



LANGUAGES OF TAJMYR IN CONTACT: MULTILINGUALISM PATTERNS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

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PROJECTS BEYOND THIS STUDY

- ‘Dynamics of language contact in the circumpolar region’
 - funded by Russian Science Foundation (2017-2019)
- ‘Multilingualism in Siberia’
 - funded by EURIAS at Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, University of Helsinki (starting in September 2018)





OVERVIEW

The Tajmyr peninsula is home to five indigenous languages:

- Tundra Nenets (Northern Samoyedic < Uralic),
- Forest and Tundra Enets (Northern Samoyedic < Uralic),
- Nganasan (Northern Samoyedic < Uralic),
- Dolgan (Turkic < Altaic),
- Evenki (Tungusic < Altaic).

From the 19th century on: Russian.

CENTRAL QUESTIONS

To what extent were the indigenous languages used **outside** their ethnic communities?

Which were the patterns of the **multilingualism**?

- Who spoke which language to whom and when (Fishman 1965)?

BACKGROUND OF THIS STUDY

A part of a bigger study of languages of the area (grammatical description, corpus creation, language contact):

with Valentin Gusev, Andrey Shluinsky, Maria Amelina (Institute of Linguistics)

Contributes to the typology of indigenous/small-scale multilingualism across the world (e.g. Campbell & Grandona 2010, Dobrushina 2013, Foley 2005, François 2012, Lüpke 2017, Singer & Harris 2016)

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

- **Geography**

- censuses, ethnographic and linguistic publications (Khanina & Koryakov 2018)
- own extensive field data (2005-2017)

- **Multilingualism**

...

2ND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY - BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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Dolgan: Turkic (with Tungusic and NS)



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Tundra Nenets: Northern Samoyedic

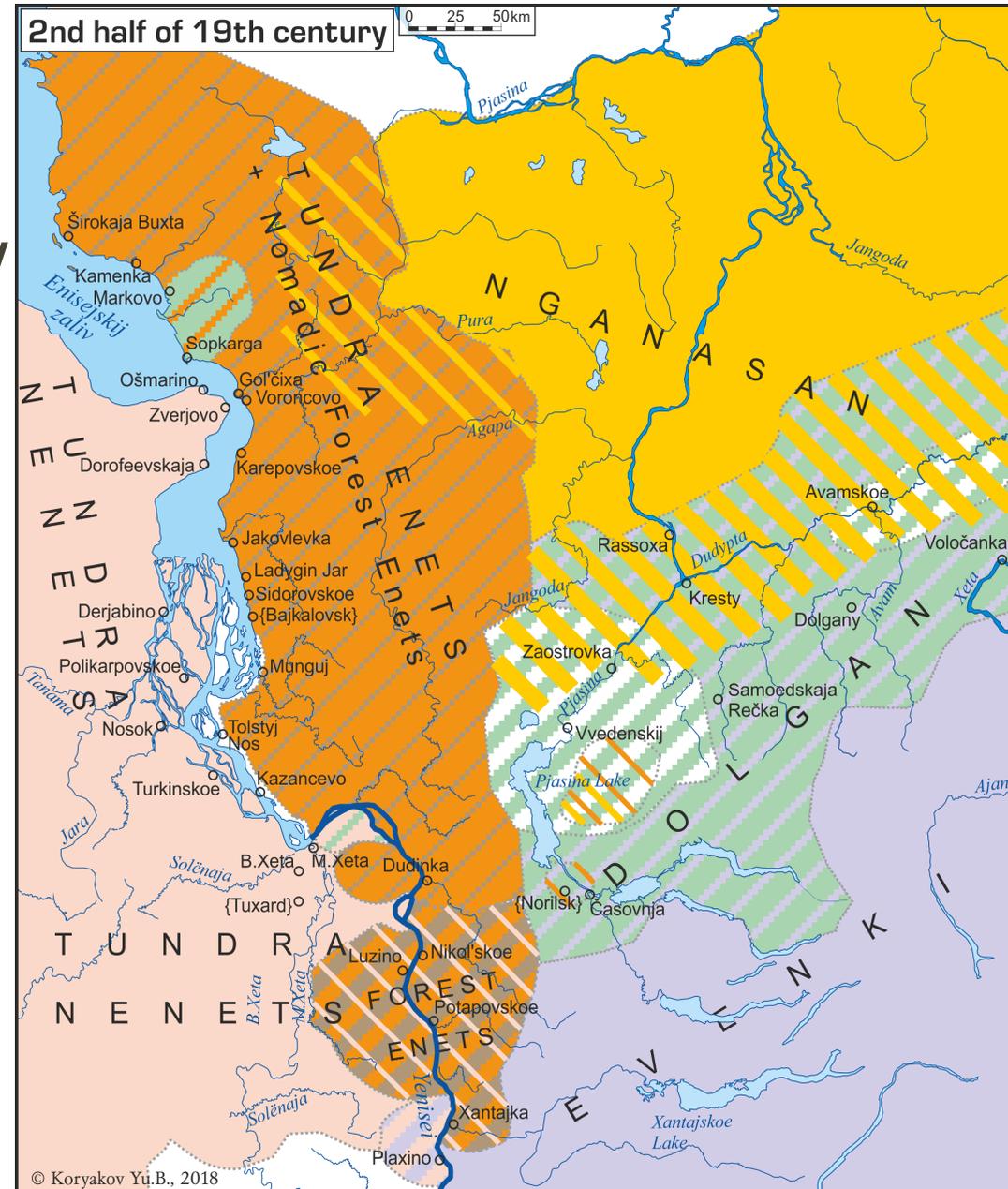
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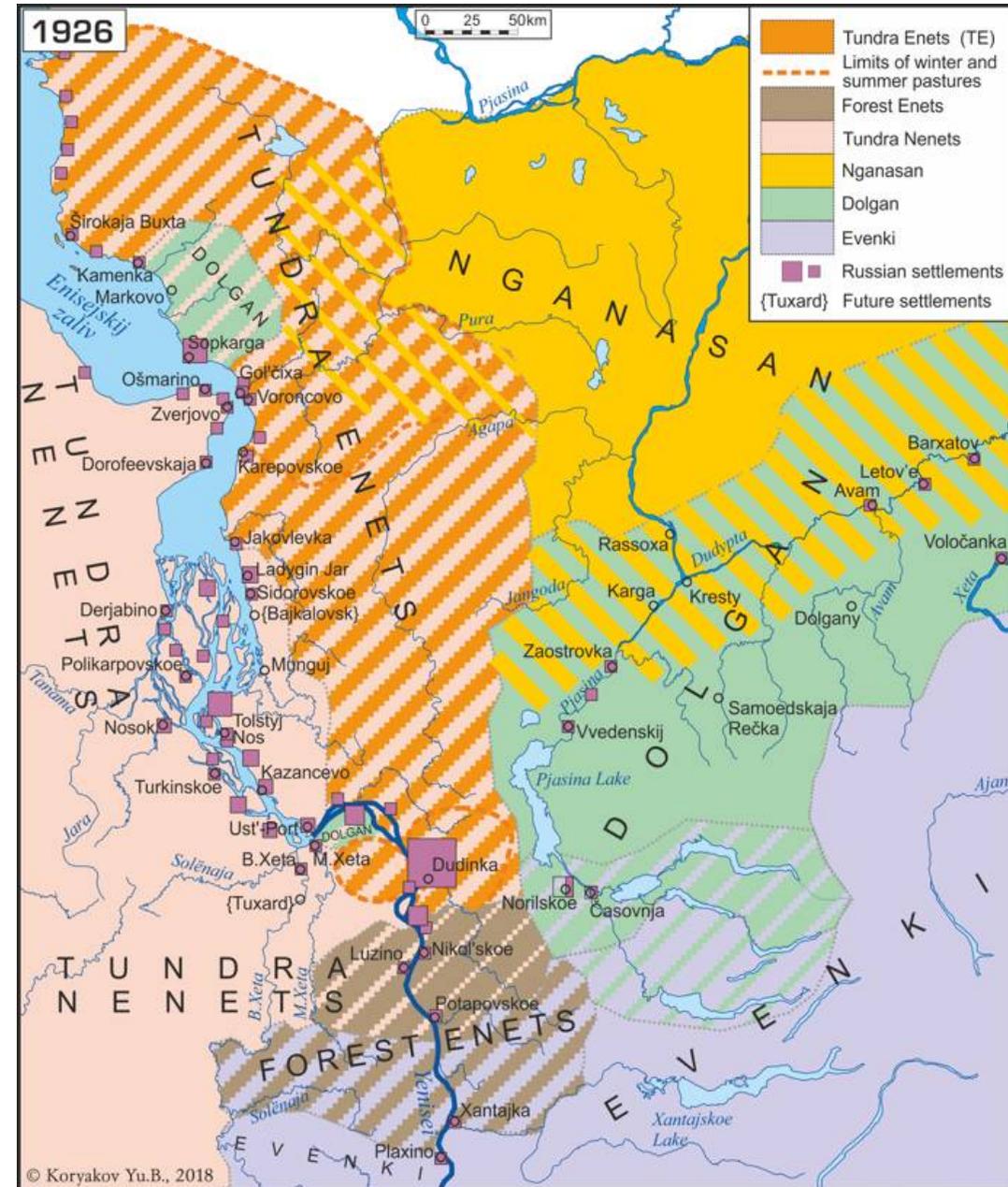
Evenki: Tungusic



1926

Changes in geography:

- **The Tundra Nenets -> to the east**
- **The Russians linguistically assimilated by the Dolgans**
- The nomadic FE linguistically assimilated by the TE
- The TE do not go to the south any more
- More FE – Evenki contacts

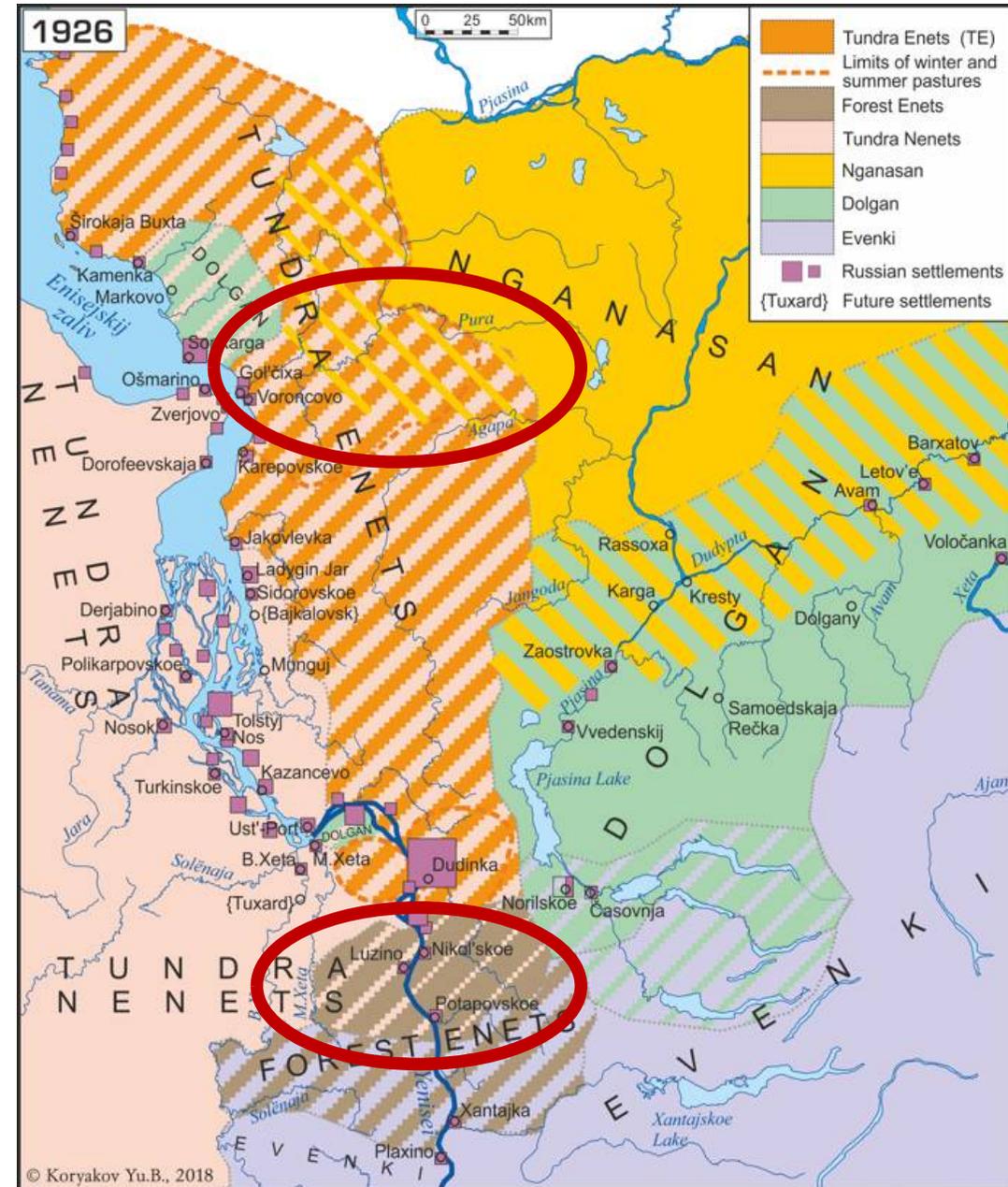


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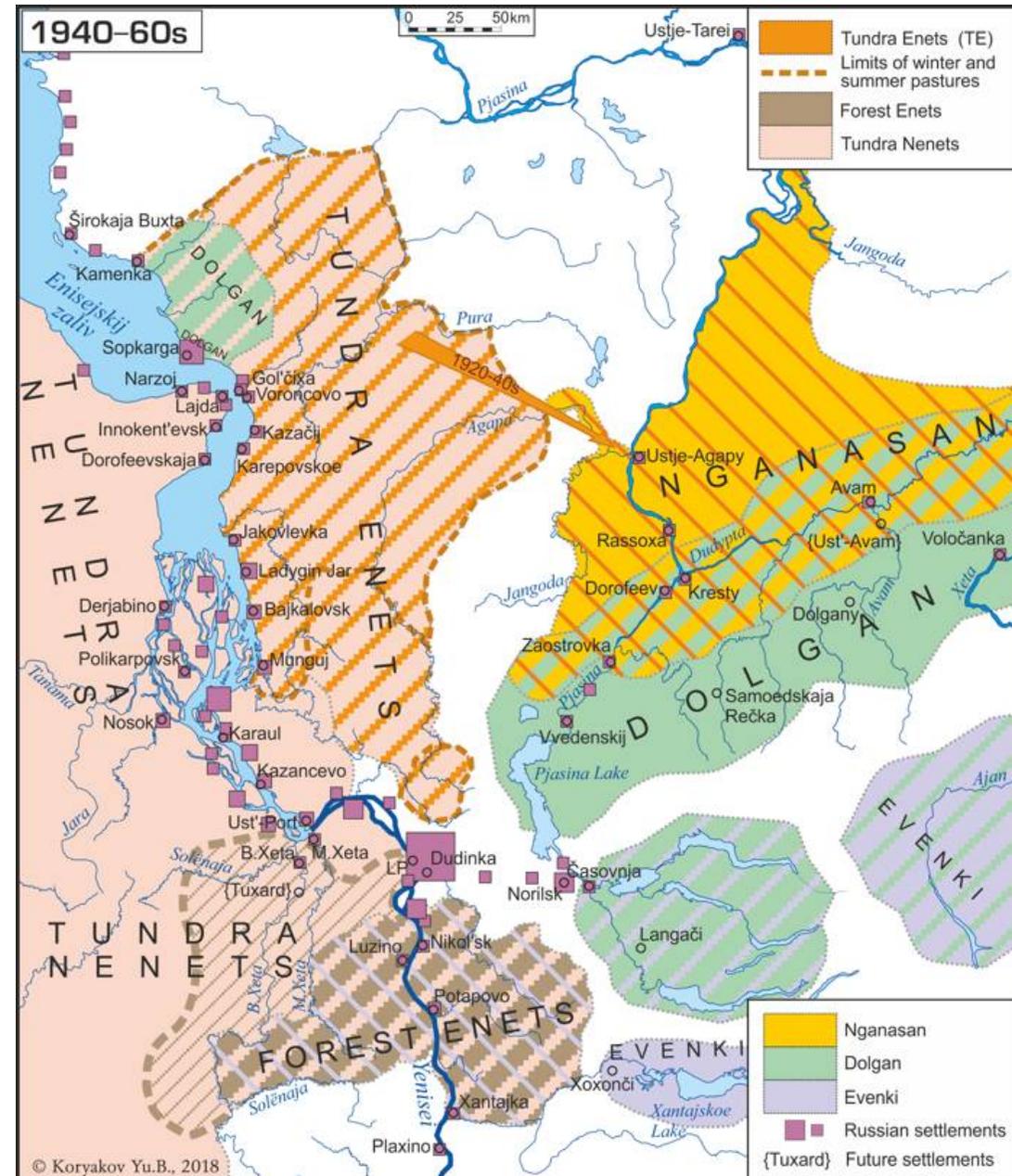
Two contact zones



1940-1960

Soviet policies implemented:

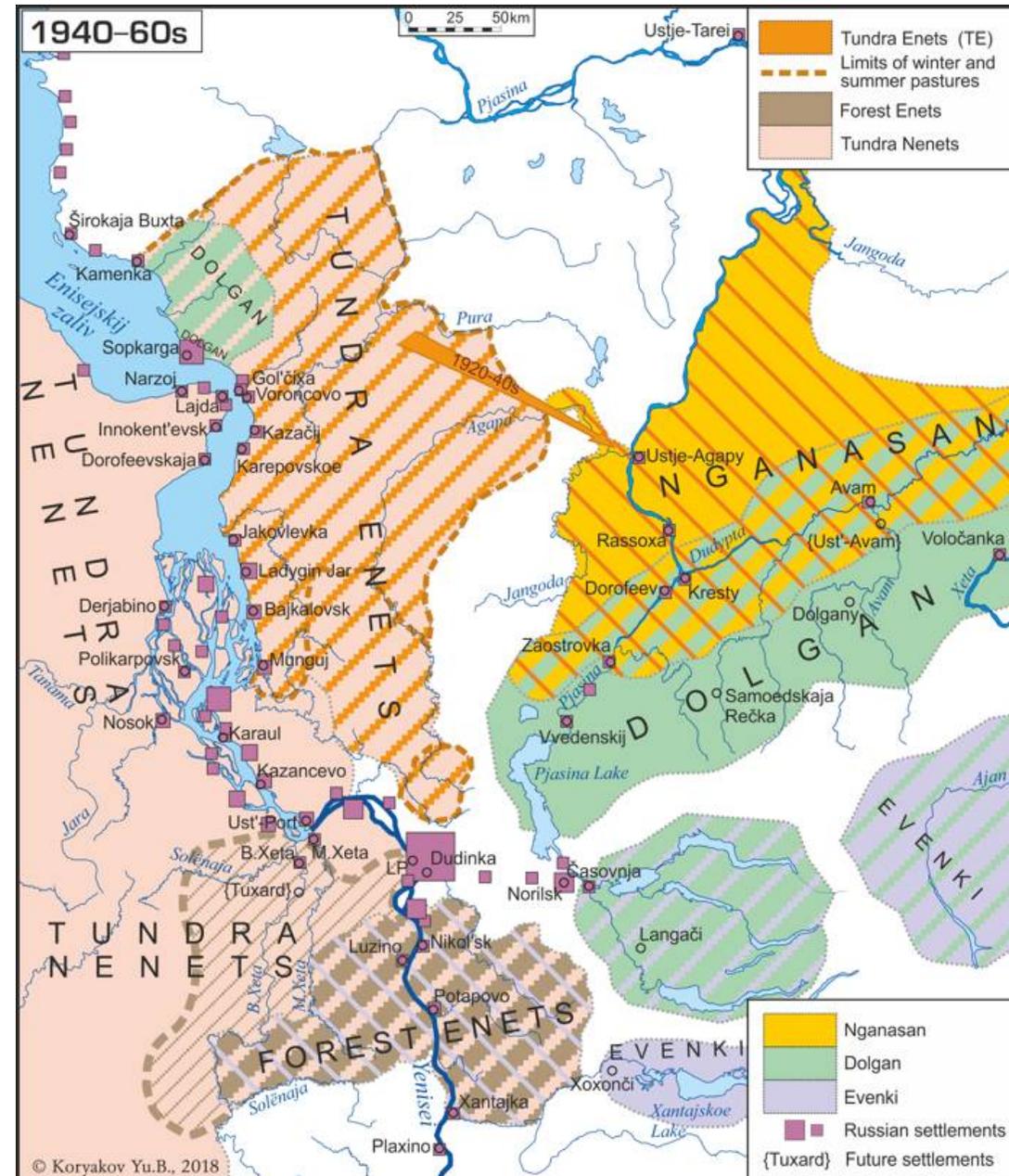
- Collective farms (1930s)
- Agglomeration of smaller villages (1950)
- Forced change: nomadic -> settled (1960)



1940-1960

Changes in geography:

- All indigenous territories squeeze
- **The Tundra Nenets numerically outgrow the TE and now equal to the FE**
- **A migration of a significant part of the TE to the Nganasans**
- The FE expand to the east
- The Evenki diminish significantly

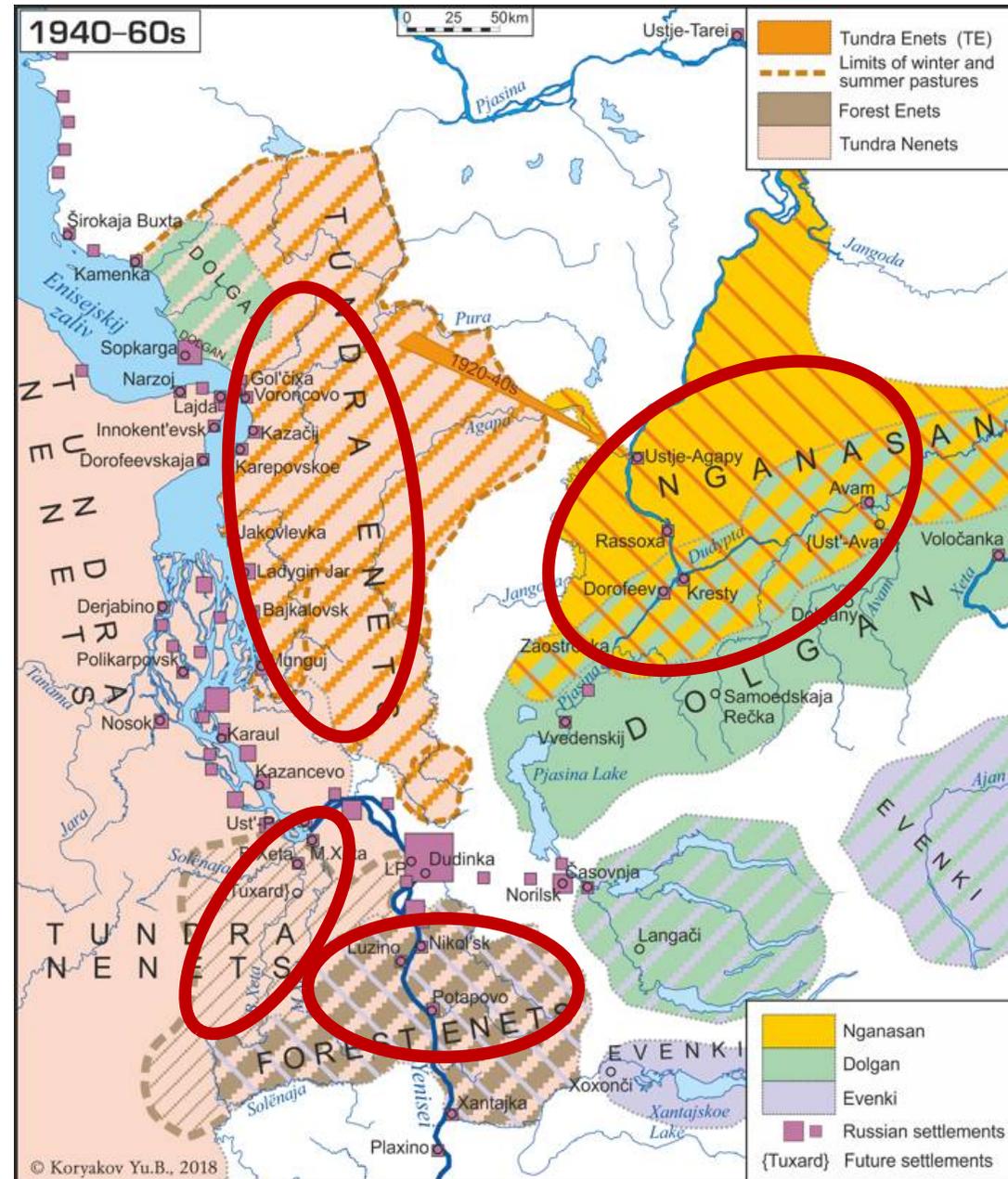


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Four contact zones



DATA

- Geography

- ...

- Multilingualism

- a series of sociolinguistic interviews with Tajmyrian elders aimed at reconstruction of multilingual practices of their parents and grandparents:
 - data on multilingualism of the Enets and their neighbors in the 1930s – 1970s.
- Khanina, Olesya & Miriam Meyerhoff (2018) A case-study in historical sociolinguistics beyond Europe: reconstructing patterns of multilingualism of a language community in Siberia. *Journal of Historical Sociolinguistics* 4(2), 1-39.
 - interethnic communication of the Enets for the 2nd half of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century;

DATA: THE INTERVIEWS

- 35 extended semi-structured interviews in different locations (2017);
- all interviewees were born before the 1970s,
(and most of them – before the 1960s, with some individuals born in the 1920s-1930s).
- the interviews aimed to reconstruct biographies of the respondents' older relatives (parents, grandparents, and their siblings)
with particular attention to linguistic repertoires, social networks, typical interlocutors in each language, and migrations within Tajmyr.

-> a data bank of individual profiles for > 100 individuals (born 1900s-1940s)

! The numbers seem relatively small, but this is a very scarcely populated area!

E.g. 1960s: ca. 400 people in the NW contact area, ca. 300 people in the NE contact area, etc.

GENERAL ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES

- small numbers
- hunting, fishing, and small-scale reindeer herding (for transport)
- occasionally large-scale reindeer herding (Tundra Nenets, some Tundra Enets)
- nomadic
- seasonal migrations for hundreds of kilometers
- more general NE migrations within the last 300 years (i.e. no native territories per se)
- friendly attitudes among NSamoyedic peoples vs. limited interaction with the others
 - mixed marriages > neighborhood > guest visits
- today, highly endangered (from 20 to 500 speakers today, exception TN)

SOME NOTES ON LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN THE AREA

- languages were not perceived symbolically/emblematically in any sense: purely functional attitude (e.g. (not) speaking a language does not give you any extra social weight; e.g. a language shift could happen in just one generation)
- ethnic identities are essentialist (not dual or indexal), but they could be changed: ethnic identity of ego is NOT the ethnic identity of his father/mother (by birth), but rather the ethnic identity of a group that he generally associates himself/herself with (e.g. changes of ethnic identities within a lifetime)
- positive attitude to all languages and to multilingualism in general: it is normal to speak/understand the language of your neighbours
- high levels of linguistic tolerance: no negative attitudes reported

1940-1960

Four contact zones

NW:

ethn.: TN > TE > Do

ling.: TE+TN, ?TN > TE+Ng+TN

NE:

ethn.: Ng > Do > TE > TN

ling.: Ng > Ng+(TE) > Ng+(TE)+(TN), Ng+Do

SE:

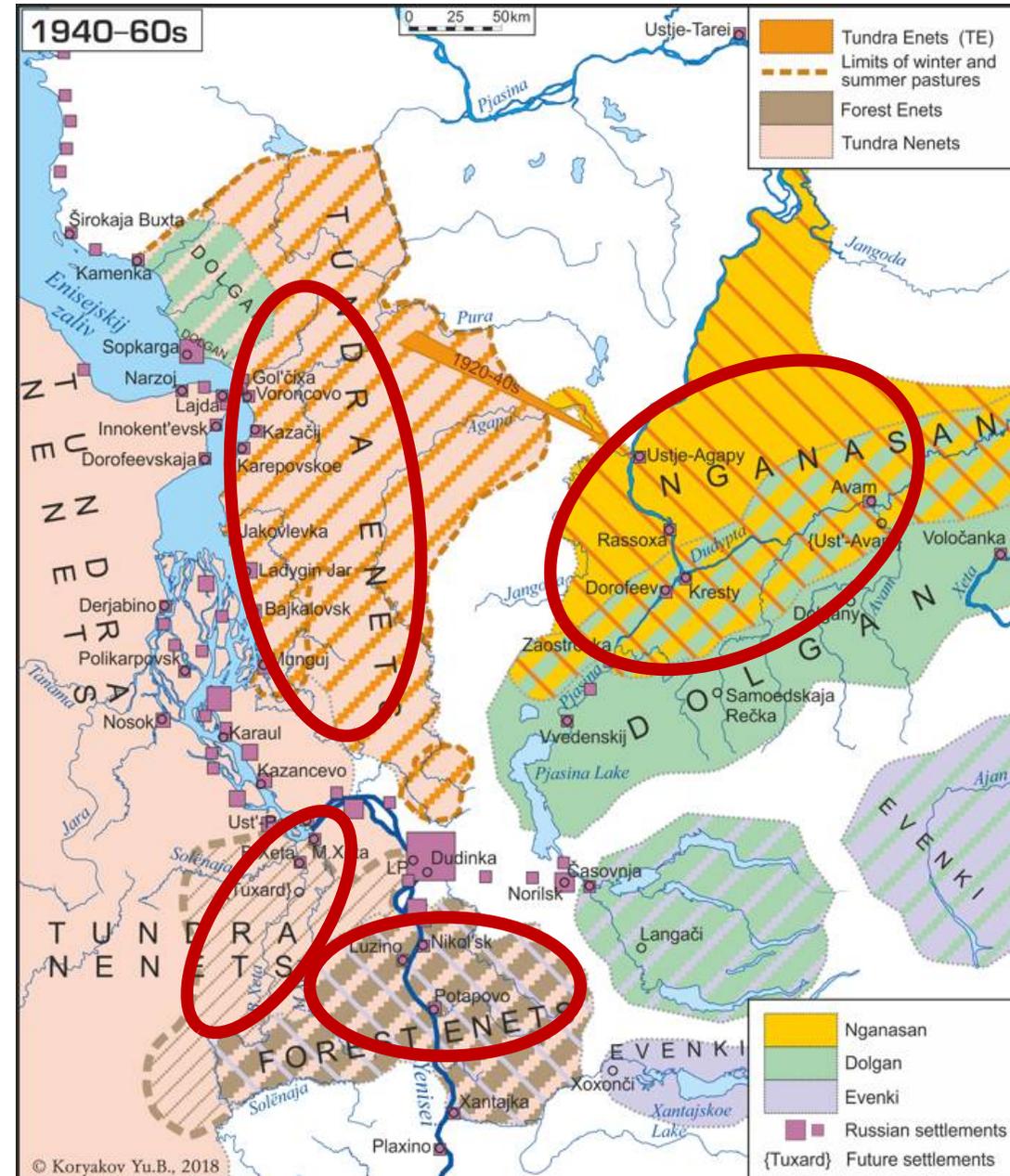
ethn.: FE > TN > Ev

ling.: FE+(TN) > FE+(TN)

SW:

ethn.: TN > FE

ling.: TN > TN+(FE)



PATTERNS OF MULTILINGUALISM: SUMMARY

- (almost) everyone speaks the language whose speakers are **the most numerous in the area**
- most people at least understand all other languages spoken in the area
- on the level of individuals: a range of combinations of active and passive bilingualism; no lingua francas before Russian/Russian-based pidgin
- individuals who marry a speaker of the majority language would use the language of their spouse with the spouse and their children, and their native language with other adults speaking their native language and during guest visits
- as numbers change due to waves of migrations, patterns of multilingualism change too

RESULTS

- where which languages were spoken, and what the contact areas were (with Yuri Koryakov)
- sets of possible individual linguistic repertoires for each contact zone
- language ideologies of the area: similar for all contact zones
- dynamics behind changes in patterns of multilingualism: similar for all contact zones



THANK YOU!

