

0. INTRODUCTION

0.1 The Yurak Language

Yurak (Nenets) is the language of one of the aboriginal populations of the following three administrative units in the northern part of the Soviet Union: Nenets National Okrug (Arkhangel Oblast), Yamal-Nenets National Okrug (Tyumen' Oblast), Taymyr (Dolgan-Nenets) National Okrug (Krasnoyarsk Krai). Considerable groups of Yuraks live in the Komi ASSR, in the Khanti-Mansi National Okrug and on the island Novaya Zemlya (this island is directly under the administration of the Arkhangel Oblast' Executive Committee).

According to the Soviet Census of 1959, there are about 25,000 Yuraks. About 15,000 of them live in the Nenets National Okrug (68,206 sq. mi., pop., 36,881, capital: Naryan Mar), about 3,000 in the Yamal-Nenets National Okrug (289,615 sq. mi., pop., 62,334, capital: Salekhard, formerly Obdorsk), about 1,500 in the Taymyr National Okrug (332,038 sq. mi., pop., 33,382, capital: Dudinka) and about 5,500 in the northern parts of the Komi ASSR, of the Khanti-Mansi National Okrug and on the island Novaya Zemlya (the Yuraks came to this island from the continent after 1869).

The study of Yurak language and culture is important for several reasons:

1. The Yurak population stretches over a vast area which includes the territory from Arkhangel to the Yenisey River in northwestern Siberia (estimated extent 450,000 square miles). The Yuraks have lived in this area for many thousands of years and have played an important role in the development of the characteristic reindeer culture of these regions. They resisted Russification for a long

time, and it eventually came about relatively late in the area where they live, not until the twentieth century.

2. Yurak is the most important representative of the Samoyed language group; its relationship to the Finno-Ugric languages was demonstrated at the beginning of the twentieth century. Besides Yurak the following languages belong to the Samoyed language group: Yenisey-Samoyed (Enets), Tavgi-Samoyed (Nganasan) and Ostyak-Samoyed (Sel'kup).

3. Yurak has a very interesting structure; its most fascinating characteristics are: the glottal stop (1.3), the so-called predestinative (2.14) and predicative inflections (2.15), the objective conjugation (2.33), indication of the category of number (singular, dual, plural) both in the nominal and verbal inflections and a fantastic abundance of grammatical forms.

Information about the distribution, habitat, appellations, physical anthropology, society, ethnology, folklore, history etc. of the Samoyed peoples and especially of the Yuraks can be found in the book The Samoyed Peoples and Languages by Péter Hajdú (Indiana University Publications).

0.2 The Yurak Dialects

Yurak is divided into two main dialect groups: Tundra Yurak and Forest Yurak.

0.21 The Tundra-Yurak Dialects. About 24,000 Yuraks — i. e. the overwhelming majority of the Yurak population — live in the Tundra belt from Arkhangel to the Yenisey and speak Tundra dialects. Although the territory over which Tundra Yurak is spoken is extremely large, there is considerable mutual intelligibility. A Yurak from the Kanin peninsula can understand without difficulty a Yurak from the Yenisey River.

Tundra Yurak is divided into the following three groups of regional dialects: Western, Central (Great Tundra), and Eastern. The Ural Mountains constitute the boundary between the Central and the Eastern dialect areas.

0.211 The West Tundra Dialects. Within this group one can distinguish the following three subdialects: 1. the dialect of Kanin peninsula, 2. the dialect of the Little Tundra (Malaya Zemlya), 3. the dialect of Kolguyev Island. Speakers of Western dialects number about 3,000. An important feature of these dialects is the absence of ŋ in many positions (especially initially and before g, e. g. Standard Yurak ŋe ~ e 'foot', Standard Yurak jango ~ jago 'trap'). Word order in this dialect is not so strongly fixed as elsewhere and Russian influence has been greater here than in other Yurak areas.

0.212 The Central (Great Tundra) Dialect. This dialect is spoken by about 12,000 natives on the Great Tundra (Bol'shaya Zemlya) in the eastern part of the Nenets National Okrug and in the northern section of the Komi ASSR. The Central dialect has been exposed least to alien influences: it occupies a middle position among the Yurak dialects, has no extreme developmental trends and can be easily understood by the speakers of all the other dialects. For these reasons it was chosen as the basis of Standard Yurak (cf. 0.3). For the characteristic features of the Central dialects (= Standard Yurak) see parts 1-5 of this book.

0.213 The East Tundra Dialects. Speakers of these dialects live in the area between the Ural Mountains and the Yenisey River. There are two subdialects within this group: 1. The Yamal-Ural subdialect is spoken by about 6,000 Yuraks who live in different groups in the Yamal-Nenets National Okrug, on the Yamal peninsula, on the eastern slopes of the Ural Mountains and in the region of the lower Ob' (partly in the Khanti-Mansi National Okrug). An important phonetic feature of this dialect in comparison to Standard Yurak is the high frequency of occurrence of y which can occur instead of Standard Yurak a, e and i; cf. the following examples: Standard Yurak xanz'erh ~ Yamal-Ural xynz'erh 'how?', Standard Yurak nesy ~ Yamal-Ural nyisy 'camp', Standard Yurak xib'a ~ Yamal-Ural xyb'a

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'who'. 2. The easternmost subdialect is spoken by about 3,000 Yuraks who live in the eastern part of the Yamal-Nenets National Okrug (Nadym, Upper Pur, Taz) and in the southwestern area of the Taymyr National Okrug (Yenysey). Standard Yurak z' is pronounced t', and Standard Yurak c' is č' or t' in different areas where this subdialect is spoken; e. g. Standard Yurak jarumz' ~ jarumt' 'to cry', Standard Yurak ḡač'eky ~ ḡač'eky 'child', Standard Yurak jol'c'h ~ jol't'h 'time'.

0.22 The Forest-Yurak Dialects. These dialects are spoken by about 1,000 Yuraks who live in the forest-belt ('tayga') in the southern part of the Yamal-Nenets National Okrug (Upper Pur) and in the northeast regions of the Khanti-Mansi National Okrug (on the rivers Agan, Lyamin and Nyalina). There is only partial intelligibility between the Tundra Yurak and Forest Yurak. The most important phonetic differences between Standard Yurak and Forest Yurak are: 1. Forest Yurak lacks the voiced stops b, d, g, h [voiced glottal stop]; instead of these Forest Yurak has p, t, k, ḡ corresponding to Standard Yurak b, d, g, h. 2. The consonants r and l of Standard Yurak correspond to ʌ (fricative l) in Forest Yurak. 3. For initial x (laryngeal), s and j of Standard Yurak we find k, š and v' (w') in Forest Yurak. Forest Yurak is subdivided into three subdialects: 1. the Pur-Dialect, 2. the Lyamin Dialect and 3. the Nyalina Dialect.

0.3 Standard Yurak

Until the 1930's Yurak language material was collected only for scientific (research) purposes. The most important contributions to Yurak linguistics before 1930 were P. S. Pallas (1786-1789), J. S. Vater (1811), Archimandrite Venyamin (1842), H. C. von Gabelentz (1851), M. A. Castrén (1842-1849), A. Reguly (1843-1846), J. Budenz (1882) and T. V. Lehtisalo (1911-1914).

Modern Standard Yurak was formulated by G. N. Prokof'ev and his co-workers, who were commissioned by the Institute of Northern Peoples in Leningrad in the

early thirties. Prokof'ev chose the Great Tundra Dialect as the basis for Standard Yurak. The first books in Standard Yurak were published in 1932 in Leningrad. They were: I. Kulagin. Sud p̄amge (What is a law court?). Translated by A. Pyrerka., and G. N. Prokof'ev. Jedej vada. N'urf'ej p'ela (New word. First part). Between 1932 and 1934 the books were published in Latin characters, after 1939 in Cyrillic. Books in Standard Yurak published up till now number between seventy and eighty. They are mainly school books (primers), popular scientific works, products of political literature (translations from Russian), dictionaries and grammars.

Standard Yurak (cf. 0.212) is codified in the following works:

1. Pyrerka, A. P. and N. M. Tereščenko. *Russko-neneckiy slovar'* (A Russian-Yurak Dictionary), ed. by I. I. Meščaninov. About 15,000 words. With 'Kratkiy grammaticheskiy ocherk neneckogo literaturnogo yazyka' by N. M. Tereščenko (315-405). Moscow, 1948. Publishing House 'Ogiz'. 405 pp.

2. Tereščenko, N. M. *Nenecko-russkiy slovar'* (Yurak-Russian Dictionary). About 8,000 words. With 'Kratkiy ocherk grammatiki i leksiki neneckogo yazyka' by N. M. Tereščenko (238-314). Leningrad, 1955. Gosudarstvennoye uchebno-pedagogicheskoye izdatel'stvo ministerstva prosveshcheniya RSFSR. Leningradskoye otdeleniye. 314 pp.

3. Kupriyanova, Z. N., L. V. Khomich, and A. M. Ščerbakova. *Neneckiy yazyk* (The Yurak Language). Uchebnoye posobiye dlya pedagogicheskikh uchilishch. Leningrad, 1957. Gosudarstvennoye uchebno-pedagogicheskoye izdatel'stvo ministerstva prosveshcheniya RSFSR. Leningradskoye otdeleniye. 284 pp.

The present manual is based on the afore mentioned three works; other sources were used only occasionally.

The Cyrillic characters used in Standard Yurak have been transliterated into Latin ones in the present manual; the rules of transliteration are given in 1.4. Some cases

of my transliteration may seem strange to linguists, e. g. x is used for Cyrillic х, which has the sound value h (laryngeal) in present day Standard Yurak; furthermore, I indicate the voiceless glottal stop by h, the voiced one by h, the latter only where the indication of voicing is absolutely necessary. In this way I hope to have introduced a Latin alphabet for Standard Yurak which consists only of simple Latin letters and which, therefore, can easily be printed and read. The use of the signs ' (voiceless glottal stop) and " (voiced glottal stop) which are employed in scholarly publications and in Standard Yurak Orthography (in the latter only ' for both voiceless and voiced glottal stops) renders printing and reading much more difficult, since the use of the symbol ' in other functions (apostrophe, quotation marks, etc.) tends to cause confusion.

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