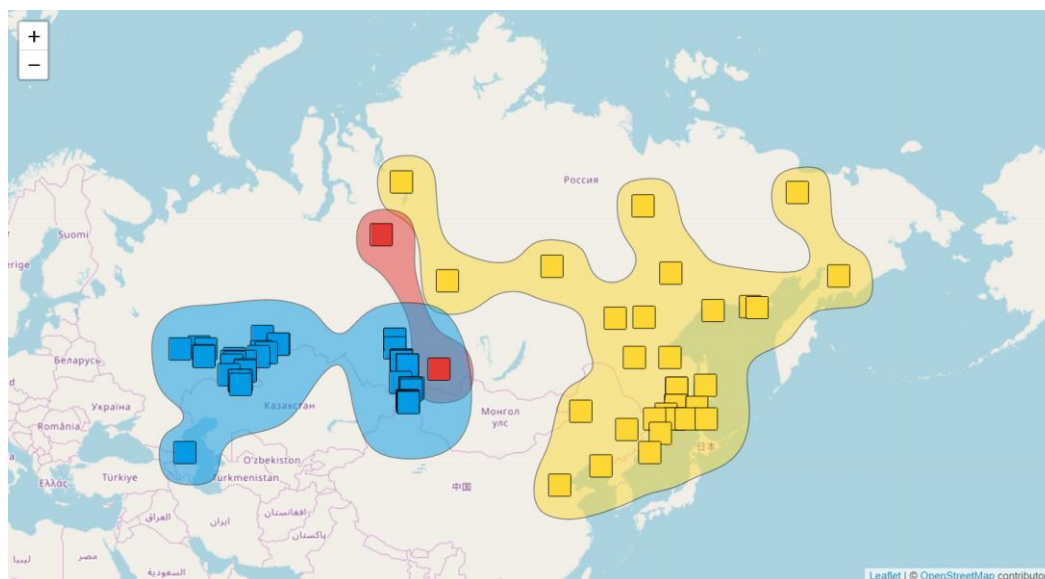


Figure 4. ‘wing’, ‘feather’

The Samoyed area (red) represents spots that are distant from each other — on the river Taz in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug and on the Vasyugan River in the Tomsk Region (Selkup language), as well as in the south of the Krasnoyarsk Krai (the extinct Mator language). In the Turkic languages (blue), polysemy and the semantic shift ‘wing’ > ‘feather’ are found only in the Kumyk language in the North Caucasus, in the Bashkir language in the Volga region and Altai dialects in Southern Siberia. The Tungus area (yellow) occupies a large territory in the Far East (Kamchatka Krai, Primorye) and the east of Yakutia, and also covers the north of China (Solon and Manchu languages) and the north of the Krasnoyarsk Territory (the northern dialect of the Evenki language).

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

Having observed the semantic patterns in the words connected with outer shells of live objects, we noted that two instances of polysemy are quite widespread and appear to be language universals (‘skin, hide’ and ‘hair, wool, feather’), while the rest two cases are more local (‘skin, bark’ and ‘feather, wing’). No apparent instances of contact-induced change are registered within this scope. Further papers in this series will also look at words for describing earth, humans and qualities.



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