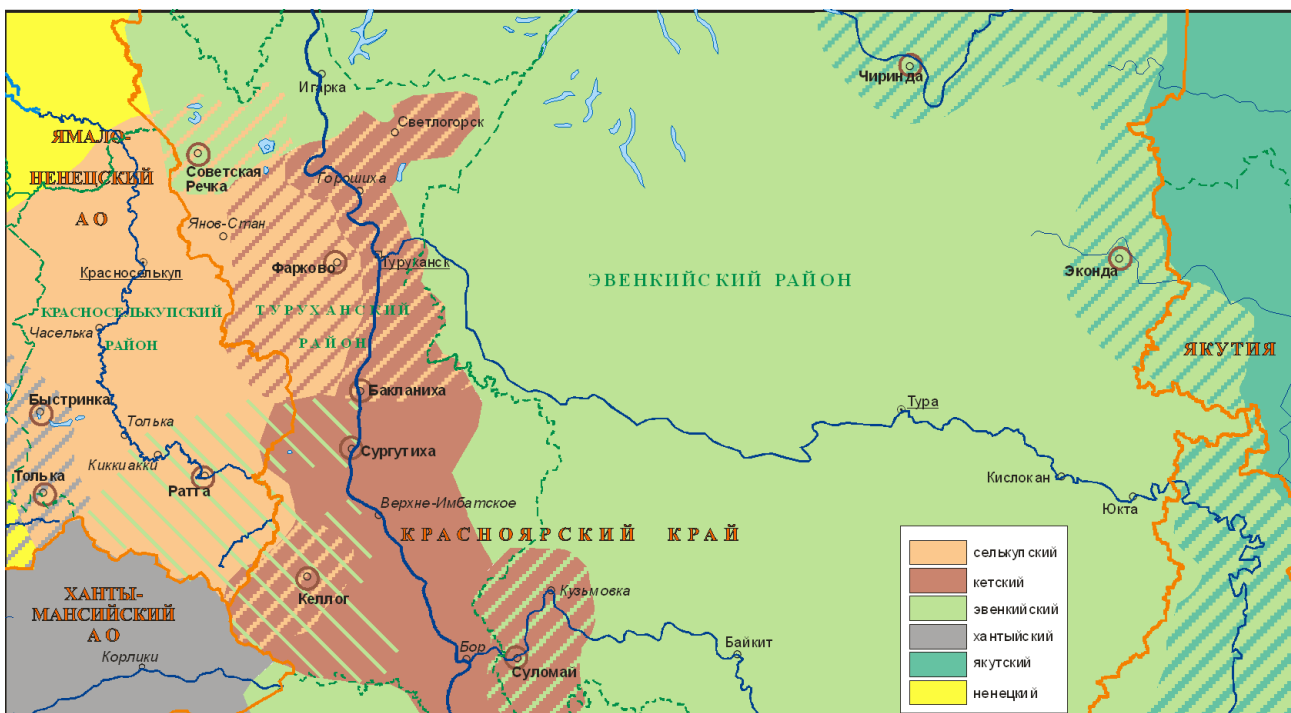


Language contacts of the Northern Selkups and some consequences of these contacts

The ancestors of the Northern Selkups moved to the Taz basin from the Middle Ob' basin in the second part of the 17th century, after the Russians had come to Western Siberia. The Upper and Middle Taz was populated by the Enets by that time, and the Selkup newcomers had to fight for the territory and took it over, ousting or assimilating the previous settlers. In the 18th century new Selkup groups joined their fellow-tribesmen at the Taz and moved on to the Turukhan, thus penetrating into the Middle Yenisei basin. Having conquered their 'new motherland' they found themselves contacting with the Vakh Khanty in the south, the Forest Nenets in the west, the Tundra Nenets (Yurak) (and probably also the remnants of the Forest Enets) in the north and the Kets in the east. By the end of the 17th century the Sym Evenkis are supposed to come to the Upper Taz and settled down among the Selkups, and by the end of the 19th century the Lower Tunguska Evenkis came to the Upper Turukhan. At about the same time some Vakh Khanty families moved to the Upper Tolka, the left tributary of the Taz. Thus, the Northern Selkup territory appeared to be multiethnic. Selkup contacts with various ethnic groups were of different kinds: Kets, Khantys and Evenkis were their common marriages partners and sometimes their allies; Forest and Tundra Nenets were regarded rather as enemies than as partners, which is reflected in plenty of Selkup warrior legends; Selkup-Nenets marriages up to recently were most rare. Bi- or multilingualism was common for the Selkup territory (Khanty-Selkup at the Upper Tolka, Selkup-Ket at the Yelogui and the Low Kureika, Ket-Selkup at the Turukhan, Evenki-Selkup at the Upper Taz, Evenki-Ket-Selkup in the watershed between the Upper Taz and the Middle Yenisei basins, Selkup-Evenki at the Upper-Turukhan, Nenets-Selkup and Selkup-Nenets at the Middle Taz), but as far as we can trace the development of the language situations in local communities of the territory (and we can trace them back up to the beginning of the 20th century, at least), not all of them were balanced (or equal). As a result, the communities demonstrate various kinds of completed language shift: Vakh Khantys shifted to Selkup at the Upper Tolka, Evenkis shifted to Selkup at the Upper Taz and Selkups shifted to Evenki at the Upper Turukhan, Kets shifted to Selkup at the Turukhan and Selkups shifted to Ket at the Low Kureika.

In the paper I am going to present the development of these shifts since the beginning of the previous century and to analyze the factors that caused them. To reconstruct the evolution of the language situations in the communities the following sources are used: 1) data of the population censuses; 2) publications describing or just touching upon the situation in the communities in different periods; 3) archival data; 4) the field data of a series of sociolinguistic surveys of the Northern Selkup territory lead during the two last decades and containing a collection of linguistic biographies of autochthonous residents of the surveyed communities; 5) life-stories of the communities members.



Map 1. Language contacts of the Northern Selkups (the map is compiled by Yury Koryakov)

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