Mapping specifics of languages of nomadic groups in Eurasian Circumpolar areas

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Language Mapping

This talk will discuss the main difficulties that arise in the mapping of (languages of) the nomadic groups in the North of Eurasia, in comparison to the mapping of the sedentary peoples and languages.

Language maps vs. Linguistic maps

Language maps demonstrate the spread of languages, or of their dialects, unified by:

• common territory;

• common genealogical affiliation

• another common characteristic.

Linguistic maps demonstrate the spread of linguistic phenomena, by means of dots, isoglosses, or areas

• within one language (e.g. on dialectological maps)

• in one region

• world-wide (WALS)

Mapping of the sedentary peoples and languages


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3
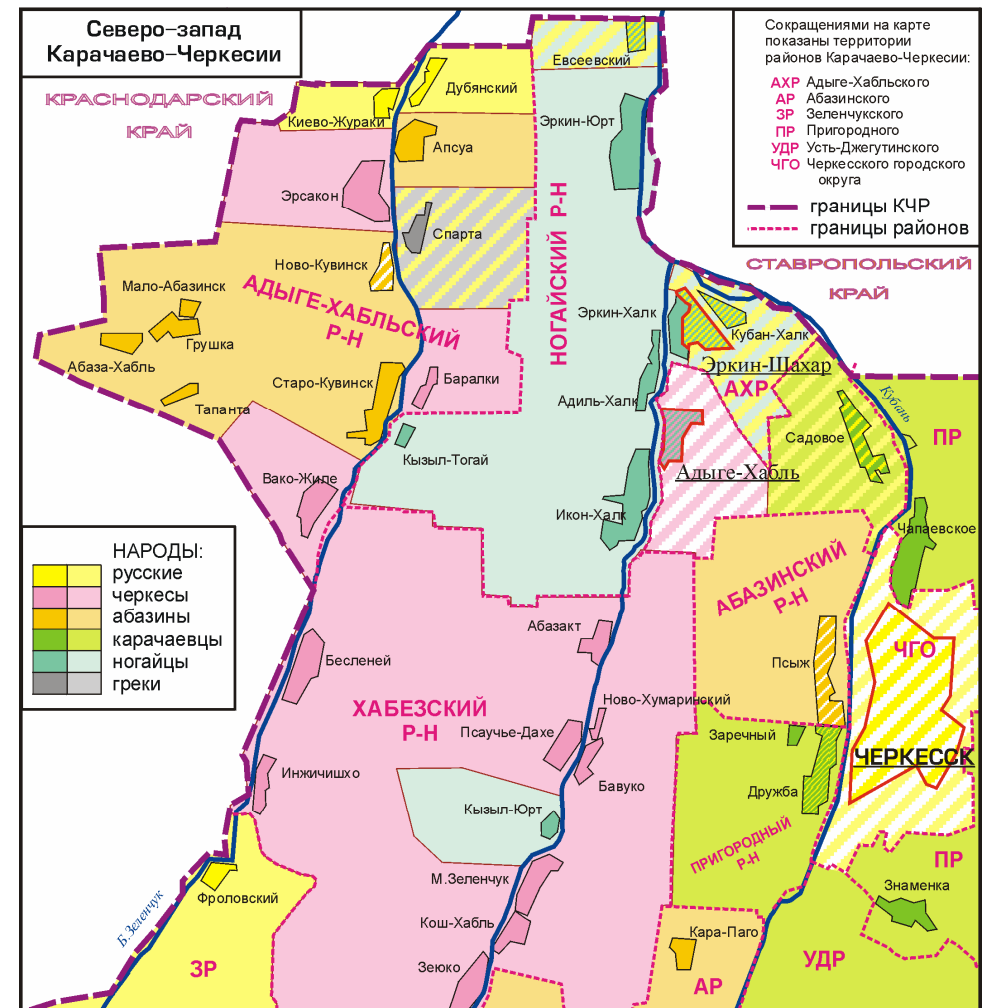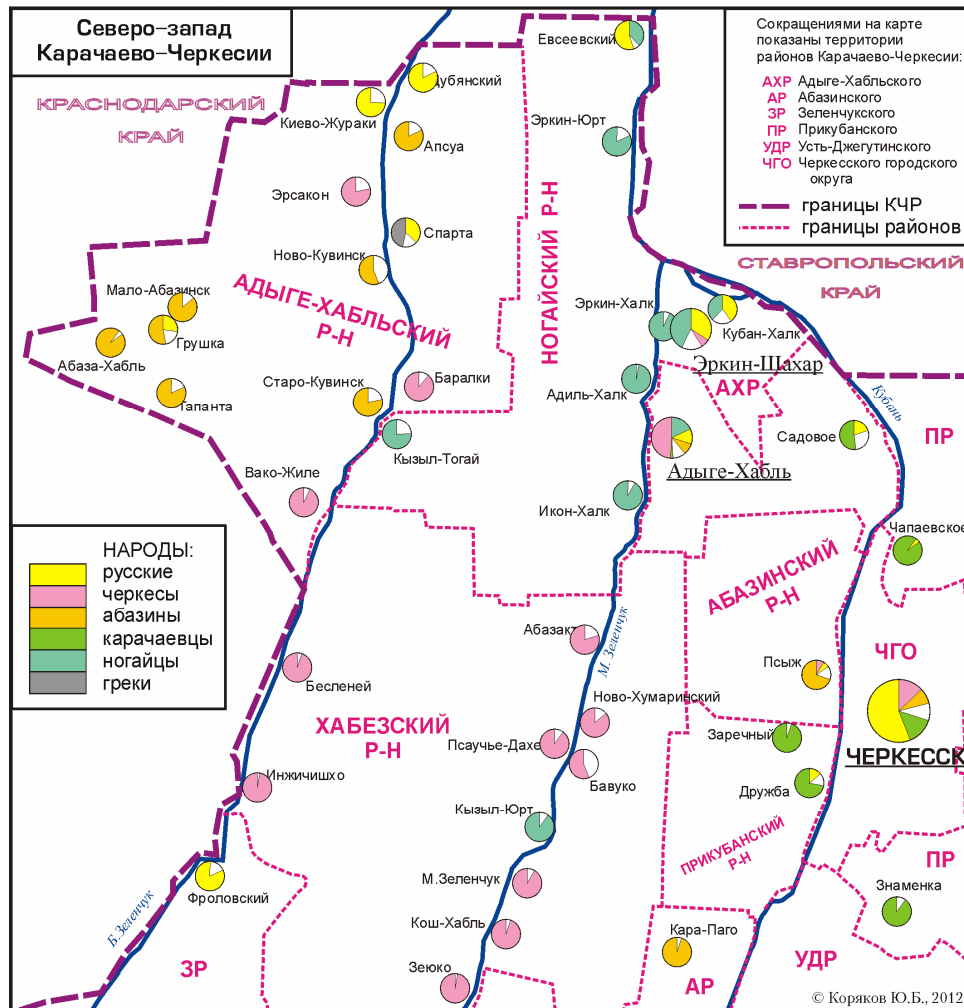
Main difficulties

- huge areas with almost no clear borders between them,

- very low population density,

- high personal, family and seasonal mobility,

- overlapping of winter pastures of one ethnic groups with summer pastures of another groups,

- migration routes and pasture areas are quite non-trivial,

- extensive multilingualism

- the lack of data

Huge areas with no clear borders between them

There are almost no mountains in the North of Eurasia. The only natural borders are rivers, river estuaries and sea straits but even they do not hinder migration in winter when they are frozen.
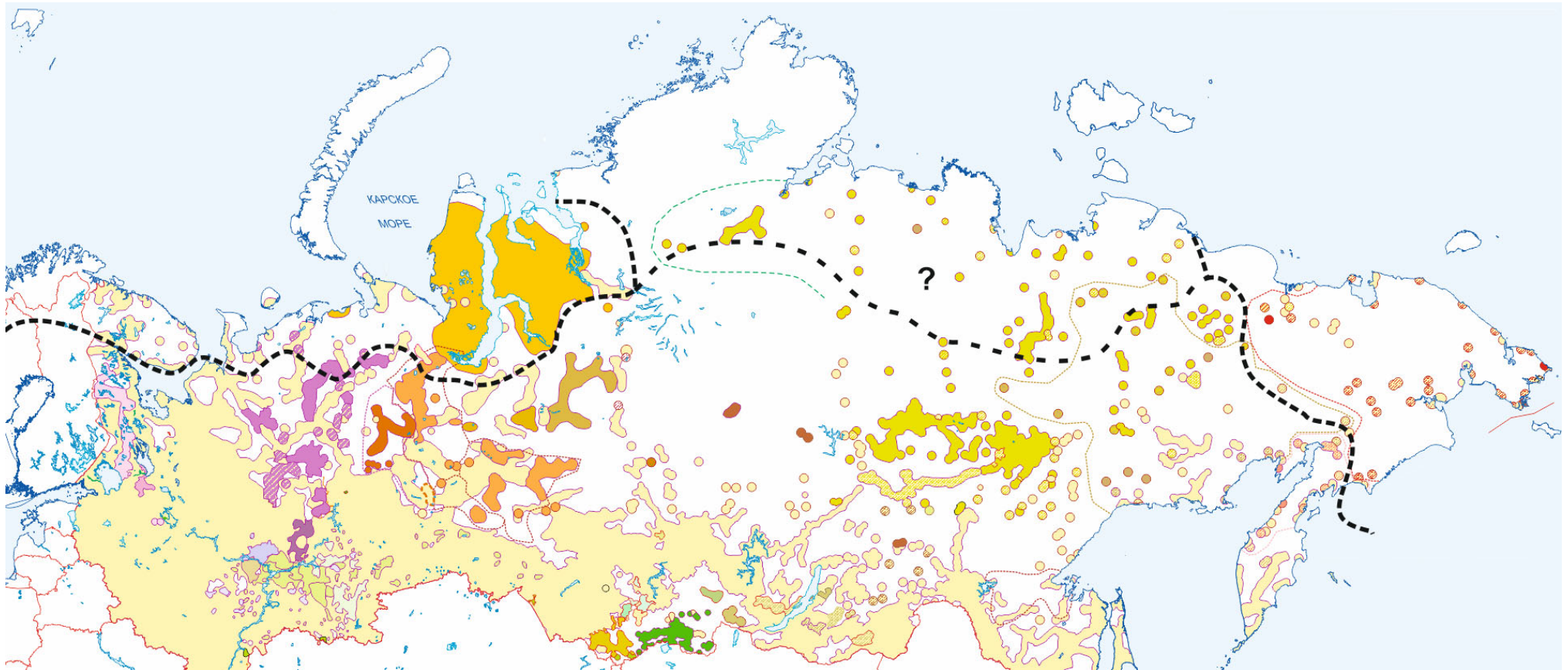
Very low population density

Density	Density 2	Density 2*1000	Area	Total pop.	Trad. pop.
	p/km²	p/Mm²	km²	persons	persons
Taimyr	**0,01**	12	879 929	34 432	10 132
Chukotka	**0,02**	23	721 481	47 840	16 779
YaNAO	**0,06**	60	769 250	522 904	46 390
NAO	**0,06**	63	176 810	42 090	11 127
Yakutia	0,16	164	3 083 523	997 565	506 915
Karelia	0,18	176	180 520	527 880	31 769
Altai	1,0	1033	92 903	210 769	95 967
Tuva	2,0	2000	168 604	337 271	337 271
Dagestan	64	63851	50 270	3 209 781	3 209 781
KBR	72	72435	12 470	903 266	903 266

Average World's population density is 58/km².
Mongolia — 2 /km², Russia — 8 /km².

Very small absolute size

Very small absolute group size in general: normally we say about dozens people per basic group.

This feature sharply distinguishes the Arctic nomads from most other pastoral groups, whose numbers and population density, as a rule, are much higher.

High mobility

Quite surprisingly for an outside observer, the most part of Eurasian Circumpolar area was inhabited until recently by nomadic or semi-nomadic groups.

Mobility can be in several scales:
• personal/family
• seasonal
• general.

High mobility: personal-family

One or few families could easily change place of their pastures, incl. to other-language-speaking neighbors; which, given the very small population, could significantly affect the area of entire peoples/languages.
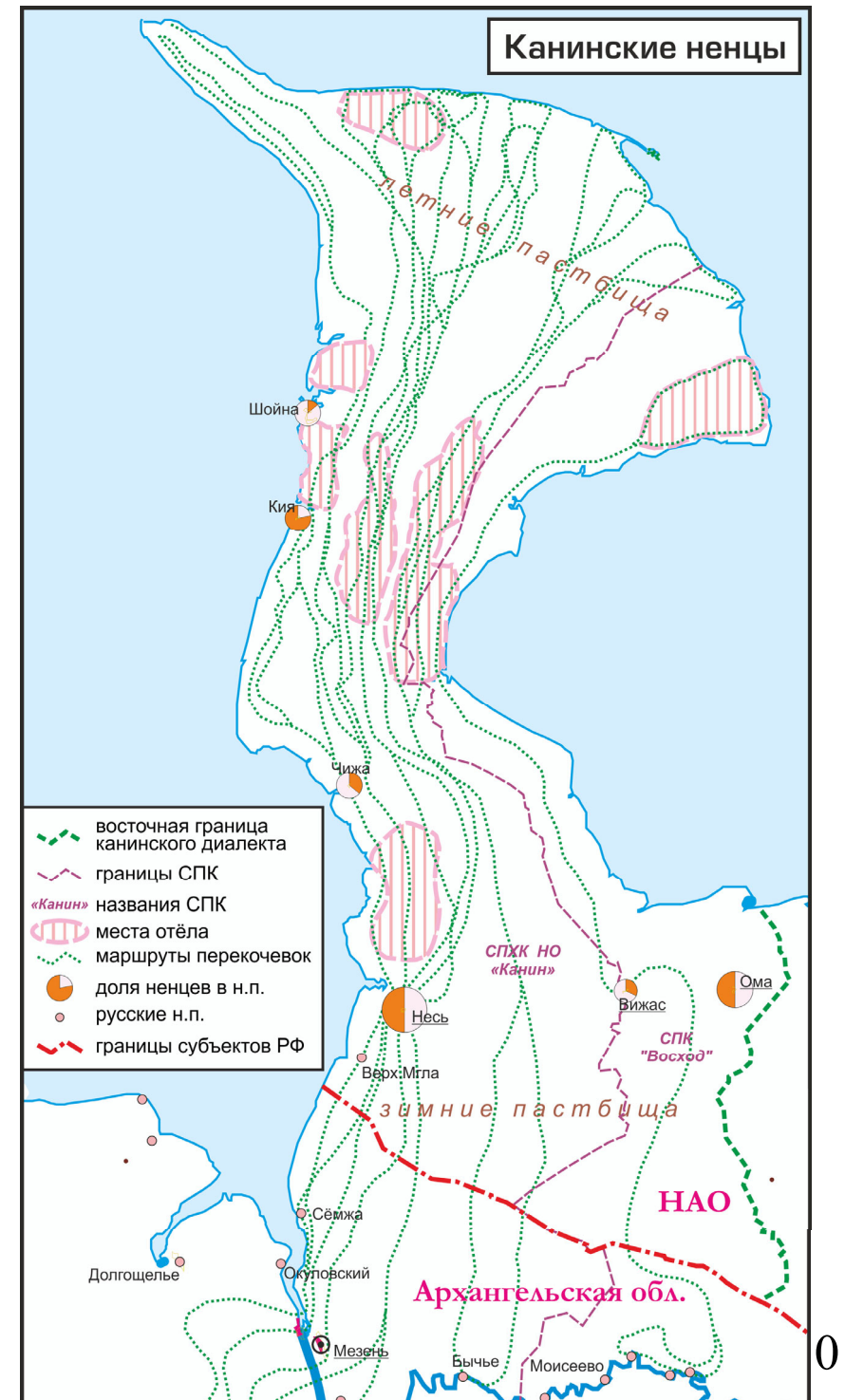
Such was, for example, the migration of one Dolgan family to the lower Yenisei, as a result of which a Dolgan-speaking enclave arose there.
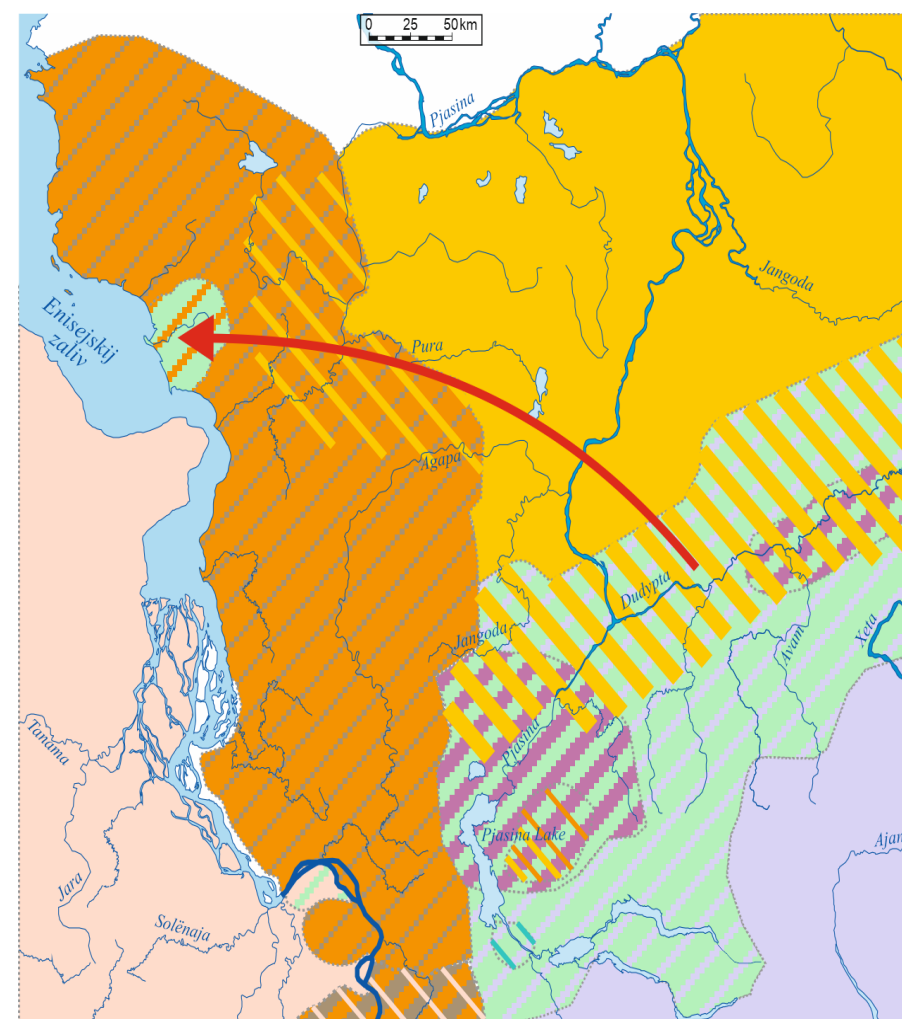
High mobility: seasonal

The most well-known type of mobility is seasonal.

Nomadic groups use different grounds for summer and winter pastures and migrate in autumn and spring between them. The calving places are also important.

Канинские ненцы

восточная граница канинского диалекта
границы СПК
«Канин» названия СПК
места отёла
маршруты перекочевок
доля ненцев в н.п.
русские н.п.
границы субъектов РФ

летние пастбища

Шойна
Кия
Чижа

СПХК НО «Канин»
Ома
Вижас
Несь
СПК "Восход"
Верх.Мгла

зимние пастбища

НАО

Сёмжа
Долгощелье
Окуловский
Архангельская обл.
Мезень
Бычье
Моисеево

10

High mobility: seasonal

Several types of seasonal life-styles can be defined:
• full (whole-family) nomadic pastoralism with herds of domestic reindeer,
• partial (male only) nomadic pastoralism with herds of domestic reindeer;
• (nomadic) hunting and gathering (sometimes together with occasional nomadic pastoralism).

During Soviet period many of nomadic groups switched to partial nomadic or even sedentary style of life. But since we create maps for earlier periods too, we have to face fully the difficulties of mapping the nomadic ethnic groups and their languages.

High mobility: general

As a result of other types of mobility the general distribution of nomadic groups and borders between them were quite fluid. There were no permanent settlements, people were accustomed to change their area seasonally so they could it generally too.
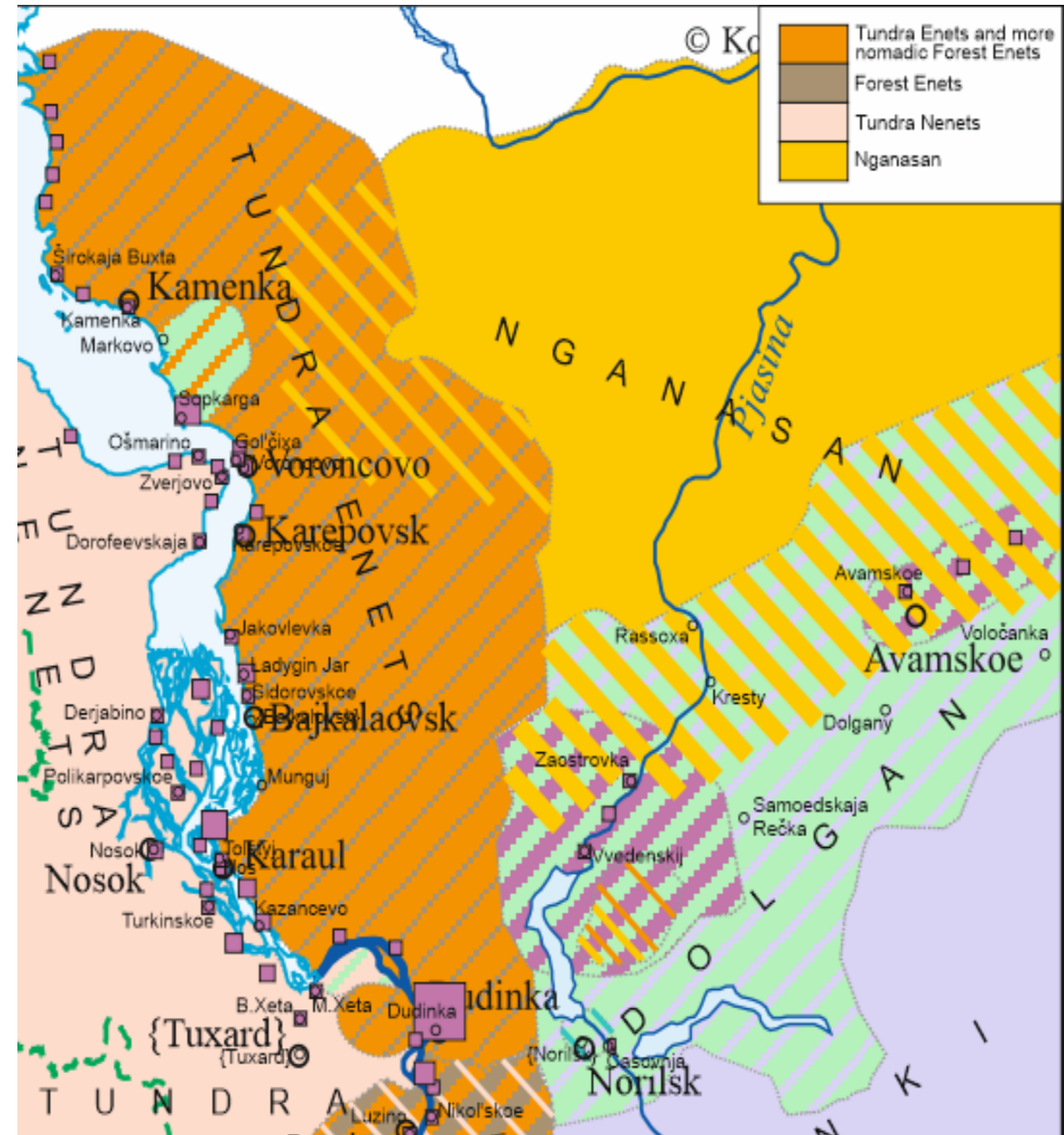
Languages of Lower Yenisei in 17th and 19th centuries ➔
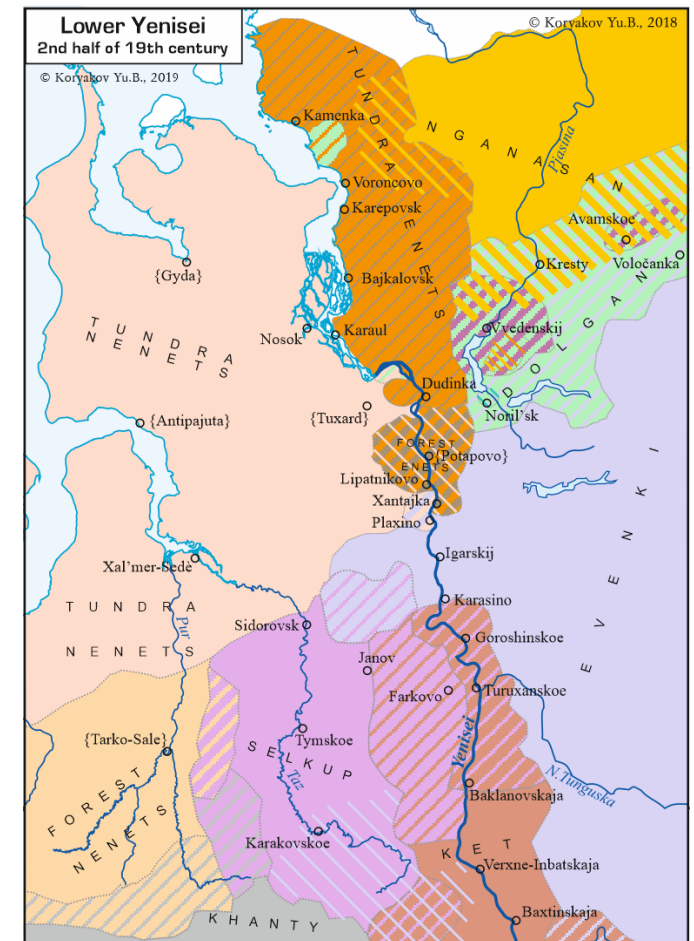
Overlapping of pastures

Overlapping of winter pastures of one group with summer pastures of another group can also be problematic when one creates maps.

For example, the Dolgan summer pastures in Taimyr coincide with the Nganasan winter pastures.
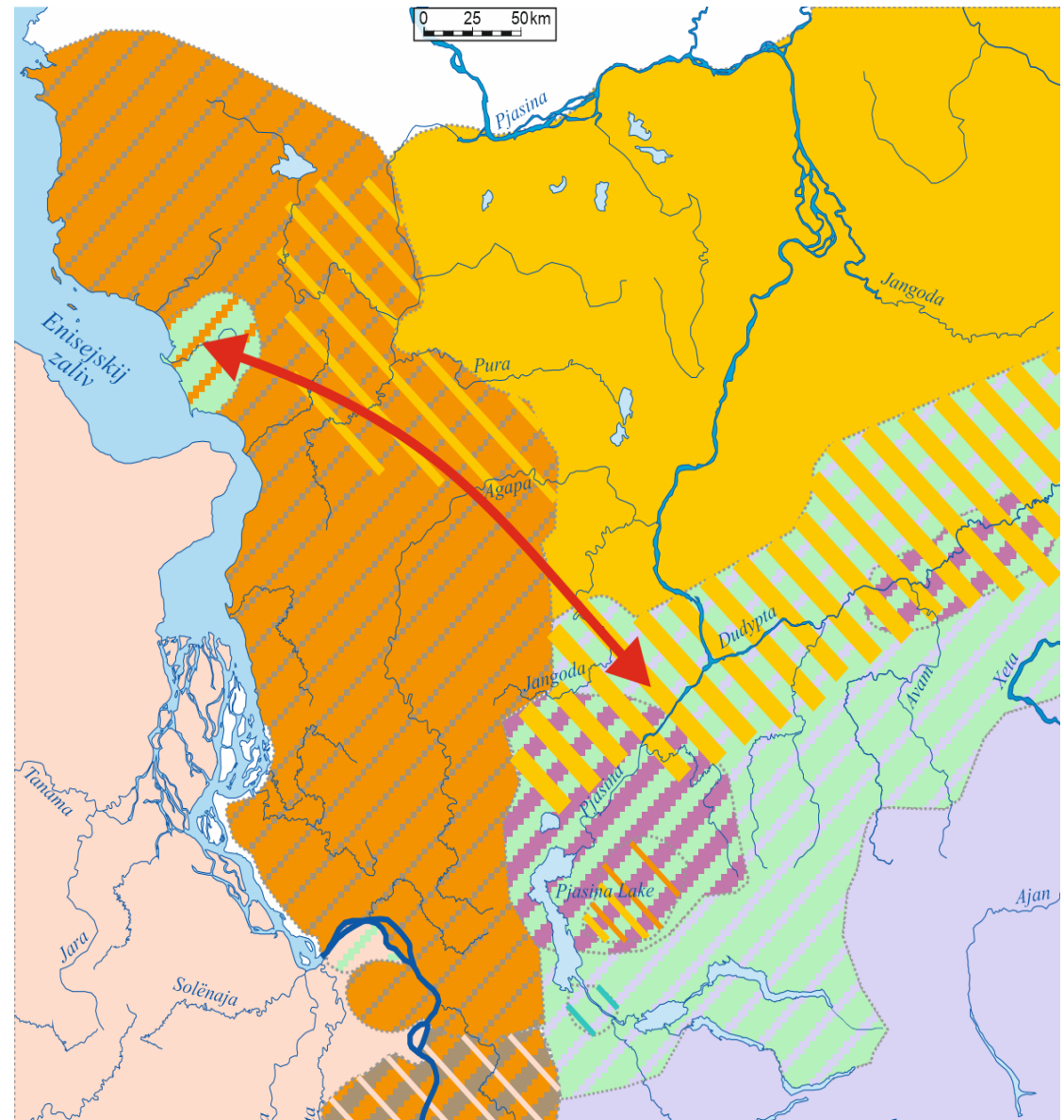

13

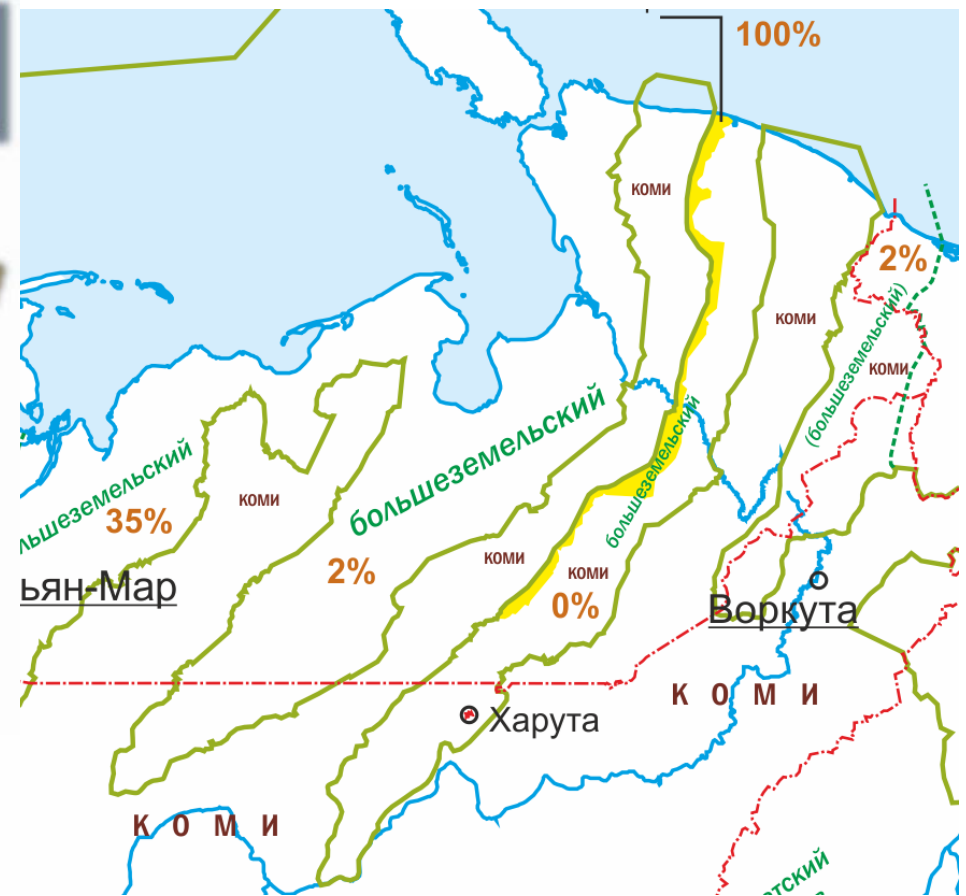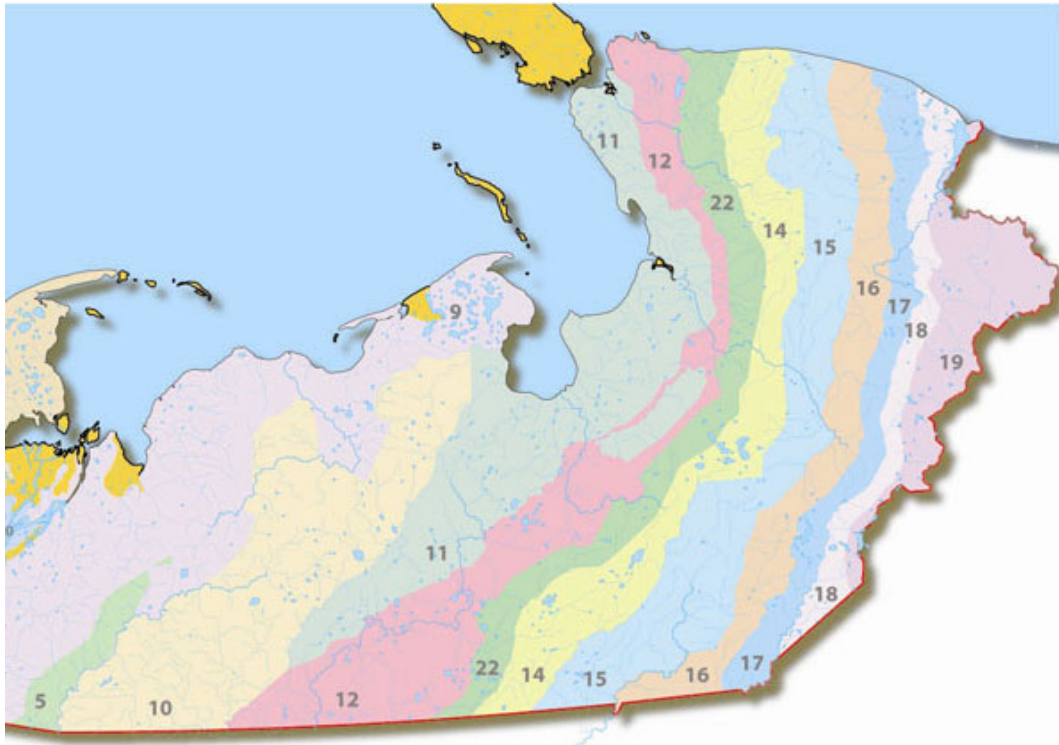# Overlapping of migration routes and pastures

Migration routes might pass through other group's territory.

For example, the Yenisei Dolgans migrated between summer and winter pastures over the Enets area.

Migration routes and pasture areas are quite non-trivial

Pasture areas in the eastern Nenets AO:

Extensive multilingualism

It is rather almost faded out now but in the past the multilingualism was wider spread in some Circumpolar areas.

• Western Nenets area (NAO) : Komi / T.Nenets ➔ Komi / Russian

• Lower Ob' area (W. YaNAO): Khanty / Komi / T.Nenets

• Lower Yenisei area: T. Enets / F. Enets / T.Nenets // Dolgan ➔ T.Nenets / Russian

• NW. Yakutia: Dolgan (Yakut) / Evenki ➔ Dolgan (Yakut) / Russian

• Lower Kolyma area: N.Yukaghir / Even / Chukchi / Yakut / Russian

Multilingualism and unclear identity

Multilingualism and often unclear ethnic identification of many groups: despite the low density (but due to high mobility), different linguistic groups constantly contacted each other, spoke several languages and often had no clear ethnic identification.

For example, the Eveno-Yukaghirs of Kolyma-Indigirka tundra area spoke two language equally, had double identity and presumably were Yukaghirized Evens.

The lack of data

Although all of the above complicates the creation of the maps, but the main problem is that it is really difficult to obtain sufficient data on all pasture areas and migration routes, especially for the earlier time spans.

The census data (quite useful in mapping settled groups) is practically useless in mapping nomadic groups.

Possible sources

The existing sources for modern maps:

• migration routes of individual groups (obtained with help of modern methods of GPS location) [Monitoring 2011];

• maps of the location of reindeer farms; oral surveys of the nomads with topographical maps [Amelina 2019];

• maps of pastures or reindeer farms (usually with no ethno-linguistic affiliation) in a certain region.

Unfortunately, only some of these sources are available for certain groups, and none at all for some.

Mapping methods

Finally we'll try to show how to display the existent data on the map.

For sedentary peoples the basic unit of language mapping is **settlements** which are merged into continuous areas only when the scale is reduced.

For nomadic peoples/languages, the initial unit is already **areas**.

At the same time, the nature of the population of such areas differs significantly from the population of areas with a settled population:
• the density of Northern nomadic regions is much lower (hundreds of times less);
• the population is not present simultaneously throughout the region, but moves seasonally and/or individually.

Mapping methods
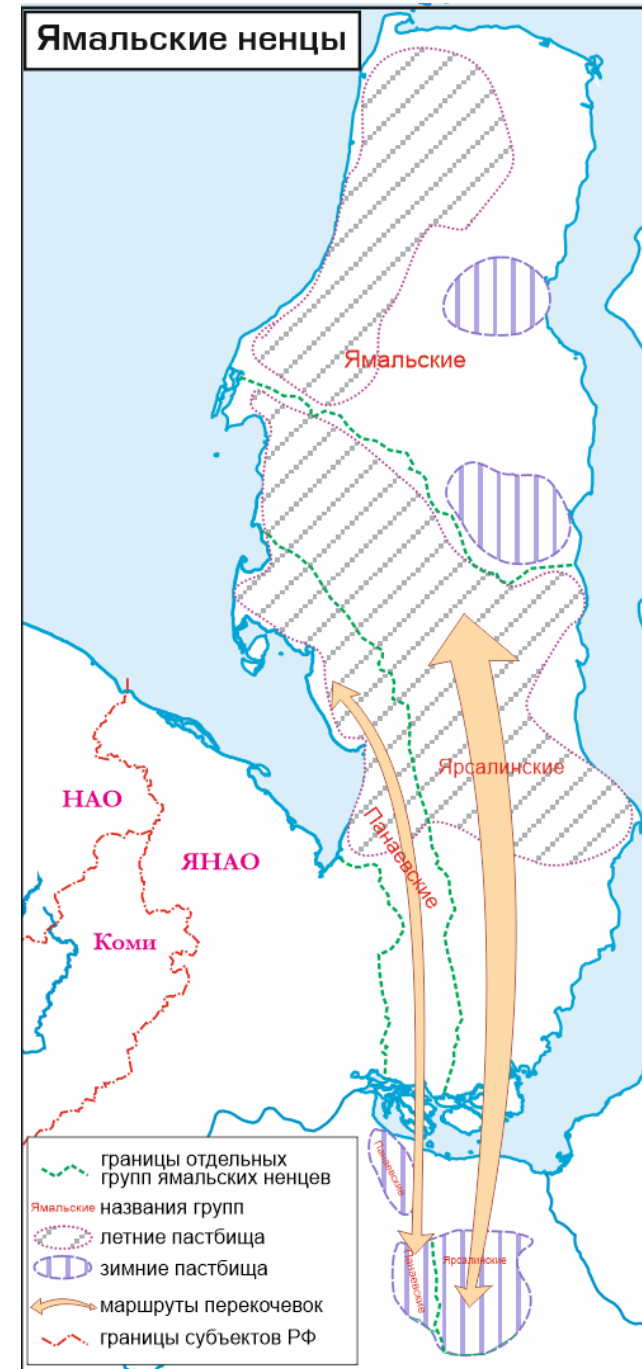
Therefore, on ethno-linguistic maps it makes sense:

1) to distinguish visually the areas of nomadic and the areas of sedentary languages/peoples;

2) especially on more detailed maps, show separately summer and winter pastures, possibly calving places, as well as areas of spring and autumn migrations.

Let us see some cases…

Creating Maps: Yamal Nenets case

Pasture areas of the Yamal Nenets include not only the Yamal region, but the areas much to the south, namely NW part of the Nadym region.

The map was created on the basis of detailed maps with the boundaries of reindeer farms and migration routes created by ethnographers (Golovnev et al. 2016; 2018). Separately, summer and winter pastures and the general directions of migrations between them, as well as the borders between the three groups of Yamal Nenets are shown.

Ямальские ненцы

Ямальские

НАО
ЯНАО
Коми
Ярсалинские
Панаевские
Ярсалинские

границы отдельных групп ямальских ненцев
Ямальские названия групп
летние пастбища
зимние пастбища
маршруты перекочевок
границы субъектов РФ

Creating Maps:
Tundra Enets case

This map shows pastures of the Tundra Enets (often together with the Nenets) with shaded areas.

The location of these pastures has been discovered by M. Amelina by interviewing local residents with a topographic map in hand.

This map also shows the migration of part of the Tundra Enets from the Vorontsovskaya tundra, first to the Levinskie Peski, and then to the Tukhard tundra.

Creating Maps: Kolyma-Alazeya case

This map is an example of combining data on the linguistic composition of settlements (2010 census) and data on the location and seasonal use of reindeer pastures (Atlas of agriculture 1989) in the Kolyma-Alazeya tundra.

The latter source does not specify ethnic affiliation of pastures. But reindeer herding is mainly done here by Evens, Yukaghirs and Chukchis and not Yakut. So these languages are shown as being used in reindeer herding.

Conclusion

So it is possible to create maps for the languages of Arctic nomadic groups but it requires more data and other, more sophisticated techniques than for mapping sedentary population.

The more interesting the result))

Thank you!

Ευχαριστώ!

Kiitos!

Баһыыба!

Takkâ!

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