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**Sociolinguistic Notes on a Samoyedic Speaking Northern People: Nenets and Their Language****Abstract**

Contemporary Samoyeds are made up of Enets, Nganasans, Selkups and Nenets, and the most numerous of these peoples is the latter. Nenets is not only a language with the highest number of speakers among the Samoyedic languages but together with Western Greenlandic and Northern Saami one of that of all languages of the North. As for that of the languages of the Russian North, it is the indigenous language with the highest number of speakers. Nenets Samoyedic, which has three dialects, is used in education and for production of literary works even though parochially. The first written language of Nenets Samoyedic was formed by Orthodox missionaries at the end of 19th century. However it did not last long. The written language used today was formed in 1931 based on the Bolshaya Zemlya dialect of the Tundra Nenets. Nenets Samoyedic had been used for inter-cultural communication up to the beginning of the 20th century by Nenets, Khanties, Mansies and Komi-Ziryans but was gradually replaced by Komi-Ziryan then on.

Keywords: Samoyeds, Samoyedic, Nenets, Nenets Samoyedic, multilingualism.

1. Introduction

“The North” as a geographical and ethno-cultural phenomenon is a region involving northern parts of the continents of Asia, Europe and Northern America surrounding the Arctic regions. Nowadays “The Small Peoples of the North” as an ethnographical classification includes peoples speaking more than twenty linguistic varieties exceeding in seven counties in the three aforementioned continents, namely Inuit in Greenland; Inuit and Atabasqan (Dene) in the Labrador, Quebec, The Northeastern Territories and Yukon states of Canada; Eskimo-Aleut, Atabasqan, Eyaq, Tilingit, Khayda and Tsimsh in the Alaskan state of USA; Eskimo-Aleut, Chukchi-Koriak, Itelmen, Nivkh (Giliak), Yukagir, Ket, Tungusic (Evenk, Even, Ulcha, Udehe, Negidal and Oroch), Samoyedic (Nenets, Selkup, Nganasan and Enets), Ob Ugric (Mansi-Vogul and Khanty-Ostiak), Turkic (Dolgan, Tofalar-Karagas, Shor, Teleut, Chulim) and Saami in the Russian Federation; Saami in Finland, Sweden and Norway (Slezkine 1994: 1; Krauss 1997: 1; Bulatova 2009: 161).

It is seen that these peoples, which are classified under a single name, speak varieties belonging to at least six linguistic families, which are Eskimo-Aleut (Inuit, Eskimo and Aleut), Atabasqan-Eyaq-Tilingit (Atabasqan, Eyaq, Tilingit and Khayda), Tsimshianic, Paleo-Asiatic (Chukchi-Koriak, Itelmen, Nivkh, Yukagir, and Ket), Uralic (Saami, Mansi, Khanty and Samoyedic) and Altaic (Tungusic and Turkic).

The languages of the North, apart from the Native American ones belonging to the Atabasqan-Eyaq-Tilingit linguistic phylum together with Inuit and Tsimsh, are spoken partially or exclusively in the Russian Federation. The regions, where these peoples live and these languages are spoken are called the “Russian North”. Despite of their ethnical and linguistic diversity the peoples of the Russian North have experienced a shared faith during the process of their subjugation by the Tsarist Russian Empire.

It is recorded that the Russian invasion of the Northern regions followed by the subjugation of the Northern peoples had taken place during the 16th and 17th centuries (Potapov 1964: 108; Golovnev and Osherenko 1999: 44)¹ and the installation of the Russian rule had taken place in three phases. The period between the years 1580-1720 is a period of direct rule, when the Russians ruled the region by means of military governors and natives were registered under Russian fortress or settlements for the collection of a tax named *yasaq*. Russians collected the taxes themselves during this period. They usually held hostages in order to compel the natives to come and pay their taxes and in general did not intervene native life apart from taxation. The period between the years 1720-1822 is a period of indirect rule, when the tax payer natives were ruled by a native principal and were registered under regional communities or tribes named *ulus*. Finally the period between the years 1822-1900 is a period, when the region was transformed into an element of the Russian state structure by the formation of a local administration with executive, financial and judicial functions. The relations of the Russians with the peoples of the North had taken form in parallel to this historic periods, which reflects the establishment of the Russian authority in the region. The 17th century had been the period of Russian invasion and the resistance of the peoples of the North against this invasion. The 18th century had been the period of the Christianization of the peoples of the North, whereas the 19th century had been the period of legalization of the Russian authority (Golovnev and Osherenko 1999: 44).

¹ The information given by Potapov on the Russian seizure of the North in particular and Siberia in general is quite different than that of Golovnev and Osherenko. Potapov states that the peoples of the North did not resist the Russians leaving the Siberian Khan Kuchum alone and on the contrary the welcomed the Russians with great “hospitality”. On the other hand Golovnev and Osherenko note that the Northern peoples were quite hostile against foreigners. The Mansi surged into the west of the Urals in order to stop the Russians whereas the Khanty countered the Russians around the banks of the Irtysh River. The Samoyedic Selkups, standing beside Kuchum Khan, showed a violent resistance against the Russians while the Nenets had destroyed a Russian detachment around the Taz River.

As a matter of fact even British explorers had been killed by the Northern peoples. It should be borne in mind that Potapov had published his work during the Soviet era and had even referred in his work to the remarks of Karl Marks. It is not hard to guess that he carried the worries of the Soviet official ideology. On the other hand Golovnev and Osherenko published their work in the post-Soviet era, reporting on the incidents of the period in detail based on the information provided by the historian Viktor A. Zibarev rather than an ideologist.

Additionally Slezkine (1994: 11 ff) has reported that the peoples of the North had shown military resistance to the Russians basing his claims on narratives compiled from the Northerners. Therefore it would not too assertive to say that the claims put forth by Golovnev and Osherenko together with Slezkine sounds more accurate as they are backed up by both historical and traditional sources. However it should be noted that the Selkup, the Mansi and the Khanty, who initially had stood beside Kuchum Khan, later abandoned him as he alienated these peoples by attempting to convert them to Islam (Forsyth 2000: 27).

Apart from a few exceptional incidents it is seen that the Northern peoples were not affected by the civil war, which took place during the interlude between the collapse of Tsarist Russia and the establishment of the Soviet Union. However, the peoples of the North revolted many times from the end of the 1920's, when the Soviet government started to become influential in the region. Particularly the simultaneous rebellions of the Forest Nenets and the Khants around the Kazim River, the Selkups around the River Tolka and the Nenets in the Yamal Peninsula in the 1930's had been very effective. The revolt of the Yamal Nenets known as Mandala and the joint revolt of the Forest Nenets and the Khants around River Kazim known as the Kazim Wars had been very violent in particular. The last revolt was again that of the Yamal Nenets in 1943, when the reindeer herds were attempted to be nationalized. All of the rebellions in the North were that of the nomads. The settled Northerners either remained impartial or cooperated with the Soviets. These rebellions were orchestrated by shamans and this brought along the annihilation of the shamans after social stability was insured. This incident is remembered by the Nenets as "the drums of the shamans went silent after the last battle." (Golovnev and Osherenko 1999: 68-69; Leete: 237).

The Soviet Union integrated the peoples of the North, who lived on a vast land comprising almost half of the former Soviet Union, synchronically to the rebellions in the North. In 1925, the Saamis, the Mansi, the Khants, the Nenets, the Nganasans, the Selkups, the Enets, the Evenks, the Evens, the Ulchas, the Nanais, the Udegeis, the Negidals, the Oroks, the Orochens, the Dolgans, the Tofas, the Kets, the Yukagirs, the Chukchis, the Koriaks, the Eskimos, the Aleuts, the Itelemens, the Giliaks and the Chuvs were classified as a special group of people under the name "the Small Nations of the North" (Pika and Prokhorov: xxx).

In 1930 national *okrugs* 'regions' were established for the small peoples of the North and the term "Far North" came into use widely in Soviet sources for the lands inhabited by these peoples. However, between the years 1950-1980 it is seen that the borders of the Far North had changed continuously according to Soviet economic and social strategies. At the present the Far North is consisting of a land around one million kilometer square composed of sixteen *oblasts* 'provinces', *krais* and republics together with seven autonomous regions. There are 165 *rayons* 'counties', 102 cities and 364 workers' villages within the borders of this piece of land, which is inhabited by a population around eleven million (Pika and Prokhorov 1999: xxx; Pika 1999b: 4).

In 1980, 'the regions inhabited by the peoples of the North' was created as opposed to the Far North by a resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the USSR. Thus the regions inhabited by the peoples of the North was separated from those inhabited by the immigrant non-indigenous arrivals and as a consequent more land was made available for industrialization. From the year 1980 on, governments have reduced the number of 'the regions inhabited by the peoples of the North'. At the present the majority of these regions fall into the 16 provinces constituting the Far North. Only six rayons fall outside the borders of the Far North, being two each in the Irkutsk Oblast, the Buriat Republic and the Khabarovsk and the Primorsk Krai. However it should be noted that many rayons of the Far North are not within the borders of 'the regions inhabited by the peoples of the North'. Presently there are 118 rayons, 8 cities and 3 workers' villages in the 'regions inhabited by the peoples of the North'.

The population of these regions are around 1.600.000 and only the 9% of this population is constituted by the Northern peoples, who deal with traditional jobs like reindeer raising (96% of the domesticated reindeer population of the Russian Federation), fishery industry (8% of the RF's fishing crops) and hunting (52% of RF's hunted furs and 58% of meet of wild ungulates and wildfowl) (Pika 1999b: 4-6).

The peoples of the North became minorities in their own regions while the population the North showed a sharp increase as a result of swift industrialization during the years following the World War II. At the present the correlation of the peoples of the North ranges from the 23% in the Koriak Okrug to the 3% in the Khanty-Mansi Okrug. The policy of sedentarization of the peoples of the North, which was brought into force from the end of the 1930's by the Soviet administration, had catastrophic consequences for these peoples. This policy caused the collapse of traditional economic life and hence the social disintegration of the native population which entailed the disappearance of their ethnic integrity together with their national and cultural characteristics.

However, in spite of this long-standing policy 10% of the peoples of the North still has a nomadic lifestyle. Industrialization in the region does not only present a danger by inspiring an immigrant population but also seriously threatens the health of the individuals. The rate of deaths caused by circulatory and oncological illnesses and child deaths are quite high among the peoples of the North. Additionally the rapid change of the social order has affected the social psychology of the Northerners negatively. Alcoholism, homicide and suicide have become social problems intimidating the peoples of the North (Pike and Prokhorov 1999: xxx-xxxvi).

2. The Samoyeds and Samoyedic

Samoyedic, which currently forms one of the two main branches of the Uralic linguistic family as opposed to Finno-Ugric, is generally spoken in the regions to the east of the Ural Mountains and constitutes the easternmost section of the Uralic languages. It is thought that the primordial ancestors of the Samoyedic-speaking communities appeared partially as a result of eastwards migration of Uralic speakers and partially as a result of linguistic diffusion. Probably the first form of Samoyedic emerged as a result of these presumptive course of events when the language of the migrating populace developed independently from that of the Proto-Uralic speaking mass (Abondolo 2006: 1-2; Janhunen 2006: 457; Ackerman and Salminen 2006: 577). Proto-Samoyedic is assumed to have emerged in the region between the middle courses of the Ob and Yenisei Rivers in Southwestern Siberia, which falls to the east of the Urals, as the first language to depart from the Uralic protolanguage (Suihkonen 2002: 169; Abondolo 2006: 1-2; Janhunen 2006: 457). In the light of linguistic and archeological data it is estimated that the events, which gave rise to the emergence of the Samoyedic protolanguage, took place around 8000 B.C. (Janhunen 1992: 206; Abondolo 2006: 2). It is thought that the speakers of this Samoyedic protolanguage were a community dealing with fishing and hunting (Hajdu 1963: 42).

It is estimated that the fission of the Samoyedic protolanguage into dialects had occurred shortly before the birth of Christ. Samoyedic, which, which had spread northwards along the Ob and Yenisei basins and southwards in the direction of the Altai and Sayan Mountains, were divided

into various dialects (Janhunen 2006: 457)². The first foreign people that the Samoyeds encountered at this phase of time is thought to be Turks as Chinese sources record that some Turkic peoples had pressed upon Europe during the centuries just before Christ due to the disturbances among Turkic tribes³. Certain words with Turkic origin present in contemporary Samoyedic languages suggest that this initial relations between Turkic and Samoyedic peoples were peaceful and commercial. Additionally words with Yeniseic origin present in modern Samoyedic languages reveal that the Samoyeds had encountered the ancestors of the modern-day Yeniseic peoples in the Altai – Sayan Mountains region in Southern Siberia during their eastwards expansion in the centuries preceding Christ (Hajdu 1963: 43-44).

It is considered that an unknown number of Samoyedic varieties had disappeared in the historical process. For instance it is thought that some of the southern varieties of Samoyedic had died out before the 18th century as their speakers were assimilated by Turkic peoples like the Khakas, the Altaians and the Tuvans. As a matter of fact it is suggested that the assimilation of the Samoyeds by Turkic peoples started in the 9th century, when the Yenisei Kirghiz dominated the Altai – Sayan region, as the Samoyedic tribes were one of the main elements of this polity together with the Turkic peoples (Forsyth 1993: 194-195; Wurm 1996b: 973; Abondolo 2006: 2; Janhunen 2006: 457; Killi Yılmaz 2010: 207). Indeed in the 17th century, when the lands of the Yenisei Kirghiz of the 9th century were shared by four khanates, the Mators were situated in the east together with the Koybals. The Mator Samoyeds fell into the Tuba Khanate. It is assumed that the Sayan Samoyeds in particular had Turkicized among Tofas together with some Kettic peoples from the Old Turkic period on. Additionally it is claimed that the origins of the Yenisei Kirghiz were Samoyedicized Yeniseians and that of the Tuvans and the Sagays were southern Samoyeds. On the other hand, the emergence of the Dolgans as a result of the Yakutization of Nganasan (Tavgi), Enets and Nenets (Yurak) Samoyeds in the 17th century, when the Yakuts moved into the Samoyed territories escaping from Russian pressure, is another claim (Lopatin 1940: 206; Menges 1955: 112-113; Menges 1956: 166, 168, 171; Menges 1959: 91; Menges 1961: 110; Killi Yılmaz: 2010: 165, 198, 208). Moreover it is put forth that ethnonyms like *Altay kiji*, *Tuba kiji* or *Shor kiji* are Samoyedic style and came into existence as a

² However it should be noted that Gumilev attributes the northwards expansion of the Samoyeds to the great drought, which took place in the 3rd century (Gumilev 2003: 140). On the other hand Hajdu (1963: 42-44) draws a completely different picture on the emergence of the first Samoyeds and the Samoyedic protolanguage as well as the breakup of this language into dialects. Hajdu has put forth that the ancestors of the Samoyeds departed from the main Finno-Ugric mass around 3000 B.C. and that they kept in touch with the Fin-Ugors for a while. Additionally he starts the dialectal breakup of Samoyedic with the birth of Christ. Samoyeds began to spread towards the northern parts of Siberia around year zero and the ancestors of the present Northern Samoyeds broke away from the Southern Samoyeds during the initial centuries after Christ.

After the Southern Samoyeds remained in place for a while a part of them (the ancestors of the present Selkups) moved to the northwest towards the Middle Ob basin as the rest went towards the Sayan Mountains. Modern-day Samoyedic peoples came into existence as a result of this diffusion and their intermingling with sub-Arctic peoples as well as Turkic peoples.

³ Hajdu propounds that the most northeastern Turkic people were the Ting-lings, living around the Irtysh and Ob Rivers, according to Chinese sources and that the same region was inhabited by Samoyeds at least to a certain extent. He also notes that the Chinese source Wei-lie records that among the Ting-lings lived another people, which spoke a strange language, dealt with fur trade and moved more swiftly than horses by sliding. Hajdu thinks that this people was no one but Samoyeds.

result of Turkicization of Samoyedic groups (Schönig 1997: 47). Notwithstanding the fact that it is hard to detect whether some Samoyedic peoples Turkicized or not before the 18th century⁴, some Samoyeds did for sure. For instance it is known that five of the thirteen constituent tribes of the Turkic Koybals have Samoyedic origins (Orkun 1932; Menges 1956: 161; Gömeç 2002: 42). Again it is claimed that the Turkic Kachins, Karagas and Soyots have assimilated a great number of Samoyeds. Word list compiled from the Southern Samoyeds during the 18th century display that Mator Samoyedic were under the influence of Soyon and Karagas Turkic whereas Koybal, i.e. Kamas Samoyedic were under that of Khakas Turkic. As a matter of fact the last Samoyedic speaker among the Turkic Kachins were recorded to have passed away in 1889 (Orkun 1932: 83-84; Menges 1956: 161-163; Wurm 1996b: 973-974; Krauss 1997: 21; Abondolo 2006: 2; Janhunen 2006: 458). However, there is a matter that needs further explanation. Attribution of vanishing of the Southern Samoyeds and accordingly Samoyedic solely to their assimilation by Turkic and other neighboring peoples would not be a correct approach, forasmuch as it is a historical fact that many Southern Samoyeds had vanished as a result of contagious diseases picked up from Russian and other European hunters, traders and settlers. It is known that many Southern Samoyeds have migrated to more northerly regions as a result of these catastrophic incidents (Wixman 1988: 173). For instance, many people not only from Samoyeds but from other Western Siberian native populations such as Khanties, Mansies and Kets had vanished during the smallpox outbreaks during the years 1630-31. The Kets and the Samoyedic Selkups had experienced another fatal smallpox epidemic in the 1660's. In the 1830's the Samoyedic Nganasans lost half of their population as a result of smallpox outbreaks and other inflammatory diseases. The wars among themselves and with other neighboring peoples is another reason for the vanishing of many Southern Samoyeds. For instance the Tundra Samoyeds had clashed with the Russians and their Finnic vassals Komi-Ziryans in the west of the Urals and with the Khanties, Selkups and with the Tungus in the east of the Urals. The Selkups migrated to the north towards the Polar Regions in the 17th century as a result of these clashes as they could not stand the pressures put on them by the Russians, Khanties and the Evenks. Likewise the Russian presence in Berezov and Obdorsk caused the migration of Nenets to more remote regions. Some of them migrated to the west of the Urals while others escaped northwards to the tundra regions of the Yamal Peninsula. Another group migrated to

⁴ Potapov notes that Pallas, who visited the Koybal steppes in the 1770's, claims Koybals and Mators still could speak Samoyedic together with the Karagas and the Kamasins (Potapov 1962: 148). Prokof'yeva, on the other hand, claims that only the Kamasins among these peoples could still speak Samoyedic at the beginning of the 20th century, whereas the Mators (i.e. the Koybals), the Karagas (i.e. the Tofa Samoyeds) and the other Samoyedic peoples started to speak Turkic (Prokof'yeva 1964: 549). It seems that there is some sort of confusion here. Janhunen notes that Koybal Samoyedic is another name for Kamas Samoyedic and Karagas Samoyedic for Mator Samoyedic. He also reports that the ethnonyms 'Koybal' and 'Karagas' have geographical bases (Janhunen 2006: 457-458). Under the circumstances, despite the fact that some Samoyeds Turkicized among Koybals and the Karagas goes without any doubt, it seems baseless to predicate all of the Koybal and Karagas Turks as a people on non-Turkic origins. Forasmuch as it is clear that the Koybal and Karagas Turks as well inherited their ethnonyms on geographical basis. On the other hand Nasilov alleged that all of the Siberian Turkic peoples and varieties have emerged as result of linguistic expansion, i.e. by Turkicization of ancient Siberian peoples like Ugors, Samoyeds, Kets and etc. (Nasilov 1997: 51). First of all this allegation contains a logical error in itself. Turkicizing such a big number of peoples needs a very large Turkic population and this Turkic population would increase further with the addition of the Turkicized ones. However, the Siberian Turkic peoples apart from the Yakuts are very small peoples. Curiously enough it is these small peoples that are commonly being alleged to be Turkicized.

more easterly regions. The latter collided with the Samoyedic Enets in the Yenisei region, which consequently pushed the Enets to the east of the Yenisei River (Gürsoy-Naskali 1997b: 12-13; Forsyth 2000: 19, 58, 174, 177-178). When these incidents are taken into consideration assimilation should be regarded as the lattermost among the factors, which caused the vanishing of the Southern Samoyedic peoples and varieties. A more reasonable explanation would be that Samoyeds became exposed to language loss and assimilation since their numbers had been reduced and accordingly their social structures were subverted as a result of contagions, wars and migrations.

3. Divisions of Samoyedic Peoples and Classification of Samoyedic Varieties

Samoyedic peoples are classified in three main groups as the Tundra Samoyeds, the Taiga Samoyeds and the Mountain Samoyeds according to their geographical distribution. The Nganasans, the Nenets and the Enets from the Tundra Samoyeds constitute the Tundra Samoyeds and they are scattered all over the polar tundra regions of the European Russia and Western Siberia. The Taiga Samoyeds are formed by the Selkups. They live in the forestry areas of Western Siberia, which somewhat coincides with the oldest Samoyedic homeland. The Mountain Samoyeds used to be formed by the Kamas and the Mators. They used to live in the wooded mountainous regions of Southern Siberia (Janhunen 2006: 458)⁵. The varieties spoken by the Enets, the Nenets and the Nganasan, i.e. the Tundra Samoyeds, form Northern Samoyedic, whereas that of the Kamas, the Mator together the Selkup, i.e. the Taiga and Mountain Samoyeds, used to form Southern Samoyedic (Wizman 1988: 173; Janhunen 1992: 205). When the Samoyedic varieties are put in line from north to south they are dispersed as Nganasan (alias Tavgi), Enets (alias Yeniseic Samoyed), Nenets (alias Yurak), Selkup (alias Ostiak Samoyedic), Kamas (alias Koybal Samoyedic) and Mator (Motor – alias Taygi or Karagas Samoyedic). Additionally it is recorded that Yurat as a transition variety between Nenets and Enets, and Abakan Samoyedic as a transition variety between Kamas and Mator existed in the past (Abondolo 2006: 2; Janhunen 2006: 457-458).

The last speakers of Kamas and Mator were assimilated among Turkic peoples and that of Yurat among Nenets (Krasuss 1997: 20; Abondolo 2006: 2). Therefore the remaining four Samoyedic varieties are Nenets, Enets, Nganasan and Selkup.

4. The Nenets and Their Language

It was mentioned before that the contemporary Samoyeds are formed by the Enets, the Nganasans, the Selkups and the Nenets, the latter being the most populous. The self-designation of the Nenets is Nenets or Hasava. They were known in the northern parts of the European Russia and in the Ob basin as Samoyeds and as Yurak in the Yenisei basin during the pre-Soviet era (Wixman 1988: 144, 172, 224). At the census held in 1926-27 in the Polar Regions 5981 Samoyeds and 192 Yuraks were recorded (Volzhanina 2009: 121). That is to say the total number of the Nenets were 6173.

4.1. Historical and Social Background

⁵ Castren classified the Samoyeds under three big groups as the Yuraks, the Tavgis, and the Ostiak Samoyeds and under two small groups as the Yeniseic Samoyeds and the Kamasins, five groups in total (Schiefner 1854: VI). As it is seen the Mators (Taigi, Karagas) are missing from this classification.

It is supposed that the ancestors of the Nenets emerged around the 1st century, when the northern branch of Samoyeds departed from the southern branch and arrived to the Polar Regions both in the west and east of the Urals, assimilating a native Polar people. This Samoyed group had been in the neighborhood of Ugors and had been 'n contact with the area as far as Lake Onega 'n the Veps country during the following centuries. This interactivity has caused the emergence of the Nenets⁶. The Novgorodians, who increased their commercial and military actions in the woodlands of the North and the polar coastline from the 10th century on, domineered the Komi-Ziryans without facing any resistance. However, they were encountered with the fierce opposition of the Perm Ostiaks, i.e. the Khanties, and that of the Nenets living in the basin of the Pechora River and a Novgorodian marauding troop was destroyed around the Urals in 1187. In spite of the fact that similar incidents continued till mid-15th century, the Nenets paid tribute to the Novgorodians between 13th-15th centuries. At the same time they paid tribute to the Khanate of Sibir between the 14th-16th centuries. As a result of the increasing rivalry between the Muscovite and the Novgorodians from the 14th century on, these two Russian principalities contended with each other for the Nenets lands and this struggle ended in favor of the Muscovite in 1456, when a treaty was concluded. The Khanties, Mansies and the Nenets submitted to the Russians temporarily after the Muscovite campaigns of 1483 and 1499 to the hinterland of the Urals. Annihilation of the Khanate of Sibir in the 16th century resulted in the consolidation of the Russian dominance in Western Siberia. This incident coincides with commence of trade between the Russians and the Nenets. The Muscovite had endeavored to explore the region and establish posts with aid of Cossack and Komi-Ziryan auxiliary troops. However this attempt was disrupted by the violent insurgency of the Nenets. Nevertheless in 1601 the Russians established the Mangazeya Fort, which was named after the Samoyedic Mongkansi tribe, on the bank of the Taz River about a 160 km from its estuary. This fort rapidly developed into a Russian town with a stockade, a governor's residence, a church, a prison and barracks as well as a trading area outside its walls including commercial buildings, a custom house and several churches and houses. The Russian settlers based in Mangazeya penetrated to the surrounding arctic regions from here and established an outpost network collecting fur tribute from the native peoples, the Nenets in particular. They gradually penetrated eastwards reaching the Yenisei and established Turukhansk in 1604 and Khantaysk in 1620. Mangazeya had become the capital of the Central Siberian Province environing a region as far as the Tunguska River in the mountainous territory in the south and the Lena basin in the east, for seventy years after its establishment (Forsyth 2000: 2-3, 28, 36)⁷.

The Nenets, who principally lived on wild reindeer and waterfowl hunting in both sides of the Urals, were forced by the hostage and yasaq system into weasel hunting and fox hunting after the extinction of weasels in North-western Siberia as a result of overhunting in order to meet the demands of Russian authorities and traders. The Nenets continuously revolted, raided the caravans of the yasaq collectors and attacked the Russians fortresses under these circumstances. Bishop Leszczynski's attempt to convert Siberian natives to Orthodoxy at the beginning of the 18th century whipped up the opposition of the Nenets. The Nenets organized many attacks, including six major ones, on Pustozersk, which was situated in the west of the Urals, in the course of these events. Particularly the assaults between the years 1714-18 had been violent

⁶ "The Nenets", Red Book of the Peoples of the Russian Empire, <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/Nenets.shtml>

⁷ "The Nenets", Red Book of the Peoples of the Russian Empire, <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/Nenets.shtml>

threatening Berezov and Surgut, the main yasaq centers on the Lower Ob, and punished the Khant tribes, who gave into the yasaq tax and the Russian religion. Nenets attacks on Pustozersk continued until 1746. On the other hand, in the east of the Urals, the presence of Russian authorities in Berezov and Obdorsk provoked the migration of some of the Nenets, who lived in the Ob region, to the west of the Urals, while another group escaped to the north into the tundra region of the Yamal Peninsula in addition to a group, which escaped farther east, towards the Yenisei. The latter clashed with the Samoyedic Enets, the Somatu and Muggadi tribes in particular, in the Taz basin dislocating them. Another result of the Russian economic pressure in the 18th century had been the gradual adoption of great reindeer economy by the Nenets throughout the century. This new situation affected the Nenets population positively like all native peoples of Central and Northern Siberia, which acquired pastoralism. The population of the Nenets living in the arctic regions of Western Russia increased from 1400-1500 to approximately 6000, multiplying four fold between the years 1600-1850. Likewise the Yamal Nenets population tripled until 1900 (Krupnik 1993: 178-180; Krupnik 1998: 228-229; Forsyth 2000: 178; Sasaki 2010: 81-84)⁸.

Unrest among the Nenets continued during the first quarter of the 19th century due to reasons like subjugation by military methods, arbitrary fur taxes, quaking of the their primordial tribal order, which was based on exogamy and the collective ownership of the pastures as a result of the monetary economy. Tribes became divided into bands each owning a small number of reindeers and became easy marks for individuals, who succeeded in gathering up big herds in expense of their tribesmen. It was not only the presence of the Russian authorities, tradesmen or villagers, which affected the lives of the Nenets adversely in this period. The Nenets in the Ob region were classified as nomads and were subjected to Khanty regions as they had no legalized tribal chiefs. Thus they became tributary and legally subordinated to their traditional enemies. In 1824, particularly after the establishment of a mission in Arkhangelsk with the purpose of evangelization of the Samoyeds, the attempt to evangelize the Nenets was accelerated. The spiritual effigies present in tribal temples were burnt by missionaries and young Nenets were educated at the parish schools present in Bolshaya Zemlya, Kanin and Timan. The Nenets accepted Christianity only after rumors of military action. It was recorded that 3303 out of 4000⁹ Nenets living in the Arkhangelsk Gubernia were baptized as a result of the evangelization activities led by archpriest Venyamin during the five years' time between the years 1825-1830¹⁰. The goal of the mission was to turn the Nenets into the full and equal citizens of the Czar by

⁸ "The Nenets", Red Book of the Peoples of the Russian Empire, <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/Nenets.shtml>

⁹ It is fact that the Nenets population was regularly underestimated throughout the 19th century. The natives were usually taken into account at centers, where the yasaq tribute was collected and the nomadic lifestyle of the Nenets had precluded determining their real numbers. The Nenets were frequently out of the reach of Russian authorities by virtue of herding the reindeers. For instance only the elders and the Samoyeds, who came to pay the yasaq tribute could be taken into account at the census of 1897 (Volzhanina 2009: 119).

¹⁰ It is understood from some of the comments made by Archpriest Venyamin in his memoirs that some of the Nenets accepted Christianity of their own volition during this evangelization campaign. Particularly the ones, who were on familiar ground to Russian lifestyle like the Nenets and Khanties working for rich Russian and Komi-Ziryan reindeer owners, were a majority among the first voluntary Christians (Toulouze 2011: 70). As a matter of fact in 1826, i.e. two years after the establishment of the mission, in Ijma the Easter mass was held in the Nenets language (Maiyer 1997: 372). This is an indication to the success of the mission in forming an Orthodox Nenets congregation.

converting them Orthodoxy. Therefore this brought along submission to Russian authorities leading to bankruptcy. This in turn led once again to a revolt of the Nenets in 1828¹¹. A rebellious chief, named Vavlo Nenyang, emerged among the Eastern Nenets and had stolen the reindeers of the rich giving them to the poor between the years 1825-39 until he was caught and imprisoned Surgut. A year later he managed to escape from Surgut and returned to the tundra, declaring himself as the great chief of the nomadic tribes. He was caught together with his men, whom he recruited among the Nenets and the Khanties, by the Russians while he was preparing to the attack the Khanty chief responsible for Nenets affairs based in Obdorsk. His aim was to topple the chief and cut down the yasaq tribe. However he was sent to the labor camps in Eastern Siberia. Nevertheless his struggle was maintained until 1850's by what was left from his band. A Komi-Ziryan mercantile class, which adopted Russian methods, emerged in the 18th century. This class of traders dispossessed the reindeers of the Nenets and the Khanties, who atrophied by alcohol and were increasingly becoming dependent on colonial trade and traders, by sucking them into debt by means of prohibitive prices for products like tea, sugar, flour, tobacco and gunpowder. Thus the Komi-Ziryans became owners of massive reindeer herds and became the lords of the tundra region as a result of their masterful success in turning these herds into profit. Accumulation of big reindeer herds in the hands of Komi-Ziryans and Russians continued throughout the 19th century and only 17% of the reindeer population living in the west of the Urals was remained in the possession of the Nenets by 1895. The Komi-Ziryan reindeer breeders passed to the east of the Urals only at the end of the 19th century, however by 1910 they already had big herds in their possessions. Consequently the Nenets communities either lost their herds completely or they were left with such small herds that they were unable to sustain their lives. They became dependent on short term aids relieved by official granaries in order to stay alive. Working for Komi-Ziryans or the Samoyedic Enets, who had big reindeer herds in their possessions or at the fishing industry established by the Russians on the Ob River with minimum salaries became the ways of earning a living (Slezkine 1994: 101; Forsyth 2000: 178-180; Vallikivi 2003: 109-110; Toulouze 2004: 216; Toulouze 2005a: 33, 36; Leete and Vallikivi 2011: 83).¹²

The Nenets, like rest of the native peoples of the North, initially were not affected much by the November Revolution and the civil war. However, in time their lives like that of the peoples living in more southern regions got also affected deeply by the collapse of economic life and administration. As a matter of fact the Nenets had been on of the first native peoples to be affected from this situation due to their geographical position. The region was taken under control by the Soviet Union in 1920 and the first Nenets soviet was established in 1921-22 in Pechora. The local government attempted to establish soviets among nomadic Nenets and other Northern Samoyeds in more northerly regions in parallel with economic life and the first

¹¹ There had been an Orthodox mission in the east of the Urals, namely in Obdorsk, in 1832. However the influence of this mission on the native Nenets had been very limited and was shortly closed down. Although it was re-established in 1854 it had its prime under the administration of Shemanovskiy. At the beginning of the 20th century an organization named Saint Guri Brotherhood Association was established with the aim of spreading Christianity. Additionally a school was established with the purpose of gathering children, particularly female ones, from the tundra and educating them (Vallikivi 2003: 110; Toulouze 2004: 216-217; Toulouze 2005a).

¹² "The Nenets", Red Book of the Peoples of the Russian Empire, <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/Nenets.shtml>

detailed census conducted in 1926. Regional native soviets were established in Taz, Yamal and Ural regions for Nenets in 1926-27, however a very few number of Nenets, Enets and Nganasans were managed to be incorporated to the 'nomadic soviet'. Inclusion of the Nenets, whose 95% of was nomadic then, to the Soviet system proved to be nontrivial. Particularly in the tundra regions actual power was in the hands of the local lords and in practice the Nenets were out of the reach of the Soviet influence. For instance regional lords were continued to be elected even at places, where Nenets tribal soviets were present. In 1928 the Soviet Union managed to install the administrative system in Northwestern Siberia and in 1929 the *okrug* 'a sizeable autonomous region' established for the Nenets in the north of the Komi-Ziryan Autonomous Region, which was located in the west of the Urals, became to be the first *okrug* to be established for the peoples of the North. In the following year another *okrug* for the Nenets in Yamal and a joint *okrug* for the Nenets together with the Enets, the Nganasans and the Turkic Dolgans was established in Taymir¹³. However, sedentarization of the native peoples had been rather troublesome. In 1934 almost half of the Siberian natives had a nomadic lifestyle and the Nenets, with the aforementioned 95%, was the Northern people with highest rate of nomadism (Armstrong 1952: 118; Hajdu 1963: 48-49; Krupnik 1998: 229; Pika 1999c: 82; Golovnev and Osherenko 1999: 72; Forsyth 2000: 240, 244, 248-249, 297, Killi Yılmaz 2010: 73)¹⁴. Collectivism attempts started simultaneously to the establishment of national regions for the Nenets. The first collective Nenets reindeer herd was established in 1929 at the downstream of the Pechora River in the European tundra. Between the years 1930-36 people had been forced into *kolkhozes* and their reindeer herds were collectivized. The Nenets made every effort to escape this situation even if temporarily. They even rebelled against collectivism with arms and launched a raid on township of Vorkuta. This armed insurgency was suppressed gorily with the aid of war planes. The ones, who managed to escape, migrated either to the east of the Urals or to Yamal in the north. Big herd owners either dispersed their herds or slaughtered them in the last resort as a reprisal as collective herds were formed by confiscation of only big ones. Collectivism advanced with difficulty as a result of such complexities. In 1937 the rate of collectivized herds in the European tundra was 86%. However in the Yamal *Okrug* rich Nenets owning a few thousand of animals stood out against the collectivization campaign and in 1932 only 8.5% of families were collectivized. This rate increased to 69% in 1937, but in the northern regions of the Yamal Peninsula, which was the last refuge of the free herd owner Nenets, not a single collective farm was present in 1936. The Soviet Union achieved full dominance over Nenets only in 1950 after the unification of small farms. These new circumstances meant forced migration and sedentarization for Nenets. Their women, children and elders were forced to resettle to villages in order to break down the non-submissiveness of the Nenets and in time their males had been obliged to join them. Collectivization of reindeers gave cause to the development of fishing among the Nenets. The Nenets manpower surplus shifted to the fishing industry developing on the Ob River. A few number of fish handling and canning factories were established in Obdorsk, which the name of was changed to 'Salekhard' in 1933, meaning 'the

¹³ Six more *okrug*s, namely the Ostiak – Vogul *Okrug* in the Ural province, the Evenk *Okrug*, the Vitim-Olekma *Okrug*, the Chukotka *Okrug*, the Koriak *Okrug* and the Okhot *Okrug* in the Far East, apart from the aforementioned three were established for the peoples of the North between the years 1929-1932 (Pika 1999c: 82).

¹⁴ "The Nenets", Red Book of the Peoples of the Russian Empire, <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/Nenets.shtml>

Cape Town` in the Nenets language. At the same time a new administrative center named Naryan-Mar `Red Town`, where fish and meat handling plants were built, was established in the Nenets National Okrug in Pechora. Collectivization of the reindeer herds remained on paper despite of intensive collectivization attempts carried out until the end of the 1930`s. The kolkhozes were in the hands of managers, whose only aim was to sell meat to the state. However this situation changed after a legislation enacted on 8th January 1961. The reindeers became the property of the state as the Yamal and Khanty-Mansi kolkhozes were turned into sovkhoses. The Nenets and the Khanties lost their national collective rights over reindeers and had become paid workers (Pika 1999a: 136; Forsyth 2000: 308-339)¹⁵.

After the traumatic effects of the collectivization attempts, the outbreak of the World War II compelled the state to change its implementations to least intervention policy again in order to secure the provision of vitally needed requisites like fur, fish and reindeer meat. However the war had its effects on the Nenets as well like all other Soviet peoples. The number of the reindeer herds declined seriously as a result of meat demand, which appeared throughout the war. The herds in the Yamal Nenets Region declined in proportion to 37% and a similar situation developed at the Nenets National Region in the west of the Urals. Like all Soviet peoples the Nenets were recruited into the army. They were taken into service as scouts, ski troops and snipers like other Siberian peoples as a consequence of their natural lifestyles. Another field, which the Nenets were employed at throughout the war, was transporting ammunition with reindeers in the northwestern regions. Not only the male population was affected by the war but a very heavy burden was carried by the female population as well. The manpower deficit in industries like reindeer, fishing and hunting, which arose from the recruitment of the males into the army, was fulfilled by the Nenets women (Krupnik 1998: 230; Forsyth 2000: 348, 350).

It was carried on with the collectivization mission after the World War II in the western parts of the arctic region and the most of the Nenets alongside with other native peoples were collectivized until 1950. However the Nenets of Northern Yamal could not been collectivized even in the 1950`s. Sedentarization of the Nenets had proved to be at least as difficult as their collectivization. They continued to wander as small family partnerships without any adherence to any administrative center even in the west of the Urals throughout the 1950`s. In the Yamal National Region two thirds of the Nenets maintained their nomadic lifestyle. In places, where Russian style settled life was adopted, the Nenets had difficulty in reconciling themselves to Russian lifestyle. The ones living in town centers got attuned to European lifestyle whilst in more remote regions even the ones settling to wooden houses designed inside of their homes in the manner of their traditional tents. As a matter of fact, many Nenets had lived in tents until 1980`s. The spread of education and health services contributed to the limited adoption of sedentary life by Nenets. Initially the shamans attempted to hinder the spread of health services by cursing individuals, who consulted Russian doctors. However the influence of the shamans had disappeared after the people explored the benefits of European medicine (Krupnik 1998: 230; Forsyth 2000: 309, 386). Improvement in the field of health services contributed to the rise

¹⁵ "The Nenets", Red Book of the Peoples of the Russian Empire, <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/Nenets.shtml>

of Nenets population. For instance the Nenets population in Yamal, which was 3240 in 1926, had risen to 7181 in 1989, to 26.435 in 2002 and to 29.772 in 2010 (Krupnik 1998: 235)¹⁶.

Major steps were taken in the field of industrialization in the whole of Siberia after 1945. These industrialization thrusts had great impact on the native peoples and the environment. Great part of the upper regions of the Angara valley upward from Irkutsk, Bratsk and Ust-Ilimsk was submerged as a result of establishment of hydroelectric power plants on Siberian Rivers with the aim of expanding the electrical grid. A similar situation was experienced in Upper Yenisei from Krasnoyarsk to the Sayan pass. However the biggest development was initiation of the processing of the oil fields in the Autonomous Khanty-Mansi Region in the Middle Ob basin and the natural gas sources in the more northerly Autonomous Yamal-Nenets Region. These processes, which contained intensive deforestation and excavation, resulted in destruction of forest lands and the tundra region of Western Siberia. Additionally a major migration to the region took place as a result of these industrialization thrusts altering the population structure of the region to a great extent. For instance between 1959 and 1982, the population of the National Khanty-Mansi region increased six folds and that of the Yamal-Nenets Region almost four folds (Forbes 1999: 369; Forsyth 2000: 359-360). As a result of these population movements the rate of the Nenets population in the Yamal Nenets Region has fallen to 5.9% in 2010 from 29.3 in 1939 and becoming the third biggest ethnic group after the Russians (61.7%) and Ukrainians (9.7%), whereas the rate of the Russians and Ukrainians were 42.1% and 0.9% respectively in 1939 (Josephson 2002: 178; Forsyth 2000: 352)¹⁷. The influence of industrialization was not limited with the change of population correlations in the region. It directly affected the lives of many Nenets, destroying their livelihoods. In Yamal and Tyumen the Nenets, Khants and the Mansies were roused out of their devastated homelands because of gas and oil pipelines and received no compensation at all. The fish¹⁸ stock in the lakes were destroyed, the cedar trees were cut down, and the storehouses of the Nenets and the Khants alongside their cemeteries were plundered. Industrial development caused the biggest devastation in the tundra region. The great reindeer pastures turned into deserts¹⁹ and the number of the reindeers fell even under the lowest numbers of the 20th century. A sharp fall in reindeer numbers is observed particularly in taiga regions from the end of 1970's on. The decline in reindeer raising also have affected hunting adversely for in contrast to the tundra region in the taiga region reindeers are mostly used for hunting intentional transportation. The lives of the Forest Nenets, besides that of some other Northern peoples, are being affected negatively from these developments. The developing oil industry affects the Forest Nenets not

¹⁶<http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=11;>

http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm

¹⁷ http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm

¹⁸ Fish is the main nutritional source in the summer for the reindeer breeding Northern peoples since the reindeers are not slaughtered during the summer and instead fish obtained from the lakes and the rivers is consumed. However, creation of obstacles on the rivers by bridge constructions during the migration seasons of the fish and the use of lakes for sand pits and etc. is taking quite a toll on this main nutritional source of Northern peoples. Additionally the fishing hobbies of immigrant workers, who do not have sufficient knowledge about the migration seasons and routes of the fish, also gives great harm to the fish stock population (Forbes et. al. 2009: 22044).

¹⁹ Citation of one natural gas source would be useful in order to demonstrate the destructive impact of the natural gas and oil industry on the reindeer pastures, which are central to Nenets life. 1270 km² of reindeer pasture land was destroyed only as a result of the processing of the Bovanenko natural gas source (Forbes 1999: 369).

only in terms of reindeer raising but it has negative influence on the population structure too. For instance establishment of the town named Radujnyi in 1984, on the reindeer pastures used by the Kazamkin Khants caused the migration of Khant families from here to Varyogan. Thus the Khant population grew in the region increasing social pressure on the Forest Nenets, who already were a minority in the region. Social and economic problems, which showed up after the collapse of the Soviet Union, gave rise to a decline in the reindeer population once again between the years 1991-1997. However the tundra region was not affected this time. The same dates mark a rise in private reindeer raising in the autonomous Yamal-Nenets Region and unlike the taiga region an increase is seen in reindeer herds in tundra regions. However in turn this is causing other problems like the inadequacy of pastures. Particularly the reindeer moss, which is needed by the reindeers, are lacking on the migratory routes as industrialization has affected the soil and the growing of vegetation, besides the lapse of many areas on the migration route since they are destroyed by fires or are withheld for industrial centers (Slezkine 1994: 373; Pika 1999: 175; Pika 1999a: 139, 140; Pika 1999b: 10; Pika 1999c: 92-94; Forsyth 2000: 395-396; Yoshida 2001: 67-69; Tuisku 2002: 150; Toulouze 2003: 100). Obviously the future of the Khants and the Nenets living in the Yamal Peninsula are being seriously threatened by the railways and pipelines, which are a result of the gas and oil industry.

Unemployment and job opportunities only as unskilled laborers like many Northerners caused impoverishment of the Nenets ending up in alcoholism. Child death has become a common occurrence (70-100 out of every 1000 birth) and failure to consider the special conditions of the natives in the health system has given rise to frequent diseases like tuberculosis, pneumonia and otitis. A high level of radioactive pollution is caused by the nuclear tests carried out during the 1950's and 1960's in Novaya Zemlya and a very high rate of cancer incidents are seen among the natives, who consume the meat of reindeers feeding on polluted moss. Most particularly the Nenets living in the Arkhangelsk and Tyumen oblasts are affected very much from this situation. At the end of the 1980's life expectancy among the Northern peoples has fallen to 45 for men and 55 for women. High mortality was a result of insecure living conditions like accidents, alcohol intoxication, homicide, suicide besides diseases. Homicide and suicide was three – fourfold of the Russian average. A temporary recovery was experienced in the situation during the mid-1980's but the death rate started to rise again after 1988. Family life took a major blow as a result of deteriorative social conditions and mass influx of migrant workers. Particularly in the 1960's native women being Russian males temporary spouses became a widespread case. It was a normalcy for Nenets, Dolgan and Chukchi women to have seven – eight children from different "white" fathers. This was an unusual incident in traditional lifestyle and as a consequence the number of mixed race children have risen considerably. In recent years child bearing fell sharply among Northern women as abortion has become widespread. However despite this decline it should be mentioned that average natality among the Nenets is over three children and this rate is one of the highest averages among all Russian peoples. Another result of the breakdown of traditional family life is the fact that men are unable to get married as they stay apart from villages because of herding, and fishing. Women stand alone at villages and

become exposed to aforementioned situations (Pika 1999a; Pika 1999b: 8-10; Forsyth 2000: 401-402; Ryashchenko 2008: 3; Dudeck 2013: 131)²⁰.

As it was mentioned above, like all Siberian peoples the Nenets population as well was wrecked by epidemics like influenza, smallpox and syphilis. Famines as a result of repetitive severe winter conditions or unrealized migrations of the reindeer were added on top of this wrecking and the herds were also decimated to a great extent by anthrax and foot-and-mouth epidemics. However, rather than these natural disasters it was the degeneration of their traditional social life and their vicious exploitation by the Russians and the Komi-Ziryans, which dragged the once prosperous Nenets society to poverty, indolence and timidity (Forsyth 2000: 180). It is a question that has to be answered why the Nenets reindeer herding did not disappear altogether despite all of the economic and social problems even if had taken a knock. Disappearing aside herds reaching 5000 animals has come into existence among the most important Nenets group, which has maintained the traditional lifestyle for centuries migrating a journey of 1200 km with their herds between the tundra and the taiga in the Yamal Peninsula. As a matter of fact even Nenets groups, among which fishing has become more important than reindeer herding, have herds of 3000 animals (Forbes 1999: 369; Stammer 2010: 219). The answer of this question lies under the adaptation power of the traditional Nenets life to changes and the fact that customization has become a part of the Nenets character as well as the flexibility needed for resisting the pressure of change (Klokov 2000: 39-40; Forbes 2013).

In 1990, in parallel with the liberation movements of all Soviet peoples, joined other Northern peoples like Yakuts, Buryats, Tuvans, Khants, Mansies Chukchis, Koriaks and Altaians, who were campaigning for sovereignty or higher administrative power (Forsyth 2000: 412). However they achieved no result.

4.2. The Nenets Population

At the present (according to the 2010 census) 44,640 Nenets in total live in the Russian Federation and they are present in every single federative region. The Ural Federal Region is the region with the highest Nenets population, which is 31,707 persons and it is followed by the Northwestern Federal Region with 8842 persons and by the Siberian Federal Region with 3699 persons. The Central Federal Region, the Volga Federal Region, the Far Eastern Federal Region, the Southern Federal Region and the North Caucasian Federal Region are regions harboring unimportant Nenets populations with 199 persons, 108 persons, 94 persons, 52 persons and 19 persons respectively. 31,621 out of 31,707 persons living in the Ural Federal Region live in the Tyumen Oblast, 29,621 being in the Autonomous Yamal-Nenets Region and 1438 in the Autonomous Khanty-Mansi Region – Yugra. On the other hand 8020 out of the 8842 persons living in the Northwestern Federal Region live in the Arkhangelsk Oblast, 503 in the Komi Republic, 149 in the Murmansk Oblast and 109 in St. Petersburg. 7504 out of 8020 persons

²⁰ Nenets female population have left the tundra and settled to villages to a great extend as a result of Soviet era policies. This situation is causing enormous problems for reindeer raising as well as endangering the future of this lifestyle. The scarcity of women among the reindeer herds in the tundra is destroying the necessary division of labor needed for the healthy conduction of this system. On the other hand the children are growing up with women in the villages away from the tundra missing out the life experience need for reindeer raising and this is endangering the future of reindeer herds (Tuiski 2001). However it should be said that the Yamal Peninsula is an exception to this situation. The Yamal Peninsula is the only place where there is no lack of young reindeer herdsman (Liarskaya 2009: 34).

living in the Arkhangelsk Oblast live in the Autonomous Nenets Region. Almost all (3633) of 3699 persons living in the Siberian Federal Region live in the Krasnoyarsk Krai²¹. Despite all of the calamities they have experienced it is seen that the Nenets population has increased sevenfold (720%) in 85 years when the Nenets population with 6183 persons in 1926-27 is taken in consideration.

4.3. Distribution of the Nenets Population and the Nenets Dialects

The Nenets, which populate a very wide region, are divided in two cultural groups as the Forest or Khandeyar Nenets²² and the Tundra Nenets. The Tundra Nenets are scattered over a massive tundra region stretching from the Kanin Peninsula in the west to the Yenisei delta and the Yenisei arm in the east. This vast territory populated by the Nenets administratively include the Novaya Zemlya archipelago²³, the Kolguev²⁴ and Vaygach²⁵ islands, which are subordinated to the Arkhangelsk Oblast, the Nenets Region, which forms part of the Mezen district and the very northern four districts of the Komi Republic in the Northwestern Federal Region; all of the Yamal, Nadim and Taz districts of the Yamal Nenets Region, which is subordinated to the Tyumen Oblast, half of the Ural district and small parts of the remaining three districts in the Ural Federal Region; great part of the Ust-Yenisei district of the Taymir Region, which is subordinated to the Krasnoyarsk Krai in the Siberian Federal Region (Krauss 1997: 20; Salminen 2006: 515). On the other hand the Forest Nenets, who call themselves 'Neshchang', live in the taiga region in the northern territories of the Purovskiy district subordinated to the Yamal Nenets Region and the Surgutskiy district subordinated to the Khanty-Mansi Region (Prokof'yeva 1964: 548-549).

The modern-day Nenets language has three dialects. These are the Western Dialect spoken in the west of Pechora, the Central Dialect spoken in Bolshaya Zemlya, which is situated between Pechora and the Urals, and the Eastern Dialect spoken in Siberia. Similarities and accordingly mutual intelligibility among these dialects are rather high in spite of the wideness of the territory they are spoken. The Western Dialect has two sub-dialects, namely the Far Western Sub-dialect spoken in the Kanin Peninsula and the Central Western Sub-dialect spoken in Malaya Zemlya. The Eastern as well has two sub-dialects, namely the Central Eastern Sub-dialect spoken in the Ob region and the Yamal Peninsula, and the Far Eastern Sub-dialect spoken in the east of the Ob arm. As a matter of fact when the phonological features are taken into consideration it is possible to classify the Nenets languages under two dialects in parallel with the cultural classification of its speakers, as the Western Dialect in the forest region and the Central Eastern Dialects in the tundra region. However the language of the Tundra Nenets has gained acceptance

²¹ http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm

²² The Forest Nenets are also known as the 'Pyan-Hasavo' or 'Pyad-Hasavo' besides the 'Khandeyar' (Prokof'yeva 1964: 548).

²³ The Nenets have been hunting and fishing in Novaya Zemlya since the medieval times. But they settled to the archipelago permanently in 1896 with a dispensation from the governor of Arkhangelsk (Serebryanny 1997: 302).

²⁴ It thought that the Nenets living on the Kolguev Island settled here from the Mezen district at the end of the 18th century or the beginning of the 19th century (Davydov et. al. 2006: 355-356).

²⁵ The only settlement on the Vaygach Island is Varnek and its population is completely constituted by the Nenets. In 101 persons from 24 families were living on Varnek and all of the adult population of this community were immigrants either from the mainland tundra or Novaya Zemlya (Davydov and Mikhailova 2011: 70).

as two separate dialects as the European Tundra Nenets and the Siberian Tundra Nenets because of the morphological and lexical differences between two Nenets varieties spoken on the two sides of the Ural Mountains (Prokof'yeva 1964: 549; Wixman 1988: 144; Salminen 2006: 516). Besides this general acceptance it should be noted that there are views, which accept the varieties spoken by the Forest Nenets and the Tundra Nenets as two separate Samoyedic languages (Toulouze 2003: 96)²⁶.

Another Nenets group lives mixed with the Ijmi branch of the Komi-Ziryans in the Bolshaya Zemlya tundra in the Nenets Region and the Ijemskiy, Pechorskiy and Ust-Tsilemskiy districts in the north of the Komi Republic. This Nenets group, which is a transition group between the Samoyedic Nneets and the Finnic Komi-Ziryans, maintain the Nenets identity, however they speak the Ijmi Dialect of Komi-Ziryan. They call themselves 'Yaran' and the Samoyedic speaking Nenets 'Vyents'. 'Yaran' means Nenets in the Komi-Ziryan language and 'Vyentsi' is derived from 'vyNenetsya', which means Tundra Nenets in the Nenets language (Prokof'yeva 1964: 549; Wixman 1988: 144).

Another Nenets group that should be mentioned is the group, which is called 'Habi' by other Nenets. They use the same name for self-designation as well. This is the word used by the neighboring peoples, particularly the Khants, to designate the Nenets. The Habis live around the tributaries of the Ob River, around the Small Yamal River, around the lower tributaries of the Taz River and more scarcely around the Greater Yamal River and the Gidan tundra. They are claimed to be the descendants of Lower Ob Khants, who have lost their language and culture among the Nenets (Prokof'yeva 1964: 549).

The number of the Nenets was 35,000 in 1997. This number have risen to 41,302 in 2002 and to 44,640 in 2010. In 2002 the number of the Forest Nenets was 2000 and this number has risen to around 3000 in 2010²⁷. 75% of this population speaks the Nenets language. The presence of children among the Nenets speakers is promising for the future of this dialect (Krauss 1997: 20; Helimski 1997: 80; Ryashchenko 2008: 4)²⁸. When the ability of speaking the mother tongue is viewed in the context of urban – rural contrast, it is seen that it is inversely proportional to urbanity. In 2010 the 21.4% of the Nenets living in the towns could speak their mother tongue, whereas this rate was 78.6% in rural areas. A striking situation appears when rate of Nenets able to speak their mother tongue to the general Nenets population is compared in the years 2002 and 2010. The rate was 75.8% in the former and has fallen to 49% in the latter (Dudeck 2013: 132)²⁹. This high rate of its speakers makes Nenets the language with most speakers in the Russian North and the third in the whole North after Western Greenlandic and Northern Saami. It is also the Northern minority language with highest possibility of survival in the Russian Federation. The Tundra Dialect is preserved in Taymir and Yamal regions to a great extent but

²⁶ Johanna Laakso, <http://www.helsinki.fi/hum/sugl/oppimat/sgrjohd/sip.html>;
Tapani Salminen, <http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/ling.html>

²⁷ It should be noted that at the present the Forest Nenets and the Tundra Nenets officially are the same people. Therefore the real numbers of the Forest Nenets are unknown and the given numbers are merely estimations (Toulouze 2003: 97).

²⁸ <http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=11>;
http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm;
<http://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Priuralsky%20District&uid=1575>

²⁹ <http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=11> ;
http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm

has suffered great harm in the west (Krauss 1997: 20; Salminen 1997: 93; Forsyth 2000: 392). For that matter when the subject is approached with a narrower perspective, the sub-dialects of the Tundra Dialect spoken in the rural regions of the Yamal Peninsula are the native varieties with the most secure future among the Northern varieties. However it is not possible to say the same thing for the urban areas of the Yamal Peninsula. These Nenets, which have adopted Russian lifestyle, generally use Russian rather than Nenets in daily life (Liarskaya 2009: 34-35). The Nenets language has taken major blows on the Kolguev Island. 80% of the Nenets population living on the island uses Russian as family language. This situation is a result of the settlement and education policies applied throughout the Soviet era. The settled Nenets got into acculturation with the Russians and Nenets children studying in boarding schools far away from their families lost their mother tongue³⁰ (Davydov et. al. 2006: 358-359).

4.4. The Sociolinguistics of the Nenets Language

4.4.1. Written Language and Language of Education

The Nenets, like most of the Northern peoples, used pictographs for centuries. Particularly family stamps named *tamga* were used for marking family properties. First attempts to create a Nenets written language was made by Orthodox missionaries and in 1830 Archpriest Venyamin Smirnov published some religious texts. Even though J. Sibirtsev composed a spelling dictionary in 1895 these practices short-termed. Also a number of publications were made by the mission located in Obdorsk under the directorship of Shemanovskiy. A priest named Joann Egorov published a textbook in 1900, a prayer book and a religious history in 1903. In 1906-1907 a short catechism and a Matthew Bible in Nenets was published. These efforts had given rise to a Cyrillic based Nenets written language (Toulouze 2005a: 52-53)³¹, however as it was mentioned before it was impermanent.

In 1931 a Latin based alphabet was formed for writing all of the Northern languages. Initially course books in sixteen indigenous languages were prepared and schools, where native teachers would teach³² and high schools for training teachers were planned. However school books and newspapers were published only in seven indigenous languages. Nenets was one of the languages, which reached this level, together with Mansi, Evenk, Even, Nanai, Chukchi and Eskimo. This written Nenets was formed in 1932 and was based on the sub-dialect of the Tundra Dialect spoken in Bolshaya Zemlya. The same year a spelling book named *Jadey Vada* 'New World' was prepared and published by G. N. Prokofyef. In 1936 a reading book for adults prepared by the same author, an arithmetic book and school dictionaries were published. In

³⁰ The mentioned result of the Soviet education policies is not limited to Kolguev Island. For the impact of the Soviet schooling system in the taiga region see Dudeck (2013) and for the Yamal Peninsula see Liarskaya (2013). As for that at the present the Nenets author Anna Nerkagi has developed tundra schools under the name *kochevaya shkola*. Owing to these schools. the children are able to stay at the tundra with their families. On the other hand the children are still attending boarding schools in the rest of the Yamal. For detail see Laptander (2013).

³¹ "The Nenets", Red Book of the Peoples of the Russian Empire, <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/Nenets.shtml>

³² Mobile schools moving around with the nomads were formed for the Nenets like all of the nomadic peoples of the North until 1930. However this method had put up a poor show. From 1930 on boarding school designed as cultural centers were established. As a matter of fact the Soviet authorities were repeating the methods of the Christian missionaries of the previous century by establishing boarding schools (Dudeck 2013: 130-131).

addition to these pedagogical publications some political texts and short stories on everyday life were translated from Russian and published. However in 1937 it was decided to change the Latin based alphabet to Cyrillic for all languages in view of the fact that students studying their mother tongues with the Latin alphabet were having difficulties in learning Russian³³. Despite the fact that the number of schools attended by indigenous children had increased throughout the 1930's, the overall tendency was the expansion of Russian in expense of the indigenous languages. For instance, there were high schools for training teachers and veterinaries in Salekhard and Naryan-Mar, which Nenets children could attend after finishing their indigenous schools. These high schools were in forms of boarding schools and first year the language of education was Nenets and the remaining years Russian. However in 1938, Russian education was made obligatory in all national republics and regions. In 1948 pre-school preparation classes in indigenous languages were introduced with the aim of strengthening the children's command of Russian. In 1959, the right to choose the language of education for their children was accorded to the families and this resulted in an increase of use of Russian in schools. Only Altaian, Tuvan, Khakas, Yakut and Buryat had managed to survive as languages of education after the preparation classes until 1972. Besides these Nenets, Evenk and Chukchi subsisted as courses in schools. Rest of the indigenous languages of the North were completely pushed out of the education system. By 1979 Russian had gained a solid place in the western parts of the arctic regions. Only 57% of the Nenets could speak their mother tongue fluently and 89% of them could speak Russian either as first or second language in the west of the Urals. Mother tongue of 19% of them was Komi-Ziryan. On the other hand the story was completely different in the National Yamal Region in the east of the Urals. 96% of the Nenets had recorded Nenets as their mother tongue and only 3% as Russian. However almost 68% of them could speak Russian fluently as a second language. The rates of use of mother tongue and Russian were almost the same in the National Taymir Region (Wixman 1988: 144; Helinski 1997: 81-82; Shoji 1997: 65; Toulouze 1997: 74-76; Forsyth 2000: 284, 286, 309, 406)³⁴. At the present, the situation of Northern languages in education is better than the past, although not satisfactory. In the context of their position in education the languages of the North could be classified in three groups as the ones taught in secondary school, the ones taught only in primary school and the non-written ones. Nenets is one of the languages taught in secondary schools together with Evenk, Even, Nanai, Selkup, Khanty, Mansi, Chukchi, Koriak, Eskimo, Dolgan and Shor (Bulatova 2009: 166)³⁵.

In 1930's authors like Tiko Vilka, Ivan Istomin³⁶, Leonid Lepstui and Vassili Ledkov produced literary works as well in addition to the course books prepared in the Nenets language. However this written language did not become widespread among the Nenets and Russian served as the real literary language (Wixman 1988: 145; Forsyth 2000: 286). The Nenets language under intense pressure of Russian with regards to literary tradition. Still it was classified as one of the

³³ Considering the fact that a very little number of Northern teachers were present while taking this decision and that most of the teachers were Russian (Toulouze 1999: 79; Toulouze 2004: 214), it is possible that the difficulties faced by the teachers taken into account in addition to that of the children.

³⁴ "The Nenets", Red Book of the Peoples of the Russian Empire, <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/Nenets.shtml>

³⁵ The Northern languages, which are taught only in primary school, are Saami, Nivkh, Itelmen, Ulcha, Udehe, Nganasan, Aleut, Yukagir, Ket, Tofa, and Teleut. The non-written ones are Negidal, Oroch, Enets, Alutor Chukchan and Kerek Chukchan (Bulatova 2009: 166).

³⁶ Ivan Istomin (1917-1988) himself was an ethnic Komi-Ziryan but he preferred to produce his works in Nenets (Toulouze 2005b: 147).

esteemed languages, even though at low level, by the Soviet sociolinguists as it had a written form. Nenets was classified in the second group, i.e. young written languages, by V. A. Avorin, who classified the languages of the U.S.S.R. with regards to their functionality and level of development. On the other hand Yu. D. Desheriyev included Nenets to the group of written languages with limited social function³⁷. *Naryana Ngyirm* 'The Red North', which was published in Salekhard the administrative center of the Autonomous Nenets Region, had been the only newspaper in the Nenets language for many years³⁸, but nowadays literature and journalism in the Nenets language has become quite developed (Krauss 1997: 20)³⁹. There had been attempts to form a written language based on the dialect used by the Forest Nenets as well during the 1990's as a reader and a school dictionary was prepared (Ackerman and Salminen 2006: 579).

4.4.2. Contact with Other Peoples and Languages

Despite the fact that a sector of the Nenets population had always been known Komi-Ziryan or Khanty, in contrast with today, the great majority of the Nenets had been monolingual until the 20th century. The Russian language had a limited influence as a result of contact with Russians. The homeland of the Tundra Nenets bordered the Russian regions in the west and many Russian towns and trade centers existed in the region. Consequently the Western Dialect copied many words from Russian. The Central dialect as well have a considerable amount of words copied from Russian, but the number of words directly copied from the Russian language constitute a very small number in the Eastern Dialect. However the latter has certain amount of Russian words copied from Khanty⁴⁰ (Salminen 1992: 201).

The Nenets language was used among the Nenets, the Khants, the Mansies, and at lower level by the Komi-Ziryans as a language of inter-communal communication until the beginnings of the 20th century. However, in the course of the 20th century, this function of the Nenets language was gradually replaced by Komi-Ziryan. As for the Samoyedic Nenets, Enets and Nganasans among themselves both active and passive bilingualism and trilingualism was in use. On the other hand the inter-communal communication language between the Forest Nenets, Evenks and Kets had been the Northern Dialect of Selkup (Wurm 1996a: 976-977; Wurm 1997: 43; Anderson 2004: 5). All of these languages has been suppressed by Russian as a result of the education and language policies applied during the Soviet era and the language of inter-communal communication has become Russian. However, it is understood that despite this pressure of the Russian language, multilingualism among the peoples of the North has not disappeared completely. In 2002, 40 Turkic Dolgans could speak Nenets and 12 Nenets could speak Dolgan in the Autonomous Nenets – Nganasan – Dolgan Region in Taymir (Killi Yılmaz 2010: 169). Additionally in the Taz basin, bilingualism in the Nenets and Selkup languages endures among

³⁷ V. A. Avorin classified the languages of U.S.S.R. under three groups as the old written languages, the young written languages and the languages with no written form. On the other hand Yu. Desheriyev divided the languages in five groups as Russian as Lingua Franca, the literary languages of the union republics, the literary languages of autonomous republics and oblasts, the written languages with limited social functions and the non-written languages of small peoples (Killi Yılmaz 2010: 10).

³⁸ A newspaper named *Naryan Vyinder* was published for the Nenets in the western region at the beginnings of the 1930's (Toulouze 2004: 219), but it is understood that it did not survive long.

³⁹ "The Nenets", Red Book of the Peoples of the Russian Empire, <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/Nenets.shtml>

⁴⁰ It should be noted that the copied words that which are indicated here were copied to Nenets in the past and were completely assimilated by the language.

the Samoyeds dealing with reindeer raising (Anderson 2004: 5). Various varieties of the Nenets language are influenced by the languages of neighboring peoples like the Selkups, Khants, Enets, Nganasans and Komi-Ziryans. On the other hand the Western Dialect of Selkup is under the influence of Nenets (Wixman 1988: 144; Andewrson 2004: 6).

It would be useful to take a glance at the aforementioned Forest Nenets living in the Agan region in the context of language contact. As it was mentioned before the Forest Nenets living in the Agan region became under social pressure as a result of the migrations caused by industrialism. Likewise their language is influenced by Khanty. The Nenets language is under the pressure of Khanty as well in this symbiotic environment, which is intensively pressured by the Russian language. The last Khant that could understand the Nenets language died in 2000, on the other hand all of the Nenets, which can speak their mother tongue, speak Khanty as well. Another indication of the social disesteem of the Nenets language as opposed to Khanty is that in all of the mixed-marriages, which the indigenous language is preserved, it is Khanty unexceptionally. There is language loss at a significant rate among the Forest Nenets as a result of this social pressure. The youngest Nenets that could speak his/her mother tongue in 2003 was 27 year old. This means that none of the Nenets children, who start school in this region, can speak their mother tongue. This means extra problems for Nenets children as it should borne in mind that the Nenets language is taught at schools since the 1980's. There is no such problem for the Khant children, who live in the same region. Most of the Khant children speak their mother tongue when they start school. Thus a threefold linguistic stratification is in question in the Agan region. Naturally Russian is spoken by everyone. Khanty is not spoken by Russians and young Nenets but is spoken by the Khants and elderly Nenets. On the other hand Nenets is only spoken by elderly Nenets (Toulouze 2003: 100-102). It would not be wrong to say that the linguistic view of the community in question was possible rather different in the past and the situation was more in the favor of the Nenets language, when the existence of Khants until 2000 speaking the Nenets language is taken into consideration.

5. Conclusion

Samoyedic has spread to the territories it is spoken today partly as a result of migrations and partly that of language diffusion at the stage of its separation from Uralic languages and has become the easternmost Uralic language. It has got through many stages as a result of the many social experiences its speakers has experienced. It is understood that socially it had a more influential status than today at its stage of expansion and proliferation. However, it has suffered a significant loss of influence and space of usage and came to its present situation as a result of the historical and social developments its speakers has been exposed to.

It is known that the Samoyedic varieties had been more variegated in the past but some of the varieties disappeared as their speakers were assimilated to other peoples, particularly Turkic peoples. Despite the fact that the last speakers of Mator and Kamas lived among the Turkic peoples in recorded history, a reality that should be borne in mind is that many Samoyedic communities suffered a great loss of population as a result of contagious diseases and wars after meeting Europeans, Russians in particular. Therefore attributing the disappearance of some Samoyedic peoples and varieties only to assimilation among Turkic peoples is not a very reliable approach. Above all, attributing common denomination based on geographical commonality as it

is in the examples of Turkic Koybals and Samoyedic Koybals, completely to language loss and language change has no scientific base.

Nenets, one of the four Samoyedic languages which has managed to survive till the present day, is the one with most speakers and therefore the one with the most promising future. This situation also makes Nenets one of the few Northern languages with a promising future. They are culturally divided into two groups in parallel with the regions they live in. However linguistically they are classified in three groups as the speakers of the western Dialect, the Central Dialect and the Eastern Dialect. The language has a high number of speakers in rural areas but has suffered great damage in urban centers. Naturally it is under the pressure of Russian everywhere and that of Khanty and Komi-Ziryan regionally. On the other hand Nenets is quite stable particularly in the tundra region of the Yamal Peninsula.

Nenets has a written form based on the Bolshaya Zemlya variety of the Tundra Dialect. It is known that the first written form of Nenets was formed by the Orthodox missionaries at the end of the 19th century. However the present written language was formed by the Soviet authorities in 1931 as a result of the educational campaign launched in the North. Initially a Latin based alphabet was used for writing the language but later it was changed to Cyrillic. The missionaries as well used Cyrillic. Therefore the Nenets language was first written with Cyrillic, then Latin and then with Cyrillic again in 50-60 years' time. The speakers of Nenets has experienced many disadvantages throughout the recorded history and the language suffered prestige loss against Russian, Khanty and Komi-Ziryan. Notwithstanding that still it is a literary language with newspapers and a place within the education system even if vulnerable.

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