

# Enets in space and time: a case study in linguistic geography<sup>1</sup>

*Olesya Khanina (Moscow) – Yuri Koryakov (Moscow) –  
Andrey Shluinsky (Moscow)*

**Abstract:** Through a series of linguistic maps based on published ethnographic data and our fieldwork accounts, we reconstruct the territories in which Forest and Tundra Enets (Samoyedic) has been spoken from the 17<sup>th</sup> century till today. Text accompanying the maps comments on details of migrations of the two ethnic groups and on language contact with their neighbors, including descriptions of several assimilation processes that the Enets have been involved with. The gradual language endangerment process is analyzed in its geographic dimension.

**Key words:** Forest Enets, Tundra Enets, linguistic maps, linguistic geography, ethno-linguistic history, traditional territories

## 1. Introduction

This paper gives an overview of the territories where the two Enets dialects, Forest and Tundra, have been spoken in the last 350 years. The native territories of the two ethnic groups have been constantly changing since the start of colonization of Northern Siberia by the Russian Empire in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and mapping these changes contributes to the linguistic and ethnographic history of the Enets, as well as to the language contact studies of the area. Available ethnographic and linguistic data have been collected, verified, and geographically tagged to create a series of linguistic maps showing the territories of the Enets-speaking people and their linguistic neighbors. For the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the published sources have been complemented by the authors' extensive field data, collected in 2005–2017 on the Tajmyr peninsula.

Up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnic Enets coincided almost unambiguously with Enets speakers, while in the last 100 years the situation has changed, with the Enets shifting to Tundra Nenets, Nganasan, and most of all, to Russian. This study, being compiled by linguists, tracks the territories where the Enets language has been spoken, leaving aside the geographic distribution of the ethnic Enets in the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (see, e.g., Krivonogov 2007 for a description of the ethnic Enets in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century).

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The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 provides basic facts about the Enets and their language(s), Section 3 presents data used for the study, Sections 4–6 present the maps themselves and commentaries to them, and Section 7 draws conclusions.

## 2. The Enets and their language

Enets is a highly endangered Northern Samoyedic language spoken in the Tajmyr peninsula, Russia. There are two dialects of Enets – Forest Enets (also called Baj, Pe-Baj) and Tundra Enets (also called Somatu, Maddu); they are mutually intelligible, but have a number of clear distinctions in lexicon, phonology, and morphology. Members of the two language communities do not consider themselves as belonging to one ethnic group. Some linguists consider Forest Enets and Tundra Enets to be separate languages (e.g. Janhunen 2009, Salminen 1997, 2007, Siegl 2013), but a stance in the dialect vs. language debate does not influence the contents of this paper in any respect.

Currently, Forest Enets has ca. 10 speakers in the village of Potapovo, ca. 10 speakers in the town of Dudinka, and some isolated speakers in other settlements of Tajmyr. Tundra Enets has ca. 5 speakers in the village of Voroncovo, ca. 10 speakers nomading together with speakers of Tundra Nenets in the Tuxard tundra, and some isolated speakers in other settlements of Tajmyr; there used to be some Tundra Enets in the Avam tundra (villages of Ust'-Avam and Voločanka), but the last active speakers passed away by the 2000s. Neither of the two dialects is used on an everyday basis at this point. All the modern Enets speakers are over 50 years old and bilingual in Russian, or trilingual in Russian and Tundra Nenets.

As for the ethnic Enets, the latest censuses (1989, 2002, 2010), as well as (Krivonogov 2007) give a stable number of 200–250 people for the two groups together, and this corresponds to our fieldwork estimates (see also Khanina & Shluinsky 2016 for more details). Still, exact reliable numbers are impossible, because the vast majority of the modern Enets (either Enets speakers or even more so younger people who do not speak Enets) have a mixed ethnic background.

## 3. Data behind the maps

The maps in this paper are based, first, on published data, and second, on field data collected by the authors in 2005–2017.

Published data belong to one of the two types: publications of primary census data and works of anthropologists/ethnographers.

We have used records from the following three censuses: the first all-Russian census of 1897 (Patkanov 1912), the first Soviet census of 1926 (Materialy 1928), and the 2010 census (Mikrodannye 2010). The reasons for not using other censuses' data, i.e. after 1926 and before 2010, were, first, the lack of a

distinction between the Enets and the Nenets common for all censuses after 1926 and before 1989<sup>2</sup>, when the Enets reappeared in the official statistics as a separate ethnic group with their own language, and second, the unavailability of detailed settlement-by-settlement data for the 1989 and 2002 censuses. Indeed, general numbers of the Enets and Enets-speakers cannot be used for creating maps per se, but only in conjunction with comprehensive data for each settlement: we have managed to obtain this kind of data only for the 1897, 1926, and 2010 censuses. It is noteworthy that the 1897 census and the 1926 census counted the Forest Enets and the Tundra Enets separately, and for 2010 we have our own field data to complement the census statistics that does not differentiate between the Forest Enets and the Tundra Enets.

The works of anthropologists/ethnographers used for this study were, in turn, based on

- (a) tribute records (*jasačnye knigi*) of the 17<sup>th</sup> century: (Dolgix 1960; 1970),
- (b) archival documents belonging to the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries: (Vasil'ev 1979; 1982; Vasil'ev, Simčenko 1963; Dolgix 1970),
- (c) primary data of the 1897 and 1926 censuses, including Boris Dolgix's own field data collected while he served as a census enumerator in 1926: (Vasil'ev 1985; Dolgix 1946; 1962b; 1963; 1970; Kvašnin 2009),
- (d) anthropologists/ethnographers' own field data: (Vasil'ev, Tugolukov 1960; Vasil'ev 1963; 1970; 1985; Vasil'ev, Simčenko 1963; Dolgix 1949; Ostrovskix 1929),

Each map is accompanied by a list of references that were used to create it.

The field data collected by the authors (Olesya Khanina & Andrey Shluinsky) consist of transcribed semi-directed sociolinguistic interviews about the past in Russian, of transcribed narratives in Forest or Tundra Enets, and of resumé of informal discussions we had with our consultants while in the field.

The final remark concerns conventions valid for all maps in this paper. Only areas where Forest or Tundra Enets was/is spoken are shown on the maps. Thereabouts of speakers of other languages, without any Enets admixture, are marked only by language names in all capitals. More populated settlements existing at each period are shown on the maps; besides, some prominent former (in square brackets) or future (in curly brackets) settlements are shown on some maps to ease their comparison for a reader. All toponyms (except for those having a conventional name in English, i.e. Yenisei and Norilsk), as well as Russian language references, are transliterated with an academic transliteration of Cyrillic.

<sup>2</sup> These censuses counted the Forest Nenets, the Tundra Nenets, the Forest Enets, and the Tundra Enets as 'Nenets', disregarding any differences that respondents could have provided.

#### 4. The Enets-speaking people in the Russian Empire

From the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century till the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the area where Enets was spoken shifted gradually further north and east, more so for Forest Enets and less so for Tundra Enets. These changes of the native territories were due, first, to the expansion of the Tundra Nenets, who progressed along the Arctic sea further east during this period, and second, to the steady migration of more southern peoples, namely the Selkups, the Khantys, and the Kets, to the north-east of their original territories. The latter peoples were forced to migrate by Russian colonization: occupation of their original territories by Russian settlements and towns (see, among others, Fosyth 1992 or Dolgix 1961 for more details). However, all movement of the Enets before the Soviet times was very slow and gradual; besides, this always originated in the Enets communities themselves and was never imposed by external forces, e.g. the tsarist administration.

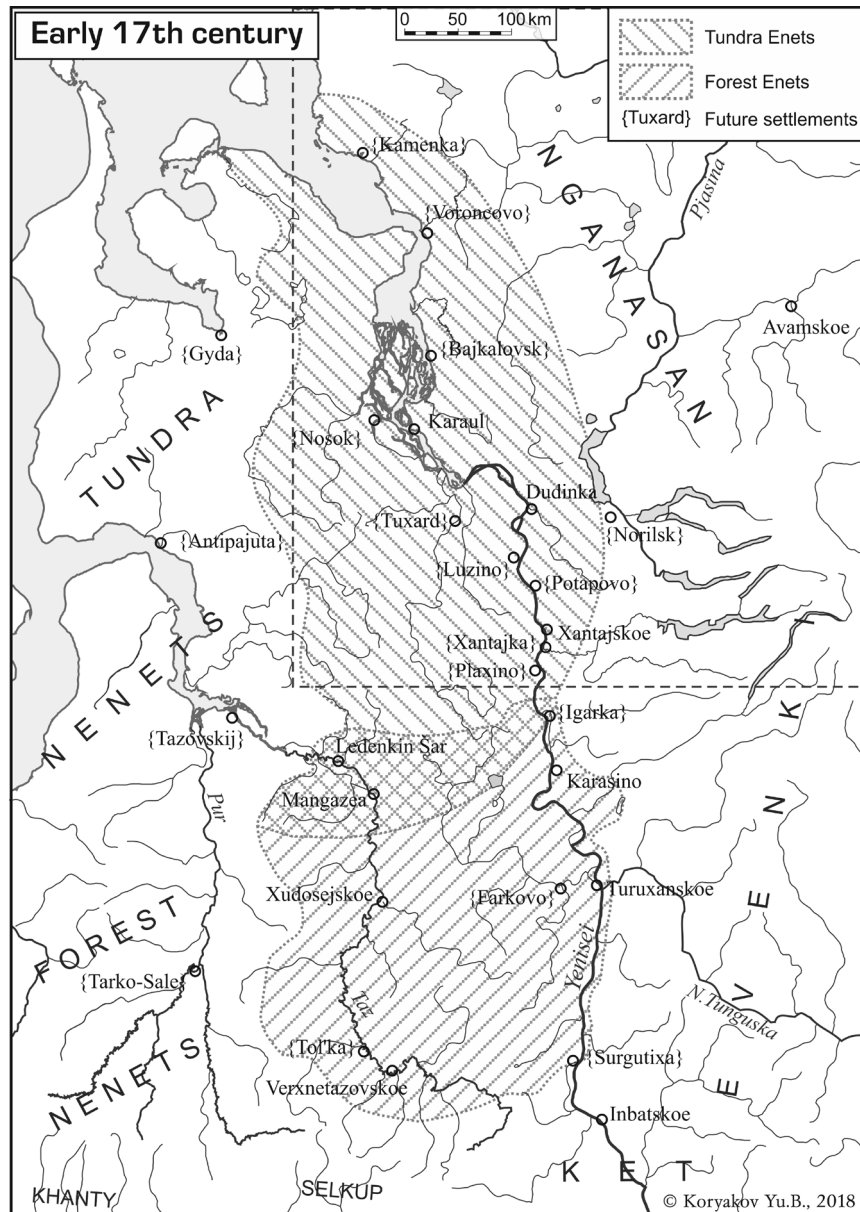
##### 4.1. The 17<sup>th</sup> century

The first account of the Enets language localization was provided by Dolgix (1960) for the 17<sup>th</sup> century, further refined in (Dolgix 1970). In the former source, the Tundra Enets and the Forest Enets had no common territories in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while in the latter one, they share lands around Mangazeja. Moreover, in the former source, the Forest Enets were shown by a bigger spot extending to the south of their location as shown in Figure 1. The map on Figure 1 relies on (Dolgix 1970): the ethnographer could have used some new data that had become available to him after the first publication, or the first map could have been simplified for the ease of visual representation, as it featured all Siberia, not just the Enets territory. Since the Enets territories were situated much more to the south and to the west in the 17<sup>th</sup> century than in all later periods studied in this paper, we use a dashed rectangle in Figure 1 to specify the area that is actually represented on Figures 2–6, 8, and 10.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Tundra Enets already had their common self-nomination *с̣о̣м̣а̣т̣у̣*, originally shown on the map in Dolgix (1960) in Cyrillic as *comamy*, while Forest Enets were indicated in Dolgix (1960) by a colored area with clear borders, but no common name. Only separate Forest Enets clan names were written in various parts of the colored area (*aseda*, *saljarta*, *juči*, *muggadi*, *baj*), and all these clans still spoke Forest Enets in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at least partially. This difference between the Tundra Enets and the Forest Enets has not changed within the last 350 years: and today, the Forest Enets have neither a common denomination in the languages of their neighbors, nor a specific self-nomination beyond *ɲeɲ entʃeu?* ‘real people’, that can also refer in an appropriate context to any indigenous people of the area, as opposed to Russian speaking newcomers. Note, though, that on the Dolgix’s (1960) map,

Forest Enets are not the only ethnic group without a proper name: to give an example from the same region, the Selkups, the Khantys, the Mansis, or Yeniseian people are also shown by clan names only.

**Figure 1.** Location of the Enets speaking people in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Dolgix 1960; 1970)



#### 4.2. The 19<sup>th</sup> century

The next map, Figure 2, shows the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, since little is known about the location of the Enets groups in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Vasil'ev (1979: 116, 127) reports a significant change in the Forest Enets territory already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: they moved further north along the Yenisei River, and simultaneously were displaced further east by the Selkups. These changes become visible when Figures 1 and 2 are compared, however, there are no other details to draw a separate map of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as presumably also in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the same century, Tundra Enets and Forest Enets were mainly spoken on the right bank of the Yenisei River, the left being occupied by speakers of Yurak or of Tundra Nenets.<sup>3</sup> Both the Tundra and the Forest Enets progressed to the north and to the east, as compared to their 17<sup>th</sup> century territory. However for the Forest Enets, the move was more radical: by the 19<sup>th</sup> century they left their former territory completely, dwelling now in the area that used to be Tundra Enets only.

Most Tundra Enets were nomadic and had reindeer herds that aided their extended seasonal migration for hundreds of kilometers every year. However, the Forest Enets were not so uniform (see Dolgix 1961: 4). The majority of them had few reindeer, basically only for transport, and lived rather sedentarily by fishing and hunting, practicing seasonal migrations only of dozens of kilometers, to change their fishing and hunting places. The Forest Enets' smaller part, several families belonging to two clans, *mogadi* and *baj*, managed to enlarge their reindeer stock by the 1830–1840s and, as a result, to practice large-scale reindeer herding together with the Tundra Enets (Vasil'ev 1979: 192; 1982: 76). In terms of geography, it meant that they occupied the same territories as the Tundra Enets. Note that by the time of the 1926 census, all of these Forest Enets switched to the Tundra Enets language (see Dolgix 1970: 122–123, 126), i.e. were linguistically assimilated by the more numerous Tundra Enets.

In summer, all Tundra Enets and the less nomadic Forest Enets resided in different areas. However, in winter, i.e. from October to April, the Tundra Enets, as well as the more nomadic Forest Enets, dwelled in the south, where forests could cover them from harsh winter winds, and where there was less snow, so that their reindeer could dig out moss with less effort. This was a part of the same forest areas where the Tundra Enets dwelled at least since the 17<sup>th</sup> century (in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they entered forest areas even more to the south and to the east), but by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the less nomadic Forest Enets

<sup>3</sup> In the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, speakers of Yurak were assimilated by speakers of Tundra Nenets, their close ethnic and linguistic relatives, the latest mentioning of a specific Yurak language belonging Mathias Castrén's diaries in 1847 (Castrén 1999: 188), see (Helimski 1976/2000) for a linguistic description of the Yurak language.

also resided here, all year round. Such change in the Forest Enets territory led to the very close neighboring of the two Enets groups in winter: we know for sure that they visited the same shops, and e.g. Mathias Castrén could find both Tundra Enets and Forest Enets speakers to work with in Xantajka in March 1847, see Castrén (1999: 189). The consequences of this geographic fact for language contact (possibly resulting in massive interference between Forest Enets and Tundra Enets) are yet to be estimated. Unfortunately, it is yet hard to reconstruct when such close winter contacts started: for the moment, the available ethnographic literature only states that they were not attested in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (see Figure 1), and were attested at least by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Vasil'ev 1979: 188–189, 1982: 76).

Altogether the Tundra Enets occupied a much bigger territory, as compared to the main body of the Forest Enets, i.e. their less nomadic share, while the respective numbers of the Tundra Enets and the Forest Enets were quite similar.<sup>4</sup> This is explained by the fact that the tundra reindeer husbandry presupposes dwelling for hundreds of kilometers and thus requires a bigger traditional territory. It is noteworthy that the mentioned group of the Forest Enets, who owned many reindeer, could not stay within the limits of the small territory belonging to the more sedentary Forest Enets and had to use the Tundra Enets lands for grazing their herds.

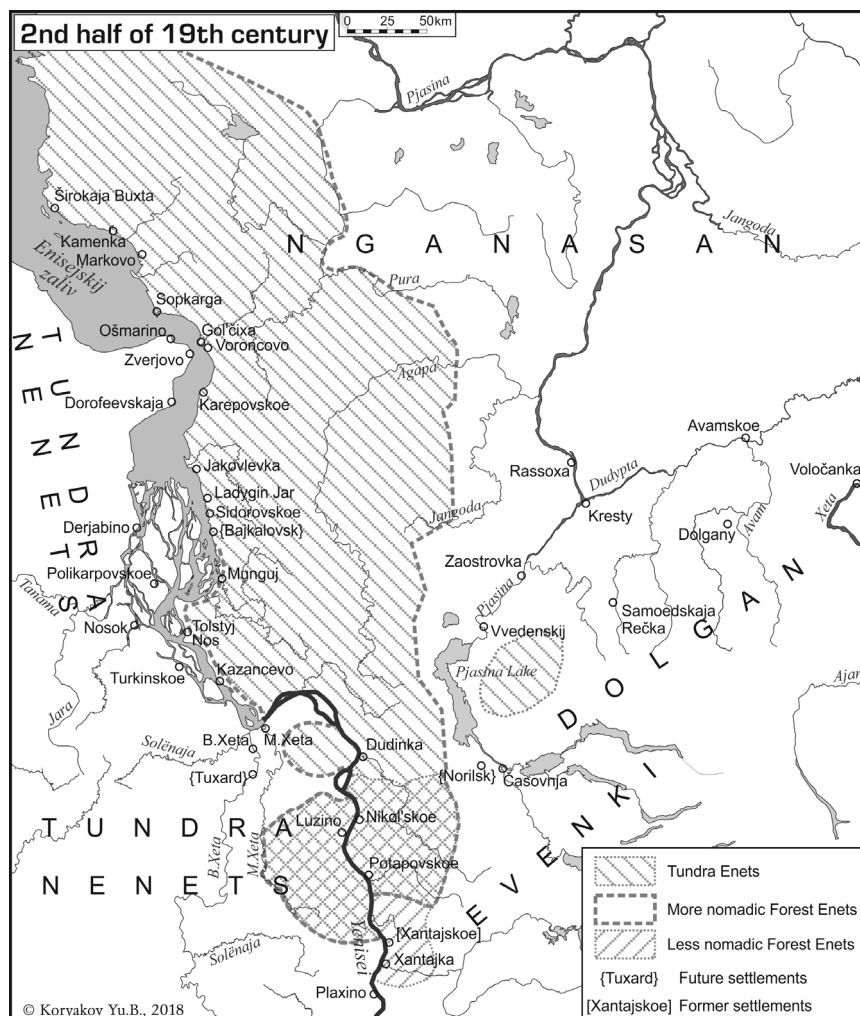
A final comment of this section refers to the remaining cases of assimilations of the Enets by a different ethnic group, beyond the already mentioned assimilation of some Forest Enets by the Tundra Enets. First, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a part of the Tundra Enets lived sedentarily near the Pjasina Lake, where they intermarried with the Dolgans. The 1897 census counted them as speaking Tundra Enets (Patkanov 1912: 411), while the 1926 census already regarded them as speaking Dolgan (Dolgix 1970: 166). Second, a small part of the Tundra Enets and a bigger part of the Forest Enets dwelling on the left bank of the Yenisei River, around the modern Tuxard settlement, started to become assimilated by the Tundra Nenets.<sup>5</sup> This process continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as we will show in the next sections.

<sup>4</sup> The 1897 census counted even less Tundra Enets than Forest Enets: ca. 200 Tundra Enets and ca. 300 Forest Enets (Patkanov 1912), though counting nomadic population of that time was far from being very reliable.

<sup>5</sup> Siegl (2013b: 16) also speaks of the Tundra Nenets domination on the right bank of the Yenisey river, in particular for those Tundra Enets who practiced large-scale reindeer herding: the author does not provide any reference for this information, and so it seems to come from his fieldwork accounts. Neither the published sources for this time period mentioned in this section, nor our fieldwork accounts support this statement for the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



**Figure 2.** Location of the Enets speaking people in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Patkanov 1912; Vasil'ev 1979; 1982; Vasil'ev, Simčenko 1963; Dolgix 1970; Ostrovskix 1929)



#### 4.3. 1926: the pre-revolution state

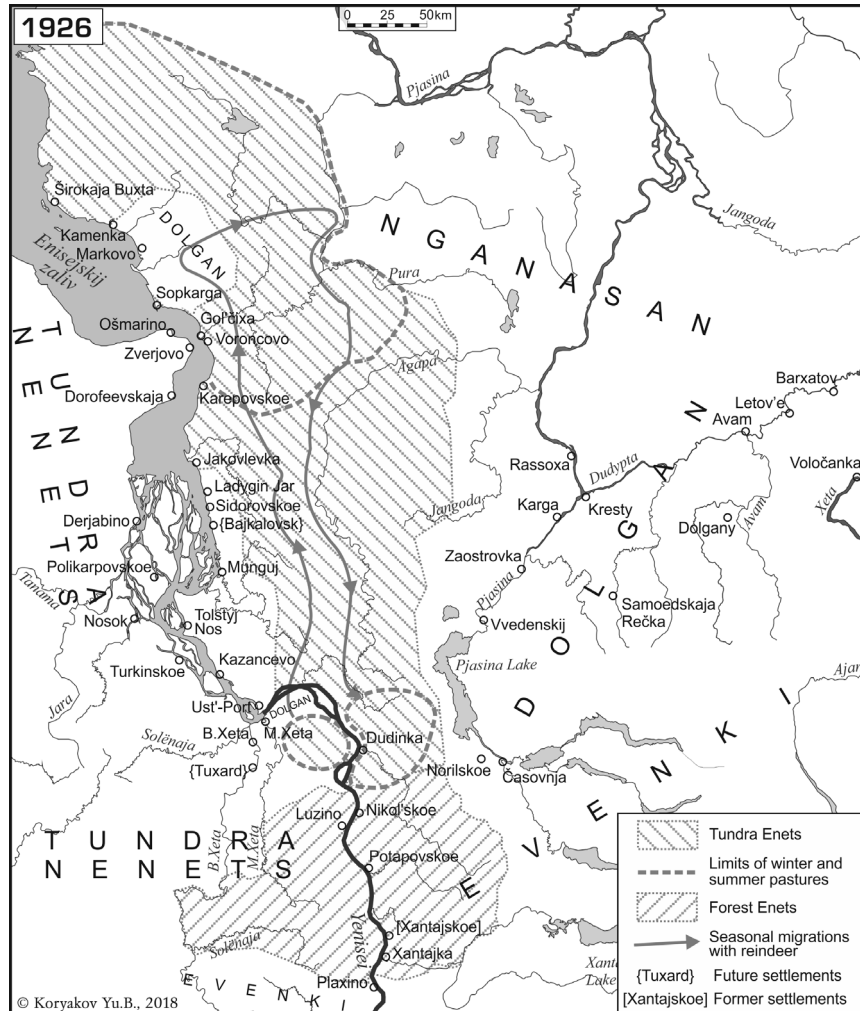
The 1926 census provided data for the geographic distribution of the two Enets groups before the arrival of the Soviet power to the area. Indeed, by 1926, there was hardly any Soviet institution in the Tajmyr peninsula, and those already established had yet no influence onto the everyday life of indigenous peoples. Thus, Figure 3 shows where Tundra Enets and Forest Enets were spoken from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and up to the 1930s, when collectivization started, changing the life of the local population dramatically.



The most important geographic changes dating to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are connected to the mutual relationship between the Tundra Enets and the Forest Enets. First, the Tundra Enets stopped going that far south in winter, staying only around Dudinka on the right bank of the Yenisei River and just across the river from this spot (some families grazed their reindeer on the right bank, while the others did so on the left bank). This meant that the winter pastures of the Tundra Enets and territories where the Forest Enets fished and hunted did not coincide anymore. Second, the Forest Enets that owned many reindeer had become assimilated linguistically by the Tundra Enets: during the 1926 census, the former still indicated their Forest Enets identity, but specified their language as Tundra Enets (Dolgix 1970: 122–123, 126). As a result of the two transformations, the Tundra Enets speakers and the Forest Enets speakers did not dwell on the same grounds any more, and the intense language contact that could be seen in the 19<sup>th</sup> century discontinued.

Moreover, the Tundra Enets at the Pjasina River switched entirely to Dolgan, plus two new Dolgan enclaves emerged at the very bank of the Yenisei River in the Tundra Enets territory. These were a handful of families that arrived from the main Dolgan area in the central Tajmyr. Later, they intermarried with the Tundra Enets and the Tundra Nenets, though their Dolgan origin is still remembered by the now living descendants of these mixed marriages (field data of Maria Amelina).

**Figure 3.** Location of the Enets speaking people in 1926 (Vasil'ev 1970; 1985; Dolgix 1946; 1962b; 1963; 1970; Kvašnin 2009; Materialy 1928)



### 5. The Enets speaking people under the Soviet power

During the Soviet period, from the 1930s till the 1990s, the Enets saw massive transformations in the way they lived. These were caused by administrative decisions in most cases, and heavily influenced the land distribution of the Enets. From this point on, the choice where to live belonged significantly less to the people themselves, as well as the choice where to dwell, to fish, and to herd their reindeer, while the local administration became an important decision maker, realizing in turn the general Soviet policy towards indigenous peoples. Together with obligatory boarding schools, where the use of native languages

was often prosecuted, this led both Enets varieties to the verge of extinction by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The maps in this section will illustrate the stages of this gradual process.

### 5.1. Collectivization among the Enets: the 1940s–1960s

On the Tajmyr peninsula, the collectivization, i.e. the state-governed forced organization of independent reindeer herders, fishers, and hunters (as well as farmers in other regions of USSR) into ‘collective farms’ (*kolxoz/sovxoz*) realizing the new Soviet economy, started in the very end of the 1920s. Importantly, it was accompanied by the anti-shaman and the anti-‘kulak’ campaigns which meant occasional arrests and murders of the most respected Enets, shamans and rich reindeer herders. During the 1930s, the transformations in the traditional territories were already visible here and there, though a decisive difference to the pre-collectivization state-of-the-art was not reached till the 1940s. Later on, till the 1960s, the collective farms managed to remain in their current borders, before the state-governed reindeer economy failed completely in the 1980s.

For Forest Enets speakers, who luckily had significantly less reindeer than Tundra Enets speakers by the start of the intensive collectivization campaign, the next decades did not bring any significant shrinkage to their geographic boundaries, see Figure 4. Instead, intermarriages with Tundra Nenets speakers on the left bank of the Yenisei River became so common that they involved quite a few Forest Enets men who settled in the Tundra Nenets lands. As a result, the territory where Forest Enets was spoken enlarged to the north and to the west, including the Bol’shaja Xeta and Malaja Xeta Rivers basin, or the area that is now known as the Tuxard tundra.

However, the linguistic situation of Forest Enets was not invincible (see also Siegl 2013a: 49–51). All Forest Enets lands, both on the right and the left bank of the Yenisei River, saw a massive influx of Stalin deportees in the 1940–1950s: Russian Germans and peoples from the Baltics (see Siegl 2013b for a general overview in English of the situation with the deportees in the Tajmyr peninsula). Leaving aside the human cost of the events, this was a great linguistic change for the sparsely populated areas where indigenous languages, i.e. Forest Enets, Tundra Nenets, and Evenki, were the main means of communication and few people could yet speak Russian at the time. Besides, representatives of indigenous peoples now had an opportunity to study in the local town of Dudinka and to get training for jobs that were connected to the Russian speaking world, i.e. basically any job beyond the traditional subsistence economy of reindeer herding, fishing, and hunting. Those Forest Enets who actually proceeded through the studies and acquired new professions spoke much less Forest Enets and much more Russian. Our maps do not show the density of the Enets speaking people in their territories, both absolute, a kind

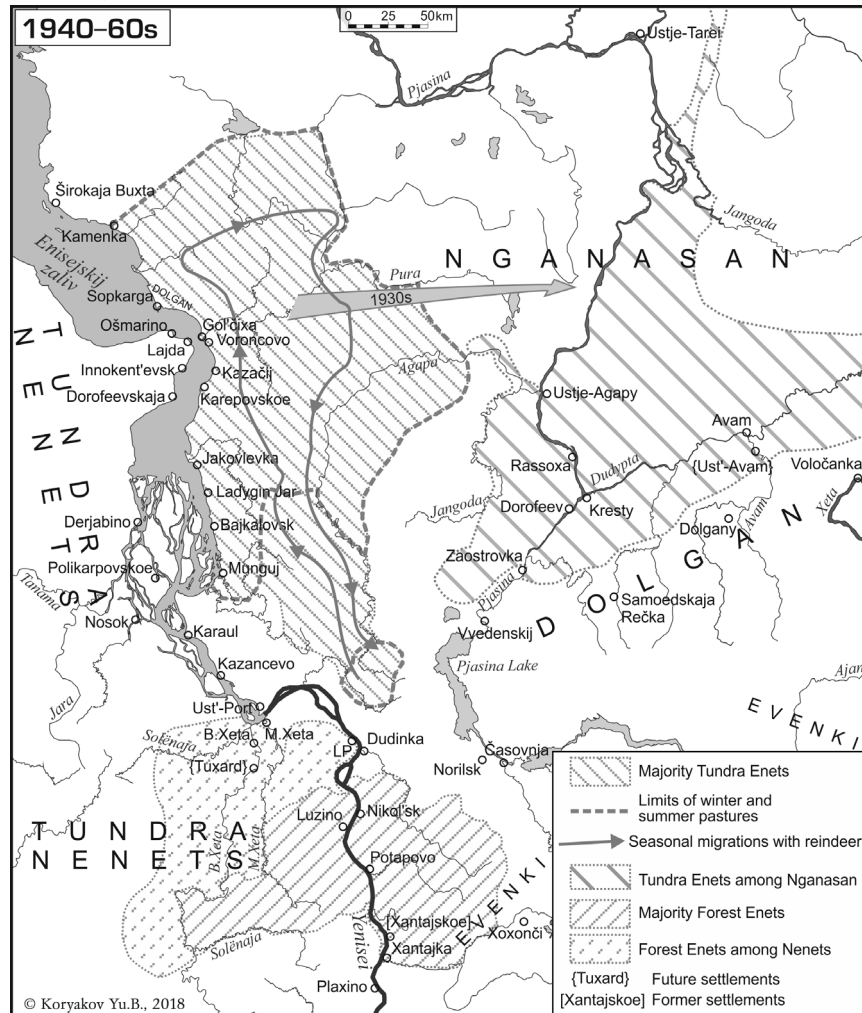
of a person to square kilometer ratio, or relative, a kind of an Enets speaking to non-Enets speaking people ratio. If they did, though, Figures 3 and 4 would show very different relative densities of Forest Enets speakers.

In the 1940–1960s, the Tundra Enets winter pastures had to be relocated further north. First, the town of Dudinka saw a sudden growth, which impeded its area to be continuously used for grazing reindeer. Second, the collective farm that the Tundra Enets were assigned to could only use the lands of its own district, and the district border turned out to pass between the Tundra Enets summer and winter pastures of the previous time period.

The Tundra Enets and their eastern neighbors, the Nganasans, had a history of intensive contact. Starting from at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Nganasans dwelled in the eastern Tundra Enets territories in the summer, and mixed marriages were common (Dolgix 1962a). Both modern fieldwork accounts of the authors and (Khanina & Meyerhoff 2018) based on narratives collected in the 1930s, report the ease of communication between the Tundra Enets and the western groups of the Nganasans: everyone had some passive command of the others' language, and many could speak the other party's language. When the collectivization, the anti-shaman, and the anti-‘kulak’ campaigns had just started, indigenous people along the Yenisei River were more easily accessible for Soviet authorities than those in the internal Tajmyr areas, the native Nganasan territories. As a result, the Nganasans discontinued their practice of frequenting the Tundra Enets pastures, and some Tundra Enets families, in particular, shamans and rich reindeer herders with their laborers, migrated to the Nganasan territory fleeing from prosecutions. This migration was more than natural, given that most Tundra Enets had some relatives among the Nganasans and had some command of their language. Figure 4 shows Tundra Enets to be spoken among the Nganasans: this was, most probably, not true for the whole of the Nganasan territories on this map, but it is now hard to reconstruct specific areas where Tundra Enets speakers were more numerous.

Finally, in the 1950–1960s, the policy of forced settlement of nomadic people and an all-Russian policy of closing smaller villages and compulsory relocation of their inhabitants to bigger villages of the area also contributed to the language ecology of both Enets groups. If a smaller village or a nomad camp could have a preponderance of Forest or Tundra Enets speakers, relocation to a bigger village inevitably led to their dissolving in a bigger ethnic group of the area, or to a switch to Russian as a lingua franca in the case of amalgamation of several small ethnic groups.

**Figure 4.** Location of the Enets speaking people in the 1940–1960s (Vasiļev, Tugolukov 1960; Vasiļev 1963; 1970; 1985; Vasiļev, Simčenko 1963; Dolgix 1949; our own field data)



## 5.2. The twilight of the traditional way of life: the 1970s–1990s

In both Enets communities, most people born after the 1960s now have very limited command of their ethnic language: apart from the reasons mentioned in the previous sections, which all are connected to a dispersal of Enets speakers, boarding schools are the reason for this. All in all, this entails that starting by the late 1970s, there appeared generations of adult Enets who used Russian all the time, and spoke basically no Enets. If our maps could show relative density of Enets speakers, there would be again a big change in Figures 4 and 5.

Besides, as already mentioned, collective farms turned out not to be a very effective solution for reindeer livestock management. By the 1970s, in the Nganasan – Tundra Enets territory, most reindeer died or fled to the tundra with wild reindeer<sup>6</sup>; the same happened to most reindeer in the Tundra Enets lands near the Yenisei River. The remaining Tundra Enets reindeer were relocated with their herders to the left bank of the Yenisei River, the traditional Tundra Nenets territories, in the 1970s (through Levinskii Peski). The main reason for this administratively governed relocation was the drastic decrease in the number of the Tundra Enets reindeer: it was inefficient for a reindeer collective farm to handle that little reindeer, so a decision was made to merge them with a collective farm on the left bank. Forest Enets reindeer stock also decreased significantly (also due to reindeer illnesses and assimilation by wild reindeer), to the extent that several different herds had to be merged, regardless of the ethnicity of the herders, Tundra Nenets, Evenki, or Forest Enets. Besides, new reindeer were sent in from the Jamal peninsula in the west to strengthen the Forest Enets herds: these new reindeer were accompanied by Tundra Nenets and Komi speakers, which also had a negative effect on the use of Forest Enets in the area. Altogether, the disappearance of the reindeer and the significant decrease of the people involved in their herding led to relocation of indigenous people from the tundra to villages, or to their immediate vicinities. So, the main change between Figure 4 and Figure 5 is a drastic diminishing of the territories where Enets was spoken, with concentration of people around villages.

The 1970–1990s was also a period of final assimilation of several Enets groups by their neighbors. First, the Tundra Enets who migrated to the Nganasan territory in the 1920–1930s did not pass their language on to their children, opting for Nganasan instead, which meant that by the 1990s only a few elders spoke Tundra Enets around the Ust'-Avam and the Voločanka villages. Besides, they might have spoken Tundra Enets with heavy Nganasan interference, as some recordings of their speech indicate.<sup>7</sup> Second, the same pattern was seen by Forest Enets speakers who married into the Tundra Nenets area on the left bank of the Yenisei River, or the Tuxard tundra: neither of them passed their language to their children, opting for Tundra Nenets instead, and by the 1990s only several elderly people could speak Forest Enets in the Tuxard tundra. Finally, the Tundra Enets who came to the Tuxard tundra in the 1970s were

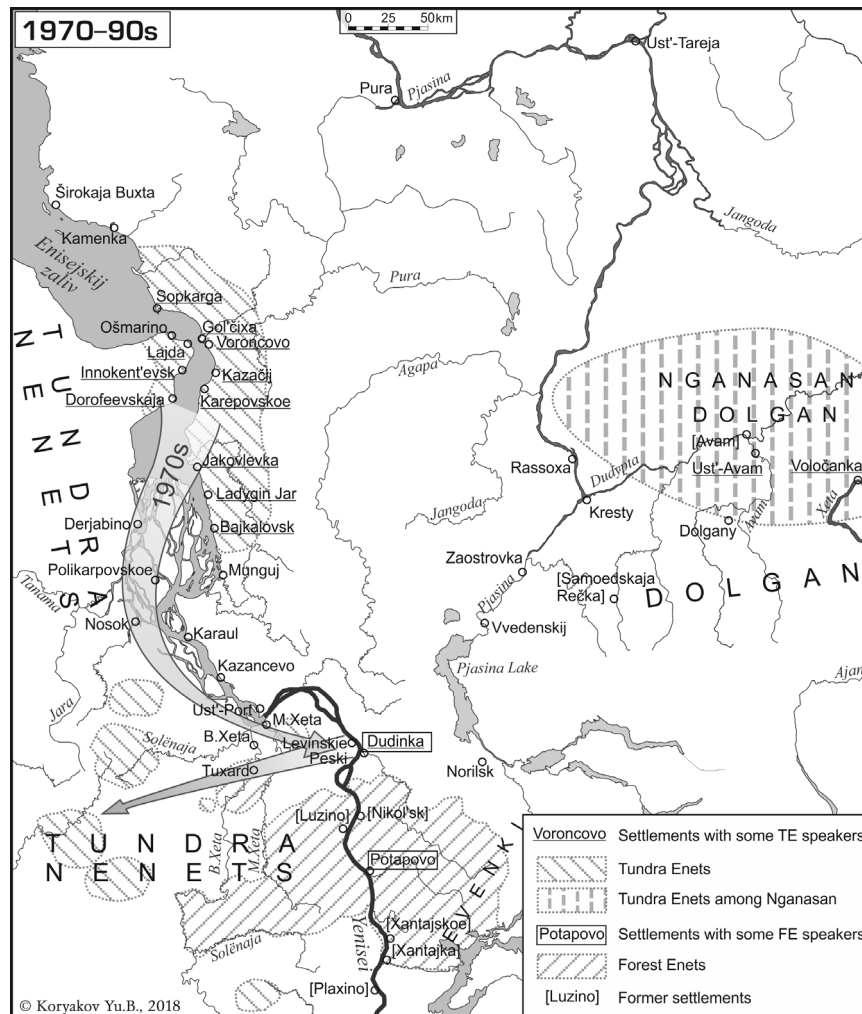
<sup>6</sup> Tajmyr peninsula has the biggest population of wild reindeer in the world, and one of the most important tasks of local reindeer herders is to watch domestic reindeer to prevent their leaving with their wild relatives: the latter come to the more inhabited areas of Tajmyr in big numbers and are easily joined by the former, unless people intervene and actively counteract their flight.

<sup>7</sup> Linguistic analysis of these recordings is yet to be performed, but this is not an easy task, since there are no more Tundra Enets speakers from this area who could assist in transcription, and Tundra Enets speakers from non-Nganasan area do not count these recordings as representing their native language.



a step below in this process: all of them, including the elder children, could speak Tundra Enets in the 1990s, and that is why they still appear in Figure 6 for the 2010s, now as few elders, with all others speaking Tundra Nenets.

**Figure 5.** Location of the Enets speaking people in the 1970–1990s (Vasil’ev 1985; our own field data)



## 6. The Enets-speaking people today: the 2010s

No new waves of local migration have been attested for the Enets since the 1990s, nor have any new speakers of Forest or Tundra Enets appeared after the 1990s. As a result, on Figure 6, showing Enets speakers in the 2010s, we basically see the same Enets speaking areas as on Figure 5, but even more

diminished and with even smaller Enets to non-Enets ratio. For all the Enets who went through the system of boarding schools with its stigmatization of indigenous languages (i.e. those born after the 1940s), the use of Enets was typical only with their parental generation or in domains related to traditional activities. In the 2000s, both conditions disappeared: most Enets from the parental generation died and reindeer herding came to its end. As a result, starting from the 2000s, the Enets have been using their native language less and less. Remarkably, it is Forest Enets that became more noticeable in the public space of Dudinka: several books have been published (Sorokina & Bolina 2001, 2009, Bolina 2003, 2012, 2015), complemented by occasional radio transmissions and local newspaper articles in Forest Enets, as well as by optional courses of Forest Enets in the Potapovo school starting from 1990s and a ‘language nest’ in the Potapovo kindergarden in the recent years. Only (Labanauskas 1992, 2002) and (Sorokina & Bolina 2005) featured some texts in Tundra Enets, and these editions hardly ever reached any Tundra Enets speakers.

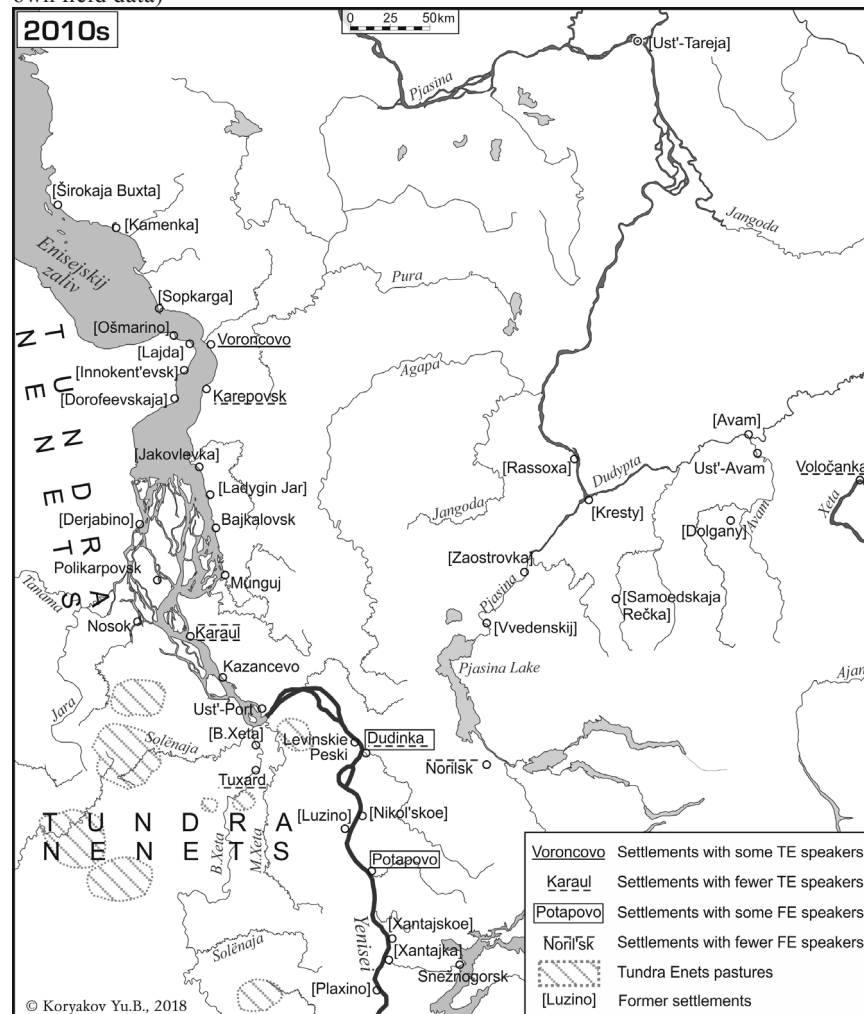
All speakers of Forest Enets now reside in villages, and are too old to practice the traditional way of life in the tundra in the presence of a readily available alternative of more comfortable village housing. As mentioned in the Introduction, there are now ca. 10 Forest Enets speakers in the village of Potapovo (with ca. 330 inhabitants altogether), ca. 10 speakers in the town of Dudinka (with ca. 21 000 inhabitants altogether), and some isolated speakers in the village of Karaul and the city of Norilsk. Even in Potapovo and Dudinka, the Enets speakers use their native language to talk to each other quite rarely, opting for Russian in most cases.

Today Tundra Enets speakers count ca. 5 speakers in the village of Voronovo (with ca. 320 inhabitants altogether), ca. 10 speakers nomading together with speakers of Tundra Nenets in the Tuxard tundra (with ca. 900 inhabitants altogether), and some speakers in an isolated settlement of Karepovsk, in the village of Karaul, and in the town of Dudinka. Only the speakers of Tundra Enets nomading in the Tuxard tundra practice reindeer herding, but their main language of communication is Tundra Nenets. Some Tundra Enets words relating to kinship terminology are used in their Tundra Nenets speech (field data of Maria Amelina), but otherwise the linguistic assimilation of the Tundra Enets by the Tundra Nenets took place in this area.

The shaded patches on Figure 6 show reindeer pastures belonging to families where one of the spouses is a Tundra Enets speaker (all Tundra Enets speakers in the Tuxard tundra are married to Tundra Nenets speakers, or are single, i.e. there are no Tundra Enets couples). As can be seen, these pastures do not form a single territory, and one can hardly speak of any Tundra Enets area in the Tuxard tundra today: it is rather a fact of biography of individual reindeer herders, or their wives, that they can speak Tundra Enets, but they do

not form any linguistic community. As for the remaining Tundra Enets in the Avam tundra, the last active speakers passed away by the end of the 2000s, though there is one very old lady in Voločanka (born in 1927) who has been reported to be an L2 speaker of Tundra Enets in the past.

**Figure 6.** Location of the Enets speaking people in the 2010s (Mikrodannye 2010; our own field data)



Finally, a methodological note regarding Figure 6 has to be made. All previous maps showed territories where Forest or Tundra Enets was used rather than indicated places of residence of Enets speakers (besides, a place of residence of a nomadic person is not an easily conceivable notion). In the 2010s neither

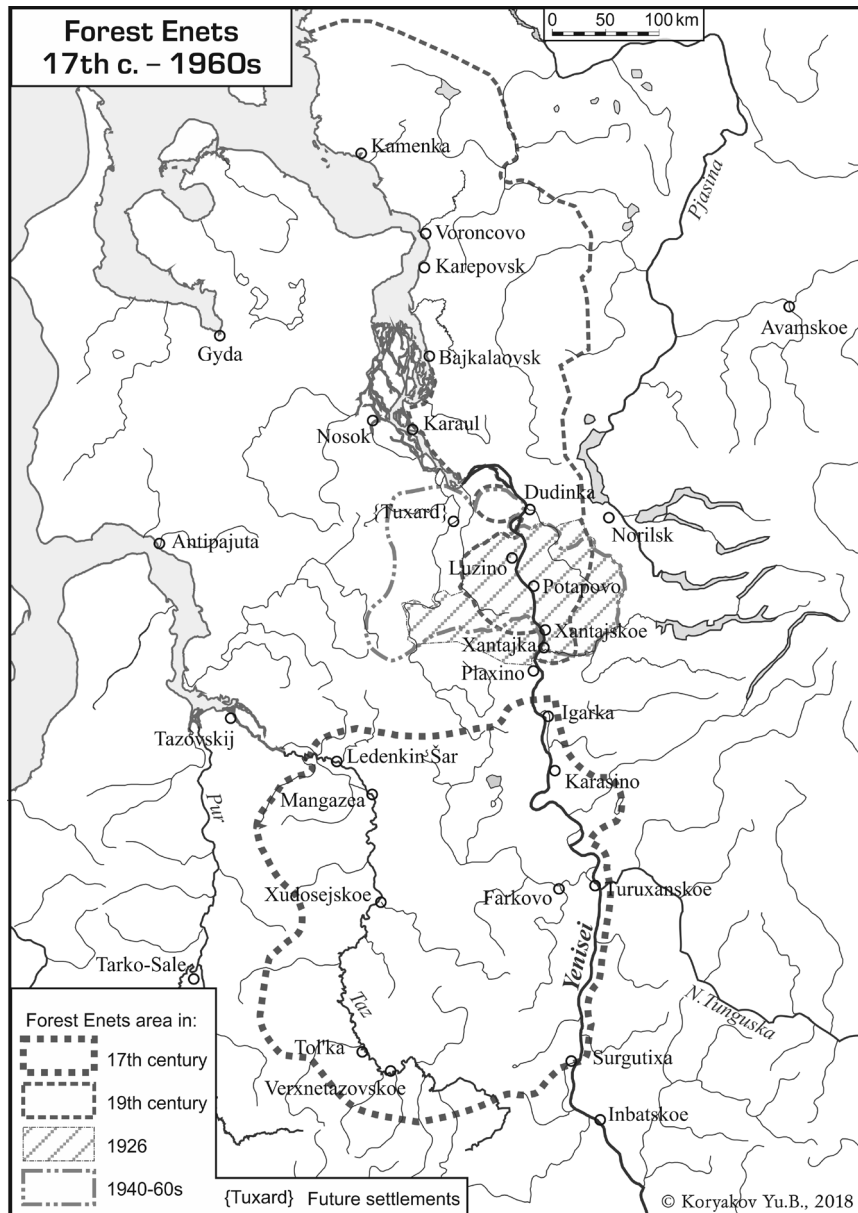
Forest, nor Tundra Enets is being used any more, and this dictates a change in what is actually shown on Figure 6: it is now the places of residence of those people who can speak Enets and do it from time to time, from once a week to roughly once a year. Some of the Enets speakers residing in villages still fish and hunt for their subsistence, but the 2010s map does not reflect their fishing and hunting territories, simply because they are now not connected to the use of Forest or Tundra Enets. In case of Tundra Enets speakers practicing reindeer herding on the left bank of the Yenisei River, we indeed show their pastures, though this does not imply the use of Tundra Enets there, but only the places of residence of these nomadic speakers.

## 7. Conclusion

We aimed to show the territories where Forest Enets and Tundra Enets have been spoken in the last 350 years: from the first records going back to the start of Russian colonization till today. Figures 1–4 display movement of the Enets in the lower Yenisei area, mainly to the north and to the east, while Figures 5–6 provide geographic details of the language endangerment path that the Enets have gone through. Thus the maps representing different periods speak of different sociolinguistic processes, and Figures 7–10 summarize our findings for both of them. Figures 7 and 9 show separately how Forest and Tundra Enets, respective territories changed in space without any threat to their linguistic or ethnic identity, while Figures 8 and 10 show how the Forest and Tundra Enets speakers' territories shrunk due to the drastic decrease in the number of speakers and the loss of traditional activities.

Figure 7 reviews the movement of Forest Enets speakers, first, to the north by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, without any significant change in the size of the area where the language was spoken, and second, its diminishing only to the southern part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's area by 1926. This shrinkage was conditioned by the switch of the reindeer breeding Forest Enets to Tundra Enets, who were much more numerous in these northern lands: only the Forest Enets who did not practice large-scale reindeer herding, and thus remained south of Dudinka the all year round, kept their language. By the 1960s, the area where Forest Enets was spoken enlarged once again, now to the west, due to the migration of some Forest Enets into the Tundra Nenets territories, mainly by marrying speakers of Tundra Nenets. After that, as Figure 8 shows, speakers of Forest Enets never gained the same extent, with less speakers attested in fewer locations.

**Figure 7.** Changes in territories of the Forest Enets speaking people from the 17<sup>th</sup> century till the 1960s (based on Figures 1–4)



**Figure 8.** Changes in territories of the Forest Enets speaking people from the 1940s till the 2010s (based on Figures 4–6)

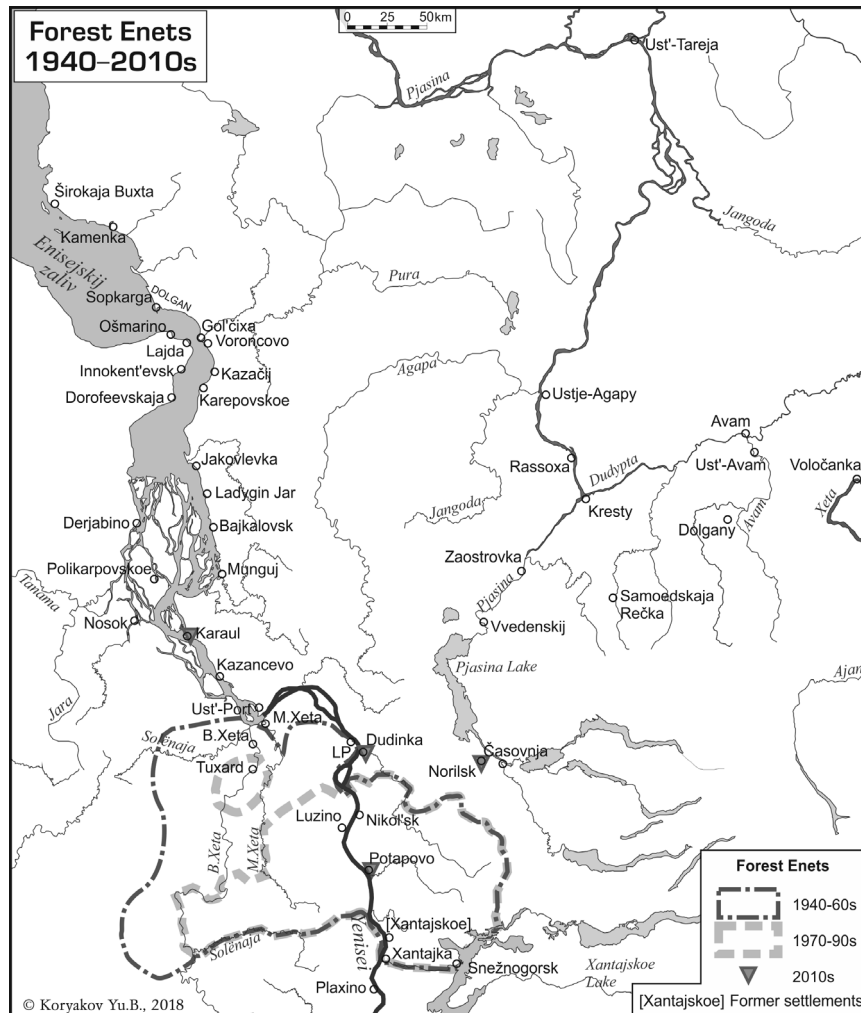


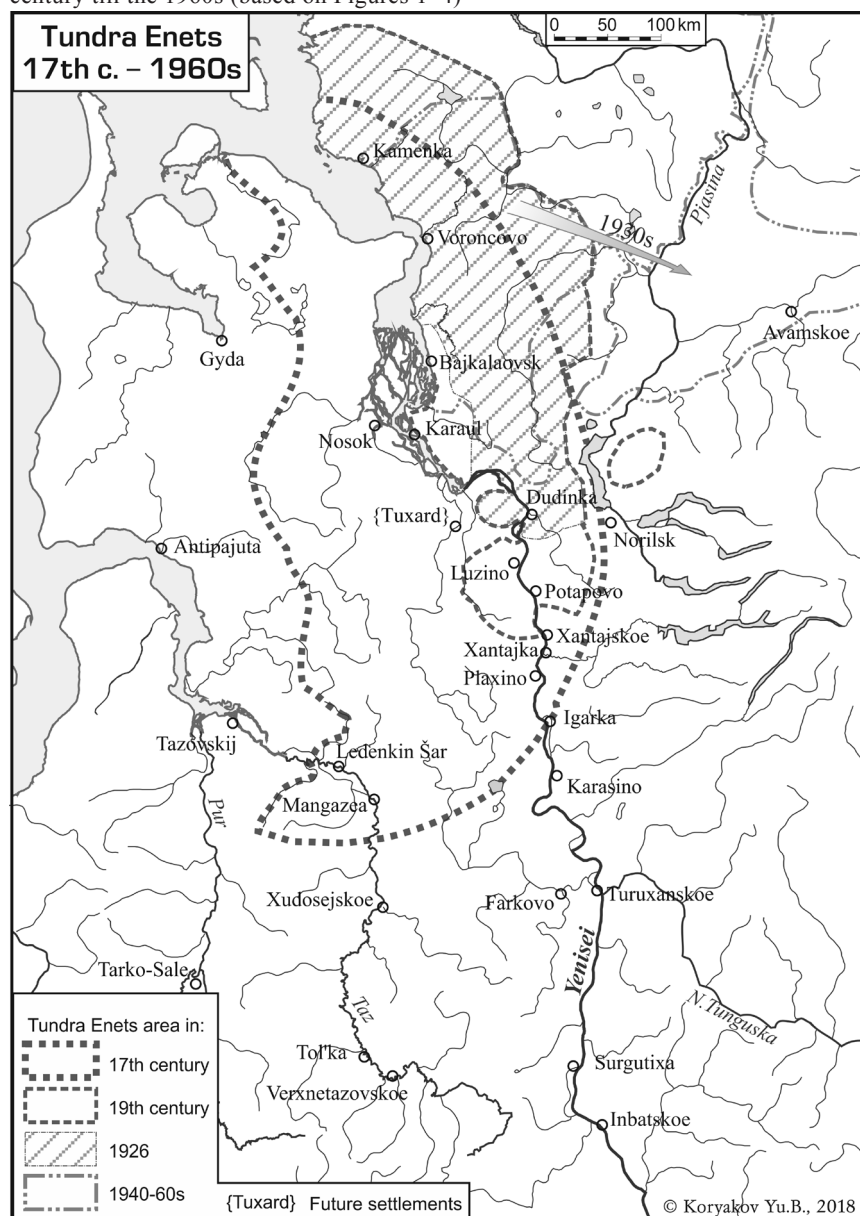
Figure 8 shows how starting from the 1940s–1960s and proceeding till the 2010s Forest Enets gradually lost its speakers. First, the comparison of the 1940s–1960s contour with the 1970s–1990s one reveals the assimilation of the Forest Enets by the Tundra Nenets in the western part of the Forest Enets speaking area. Second, the comparison of the territories where Forest Enets was spoken in the 1970s–1990s to the four settlements where speakers of Forest Enets can be met today makes evident the loss of traditional activities and permanent residence of Forest Enets speakers in predominantly Russian-speaking villages and towns. Remarkably, while Potapovo is indeed a village in



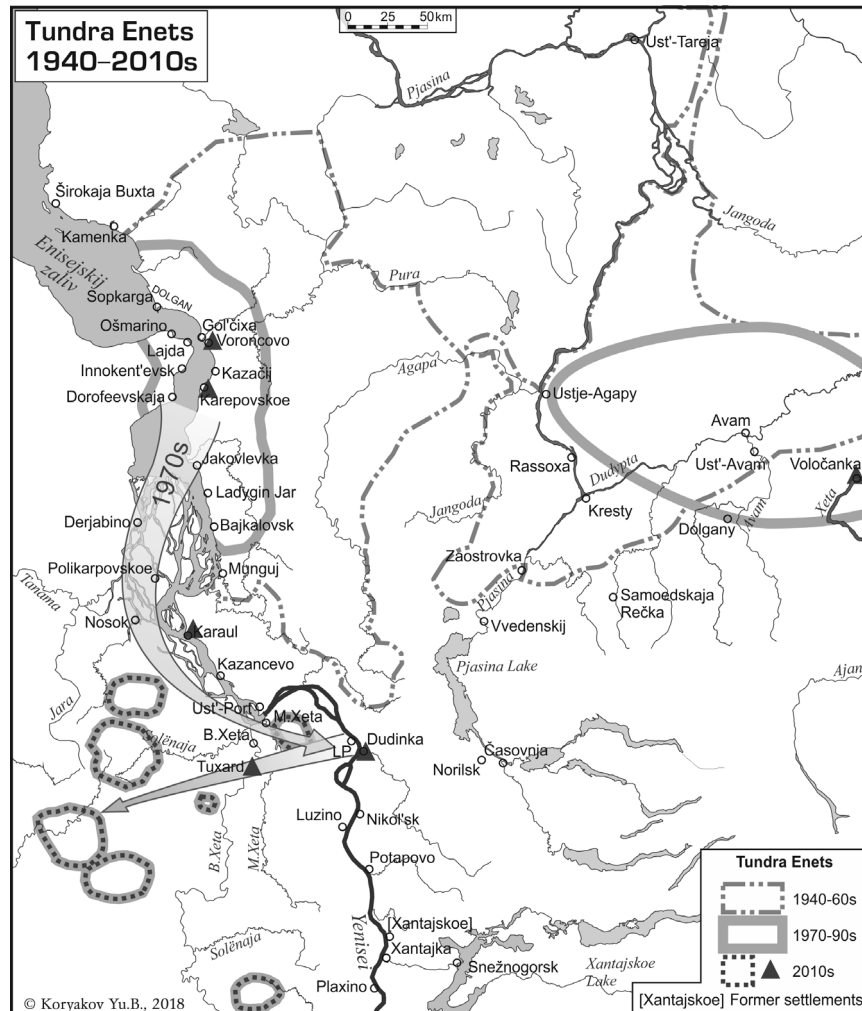
the midst of the former Forest Enets territory, so the location of modern Forest Enets speakers here is a manifestation of the reduction of a once vast area to a single location, Dudinka is different. The latter is a town where modern Forest Enets speakers have migrated to, but it is a coincidence that it is placed quite close to the former Forest Enets territory, as this migration is a part of a more general all-Russian urbanization process.

Figure 9 reviews the decrease of the Tundra Enets area in the south-west by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, accompanied by a slight expansion to the north-east at the right bank of the Yenisei River. This was conditioned mainly by the intrusion of the Tundra Nenets into the Tundra Enets traditional territories in the north and of the Selkups and the Evenkis in the south. By 1926, Tundra Enets speakers retreated further north, and unfortunately, there is no clarity in the reasons why they stopped coming farther south of Dudinka in the winter. Similar to the Forest Enets case just discussed, by the 1960s, the area where Tundra Enets was spoken enlarged once again, now to the east, due to the migration of some Tundra Enets into the Nganasan territories. In the south, however, the Tundra Enets lands continued diminishing, with their southern border changing from just south of Dudinka to just north of Dudinka. Likewise in the north, a slight decrease in their territory can be observed, with Tundra Enets speakers now not going further north than the settlement of Kamenka.

**Figure 9.** Changes in territories of the Tundra Enets speaking people from the 17<sup>th</sup> century till the 1960s (based on Figures 1–4)



**Figure 10.** Changes in territories of the Tundra Enets speaking people from the 1940s till the 2010s (based on Figures 4–6)



Finally, Figure 10 shows how, starting from the 1940s–1960s and proceeding till the 2010s, Tundra Enets gradually lost its speakers. Already in the 1970s–1990s, Tundra Enets speakers tended to reside closer to the villages, mainly due to the loss of the large-scale reindeer herding. The only Tundra Enets who still had reindeer herds by the end of the 1970s moved to the left bank of the Yenisei River. In the 2010s, Tundra Enets is kept in the families of these reindeer herders and in the settlements shown by triangles in Figure 10. However, it is kept only as a passive skill that is rarely practiced, with Tundra Nenets in the tundra, and Russian being used in the settlements instead. Besides, Tundra

Enets speakers in the very east of their former territory became completely assimilated by the Nganasans, and so the recent expansion resulted in a negative outcome for the fate of the language: exactly as it was the case for Forest Enets, who first expanded in the same period, the 1940s–1960s, to the west, but then became assimilated by the more numerous Tundra Nenets speakers. In conclusion, the study presented in this paper originated in a relatively trivial question: where were the Forest and Tundra Enets spoken before the language shift to Russian? The answer turned out to be less trivial, since the two ethnic groups showed an unusually high level of mobility. In different periods of their history, contacts with different neighbors were relevant, resulting in different patterns of multilingualism: while the study of the latter deserves a separate study, now there is exhaustive geographic data that this and other kinds of further research can be based upon. Finally, this study did not restrict itself to the analysis of the pre-shift situation, but also concentrated on the visual representation of the route to language endangerment that both Enets communities have gone through.

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**Olesya Khanina**

The Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences, Б. Кисловский  
пер. д.1 стр. 1, Москва 125009

E-mail: olesya.khanina@gmail.com

**Yuri Koryakov**

The Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences, Б. Кисловский  
пер. д.1 стр. 1, Москва 125009

E-mail: ybkoryakov@gmail.com

**Andrey Shluinsky**

The Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences, Б. Кисловский  
пер. д.1 стр. 1, Москва 125009

E-mail: ashl@yandex.ru

