



Forest Nenets folklore and identity²¹

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The Forest Nenets may be considered as an ethnic group whose identity is still very much in shaping and is characterised by some instability. On the one hand, they remained long hidden from the scientific community as a distinct group; politically they were never recognised as such; while from an emic point of view they have no doubt of their own existence, in the present live conditions, that are powerfully threatening even of their physical existence, they are attempting to find identity instruments to face the challenges as unscarred as possible. Is their oral tradition helping them into achieving this goal? The aim of this article is to unravel this complex question mainly from an emic point of view²².

Introduction (an etic approach): Forest Nenets seen by Others

Literature about the Forest Nenets is certainly not as rich as it is on the Tundra Nenets, their Northern counterpart (Toulouze 2002, p.89). For centuries, in tsarist Russia, the way aboriginal groups were included in the overall state administration was through taxation. In tax systems ethnicity was not a relevant category, the tax unit was person – adult males were submitted to the capital tax, the *iasak*. Thus, undoubtedly, the people we now call Forest Nenets were known as smaller units, albeit they were not recognised as a community.

Thinking in ethnic terms is inserted in history. It emerges during the

21 Article published in *Studia Fenno-Ugrica Groningana* 7; 2011, 227-240.

22 Those reflections rely mainly on my own fieldwork, a total amount of six months among the Forest Nenets, in 1999, 2000, and 2009.

19th century: while in the first decades, as the Speransky statute shows (Slezkine 1994: 83-88, Marchenko 1984: 175, Vakhtin 1993: 16), the relevant distinctions among indigenous peoples were seen in connection with their lifestyle and not through ethnicity (although groups were listed in each of the three categories identified – sedentary, nomadic and wandering peoples), the latter emerges powerfully during the same century. In Western Siberia, the impact of science was of peculiar weight. While in other parts of Russia, indigenous groups were investigated in order to master – both in terms of knowledge and political power – the territory of the empire, in Western Siberia the influence of Fenno-Ugric research was particularly felt. Indeed, search for roots based on language kinship developed simultaneously in Finland and Hungary. It led scientists to enlarge their research field towards Russia and to explore huge territories inhabited by people speaking related languages. This approach was even more enhanced by the Hungarians, whose closest language kins were two Western Siberian communities, speaking Vogul (now called Mansi) and Ostyak (Khanty) languages²³. Therefore their interest focused very much on these two communities, clearly identified by the languages they spoke. Clearly, the Hungarians were not so much interested by Samoyeds, who were much distant in terms of kinship. The Finns were not so limited in their search: they had their closest language kin, the Baltic Finns, in a contiguous area, and they were looking for more distant “relatives”. Thus M.-A. Castrén²⁴ explored mainly the so-called Samoyed areas, investigating different groups of Samoyeds and leaving precious testimonies, data and analysis. At the core of all these searches, was language, not in itself but as a milestone for the history and the roots of others.

Those whom we call Forest Nenets were identified by their language as being part of the wide ensemble of the Samoyeds. Thus, their language

23 Actually Hungarians still call these communities, in scientific research, by these older ethnonyms, while Soviet rules led to generalise and officialise the ethnonyms recognised by the people themselves.

24 Castrén, M. A. 1870. *Nordiska resor och forskningar. Första bandet: Reseminnen från åren 1838–1844*. Helsingfors: Finska Litteratur-Sällskapet ; Castrén, M. A., Toivo Lehtisalo 1940. *Samojedische Volksdichtung*. Gesamm. von M. A. Castrén. Herausgegeben von T. Lehtisalo. Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne LXXXIII. Helsinki: Société Finno-Ougrienne ; Castrén, M.A., *Grammatik der samojedischen Sprachen*, Indiana University Publications, Uralic and Altaic Series, Vol 53, 1966.

was researched by Toivo Lehtisalo, who is the first to have dedicated them part of his work: in his fieldwork, he spent more than a year in a Forest Nenets community, and that allowed him to collect their lore, data about their religion as well as linguistic data (Lehtisalo 1924, 1947, 1959). Lehtisalo did not separate the Forest Nenets from their tundra kin: although he was well aware of the differences in lifestyle, his sensitivity to language led him to focus on linguistic structures and he chose to consider Forest Nenets as a dialect of Nenets and thus, to treat Forest Nenets as part of a wider Nenets ethnic group. This is directly revealed by the way he presents linguistic data, as his huge dictionary (Lehtisalo 1956): Forest Nenets lexical data are present as part of the Nenets language.

Russian explorers before the Revolution were not as much interested in language as the Finno-Ugrists. But they started being interested in ethnicity as a way to categorise human communities. In defining these categories, language played a huge role. At the end of the 19th century, explorers were surprised to meet people speaking a strange language, which was different from Khanty, although there were some phonetic similarities, while sounding very alien to Tundra Nenets. Thus, it was assumed that a new, unknown people was being discovered, called “nyah-smar-yah” (Bartenev 1998: 145-146). Still, the error was soon corrected and the “new” people was identified as kin to the tundra Nenets (Patkanov 1911, Zhitkov 1913: 249-251).

Soviet scholars, within the wider process of establishing Soviet knowledge and power on the indigenous areas, concentrated in the pre-war period on studying different languages and groups. Ethnic categorisation was a central issue: while solidly established nationalities, in Western Russia, were achieving some kind of autonomy, the same pattern was chosen for Siberia. In the modernisation process imposed by the Soviets, they built up their administrative construction on notions as clan and “nation”, which led them to create administrative units based on ethnic groups (Andreyev 1970: 114-115, Zibarev 1968: 43, Gurvich 1964: 102; Zibarev 1972: 83–84). The beginning of this process, encompassing the second half of the 1920s and going up to the war in 1940, is characterised by serious scholarship. Some fine specialists of Nenets were trained in Leningrad, and one of them, Grigori Verbov, concentrated on Forest Nenets. He is the author of the first monographic study, an article in *Sovetskaya*

Etnografiya, about the Forest Nenets, which treats them independently from Tundra Nenets (Verbov 1936). After Lehtisalo, Verbov was the first scholar to contribute to knowledge about this group, both linguistically and ethnographically (see also Verbov 1973).

The status of Forest Nenets language has actually been for scholars the core of the recognition. While recognising the undoubtable language closeness, late 20th century scholars have in general preferred to distinguish more sharply Forest Nenets from Tundra Nenets²⁵. There are two reasons to this choice, as I would analyse it: the first is a decline of language-centred approaches. The 19th century Finno-Ugric problematics of root-searching has become obsolete; reconstruction of Uralic proto-language is no more the main focus of scholarship, even in linguistics, where synchronic analysis has supplanted historical approaches. More and more importance has been given to eco-system and way of life. Moreover, in linguistic categorisation, mutual understanding of speech has become a serious criterium of language borders.

From both of these points of view, Forest Nenets material has strong peculiarities compared to Tundra Nenets. The eco-system in which they live is different indeed: from tundra to taiga, all aspects of life are touched. Nomadism has not the same meaning and does not cover the same reality. Reindeer herding has another function, and the bases of husbandry are also quite different.

On the other hand, intercomprehension between speakers of the two languages is far from guaranteed. Quite on the contrary. While from the point of view of linguists there is no doubt on the closeness of the two language forms, the language user does not see them: they are not transparent, mainly for phonetic reasons. Actually, some experiences have convinced me of the reality of mutual non-comprehension, albeit efforts have been made. When in the 1990s, Yuri Vella, the most famous of the Forest Nenets, an intellectual who, besides being a writer, is also a reindeer herder and an activist²⁶, organised in cooperation with the administration the import of 1000 reindeer from the Yamal-Nenets district into the Khanty-Mansi district in order to help indigenous people to restart reindeer husbandry on individual, independent bases. The

25 It is the case with Tapani Salminen (<http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/fn.html>, last consulted 4/12/2011).

26 See for more details www.jurivella.ru.

reindeer were brought from the Yar-Sale sovkhoe, and the herd was headed south and led by Tundra Nenets. They met the Khanty-Mansi district representatives at the border between the two districts and gave them the herd. As among the people attending this meeting was Yuri Vella, he filmed it and the Nenets, on both sides, attempted to communicate. They had to resort to Russian. I had the same experience ten years later in my home, while Yuri was visiting Tartu with his wife and the Numto singer Tatva (from the Logany clan). At that moment, there was a Tundra Nenets teacher studying in Tartu and she visited us. They tried to speak their language and could not communicate; then they turned to Russian, and they explored their non-comprehension. When taking time and with the help of Russian, they recognised many elements in one another's speech and were able to identify the common root. But it was of no practical help in simple communication. So it is not a legend that intercomprehension is not possible between the two languages. This is considered, nowadays, as hindering the hypothesis of it being merely two dialects of a single language. Finnish linguist Tapani Salminen, who has been working on both and has concentrated on Forest Nenets, considers them as being two different languages, and so do I. While identity is often linked with language, this a step taken by researchers to see the Forest Nenets as a separate people.

But we still have no precise data on how many people consider nowadays to be Forest Nenets and how many do consider Forest Nenets to be their mother tongue. Soviet census are usually good sources for this kind of data, as the people chose themselves which nationality to relate to: they give us subjective data about a peculiar period. But Forest Nenets have been recognised in a census only in 1926, and then the number of respondents was 1129 (Khomich 1995: 23). After that, no census distinguished the Tundra from the Forest Nenets, and therefore there is no actual means of knowing how many persons consider themselves to be Forest Nenets. In the last statistics we have (2002), the Nenets population is of 41302 persons, defining themselves with terms that cover both Tundra and Forest Nenets. In the Khanty-Mansi district, the number of Nenets was 1290. We may be pretty sure they are Forest Nenets, because in this region there are no other Nenets. But we cannot interpret properly the data about the Yamal-Nenets district: 26435 persons are both Tundra

and Forest Nenets. So we may present only hypothesis that take into account that two of the three regions in which Forest Nenets dwell (the Num-to and the Agan basin) are in the Khanty-Mansi district; in the Yamal-Nenets district, the Forest Nenets inhabit the basin of the Pur and of its branches the Pyaku-Pur and the Ayvaseda-Pur. Taking into account that the Pur group is supposed to be the biggest of the three, we can estimate the overall number of Forest Nenets to around 2000 or a little more. We are expecting every day the results of the 2010 census about the ethnic composition of Russia, which may be a bit more precise, but we still do not have them.

The context – past and present

What characterises the Forest Nenets communities is that they all live in quite remote areas. They were not on the paths followed by Russians, while they were penetrating Siberia: they followed rivers, but the Forest Nenets live as rule close to the headwaters, both of Ob tributaries and of rivers flowing into the Arctic Ocean. Actually, there are three main centres nowadays forming three Forest Nenets communities: the Westernmost inhabit the high course of the Kazym and the Nadym, and the territories surrounding lake Num-to. Eastwards, toward the North, dwell the Pur Forest Nenets: the two branches of the River Pur are called Pyaku-Pur and Ayvaseda-Pur, using the names of two Forest Nenets clans. Southwards, in the Agan basin dwell also the smallest and the most endangered group of Forest Nenets. None of these territories is easily accessible: it is the beginning of forest tundra, with lakes, rivers, bogs and forests, where survival requires strong adaptation (Gemuyev 1987: 32, Golovnyov 1995:56). While accessibility has drastically improved over the last century, it still requires at least two days to reach the areas traditionnally inhabited by Forest Nenets (while villages, where they are now sendentarised, may be reached much more easily). This explains why Verbov, in the mid-thirties, when he dwelt among the Forest Nenets, did not find anyone speaking Russian (1936:66). They had undoubtedly trade contacts with Russians during the fairs (Obdorsk and Surgut), but they hardly appeared there as a separate population.

While contact with Russians developed late, it would still be wrong to consider them as a closed society. Their contacts with their indigenous neighbours were most thorough – the term *kapi* is meant for an indigenous person who is not a Nenets, and it is widely present in folklore. These neighbours could be from different ethnic groups depending on the regions. Folklore has fixed the memory of wars with *kapi*, who are sometimes understood to be Selkups and Khantys (oral information by Yuri Vella and Yeremey Aypin). More recently contacts have been more peaceful, mostly with those who live close to their dwellings. For the Num-to Nenets, it is the Northern Khanty; for the Pur Nenets, it is the Tundra Nenets, who use to spend winters in more protected areas than the Northern tundra; the Agan Nenets are closely connected with Eastern Khanty (Surgut Khanty) clans. So in spite of their habitat conditions, the Forest Nenets have been quite opened to dialogue and influence from others.

The consequences are that Forest Nenets society was far from being monocultural, even before the interference of Russians. Verbov mentions Nenets-Khanty exogamy rules. They are a clear sign, that mixed marriages were already a rule eighty years ago, as they are nowadays. There were older routes that lasted for decades even in the Soviet period: Agan Khanty and Nenets men looked for Forest Nenets wives in the Pur region around the villages of Khalesovaya and Kharampur²⁷. Verbov presents an exogamy system ruling intermarriages between Eastern Khanty and Forest Nenets clans in the 1930s (Verbov 1936). More recent developments only increased the Forest Nenets' openness to mixed marriages. While Yuri Vella married (following the clan exogamy's rules presented by Verbov) a Khanty woman from the Taylakov's clans, his four daughters present in their marriage more varied, but not exceptional patterns: the eldest married a half Nenets-half Tatar man from the same village; the second's first husband was a Nenets from the same region, but the second is a Russian of distant Khanty origins; the third married a Tatar oil industry worker and the fourth's first husband was a Northern Khanty. Mobility and social intermingling in the education system, in working structures and public places widen the choice of spouses, while the future spouses are more active in the choice and often now decide

27 There are still nowadays families in Varyogan, in which the wives are from Khalesovaya (my fieldwork).

from themselves.

This is a consequence of two major shifts in the life of the Forest Nenets during the 20th century. The first is connected with Sovietisation. This process was not achieved quickly: it took decades. It was at some moments quite brutal: the goals were to “civilise” backward peoples – in order to form a homogeneous Soviet nation, which would overcome ethnic differences. Among the main changes that were imposed to the Forest Nenets, sedentarisation is the one that had the main structural impact in a historical perspective²⁸. The natural habitat of the Forest Nenets was in the wilds, where they dwelt by small family units in season camps, that were not very distant from one another. With sedentarisation, they were gathered in stationary villages, given loghouses and attached to the village collective unit. Total sedentarisation was still in process in the 1980, when some individuals still lived mainly in the wild, while having a dwelling in the village. Life in the wild and life in villages answer to different rules: clothing, language are different or used to be different (Lyarskaya 2003: 272²⁹). I suppose that for decades the Forest Nenets used to move between the two worlds quite flexibly. But by the time I made my first expeditions to the Agan area, in 1999, this was just a remembrance of the past: for the most of the younger generations sedentarisation was fully achieved, they were unable (and unwilling) to live in the wild. They had mostly lost their heritage of skills. A movement had been starting since the beginning of the 1990s with elder people going back to life in the wild and reindeer herding. These are realities that have a powerful impact on identity.

Finally, in the second half of the 20th century, Forest Nenets experienced a second disruption in their lives: the discovery in the 1960s of huge oil fields exactly on the locations where indigenous peoples were living. This region became in a few decades strategically central for Russia as whole. Oil was drilled everywhere. Even places that had remained

28 It was of course thoroughly connected with collectivisation. Still, nothing remains from collectivisation, with the collapse of the Soviet Union collective units disappeared. While sedentarisation is a process whose consequences are nowadays still to be coped with.

29 Lyarskaya has been working on tundra Nenets. All of her assumptions may not be valid for the Forest Nenets. Still this sharp difference between the two ways of life seems to me to be a thoroughly appropriate way of interpreting the situation both Tundra and Forest Nenets have been submitted to.

relatively unscarred by Soviet presence were taken into the ruling system³⁰ and no free space remained for men, game or reindeer. This situation has several dramatic consequences for indigenous cultures: with the arrival of hundreds of thousands oil workers, they became a tiny minority on their homeland (in Khanty-Mansi district, 1,5% of the population); reindeer pastures have been drastically reduced, while aborigenes try to revitalise reindeer husbandry; game has fled; soil, air and water pollution endanger live for men, animals and plants; the massive presence of oil workers ignoring all of the local delicate ecosystem leads to different kinds of violations: fires, poaching, robbing. Life in the wild is more and more difficult.

An unstable identity

Forest Nenets have a name for themselves, *neshcha*, and they are well aware of their existence³¹. Still, communitary awareness remains limited. First of all, while formerly concrete feelings of belonging were connected to family and forest, now belonging is embodied by village and is not connected to one group's culture. The stage of ethnos has not been ideologically achieved. Secondly, mixed marriages produce mixed ethnic feelings in younger generations, who most probably will choose a spouse without reference to ethnicity (other than negative). Thirdly, all indigenous identities are stigmatised in the environment: indigenous peoples are considered by newcomers as primitive and backward, event savages (Rus. *dikie*). They have no way of fleeng these judgements, because of their physical features. Language is most endangered: more in some areas than others (the Agan basin), but overall in quite weak a position. Interest for language is very tepid: pragmatic approaches lead people to consider their language as useless, hence further endangering one main identity marker.

How are folklore practices interfering with the identity creation

30 I may refer to my own experience of flying hours over Wester Siberia by helicopter and not finding a single moment in which an oil tower would not be visible.

31 Its use is being developed, particularly in the Pur region, where the term «neshchanskiy yazyk» has been rooted. Prikhod'ko 2002.

processes? Are they strengthening Forest Nenets identity or are they offering another way out of the deadlock?

Folklore practice in Nenets life

Folklore collection has been limited. Castrén and Lehtisalo collected some samples, but they are quite limited. Verbov certainly collected language, but we have no folklore recordings by him. Pekka Sammallahhti recorded also language and biographic texts. Jarkko Niemi has been interested in the song repertoire, and I have collected with linguist Kaur Mägi different kinds of oral productions, presented in a CD in 2001. There have also been since publications of songs in the Pur region, also with a CD. I shall focus here on the vitality of the different genres and see how they can convey – or not – Forest Nenets identity.

Genres may be more or less connected to language and to the living use of it. It is the characteristic of songs (*kynavs*): either they are centred on narration either they are based on improvisation. Narrative songs are, at least nowadays, felt and presented as fragments of an forgotten whole. Unfortunately, nobody has collected Forest Nenets songs for eighty years, so we have no record of complete narrative songs. The language of the fragments is quite archaic and is connected with the metaphoric “artistic language” that, according to Vella, has been lost before his generation (he is born in 1948). Even more important for the cohesion of the community are the personal songs. The nature of the personal song is to remember somebody through his or her singing: personal songs are usually sang while intoxicated. The melody is always the same, but the text fits to the concrete situation in which the person sings it. It is transmitted by others, who have heard it, and reproduce it by heart. Language is central: these songs are not based on melody, who is more of a kind of rhythm, with aesthetics that are very far from the western type of melody.

These songs are disappearing with the fading of the generations that know the language. They are impossible to dissociate from Nenets language. Young people, who are permanently submitted to Russian style, ignore this tradition and feel totally disconnected with it. Some songs already present some melodic features, that prove how the younger

generations of language speakers already are changing their taste and their understanding of music.

These songs, as I mentioned, were particularly important for maintaining the cohesion of the community by remembering its members, absent or deceased: they were sung in gatherings, during visits and they were a way to talk about common acquaintances or ancestors, and keep alive mental and emotional links that could well be weakened by distance or lack of meeting. The extinction of this kind of instrument has certainly consequences on the internal connexion between the community members.

Children songs, even in Nenets, are liable to remain longer than others: they are more melodic and grand-parents may sing them longer to their children, who may well remember texts they do not understand in a language they do not know. Children songs may contribute to strengthen the future adult's Nenets identity but do not influence communication within the community.

There are other genres whose dependence on language is not so thorough: folk tales were told in Nenets, but this depended on a Nenets-speaking audience that was supposed to follow the narration reacting by exclamations. The possible audiences are more and more limited, the people able to react are less and less. But tales may be told in Russian: it is a common entertainment, when there are guests in the camp, that after everybody has gone to bed, the grandfather in the dark tells a tale in Russian so that everybody understands.

Another genre that stands quite well translation is the riddle. Riddles go on functioning in sociability. Children are asked to guess answers and they soon learn to ask riddles to visitors or other children. Even when riddles are connected to cultural realities, these may be described in Russian. Moreover, riddles are still an entertainment among Russians, they are present at school, so it is a genre in which Nenets tradition fits into the model that children are given with school programmes. It is not sure that children will feel a difference between the two different repertoires.

So some aspects of folklore that functioned in traditional Nenets society are fading but others are being transmitted though not in the original form.

Emergence of new identities

I argue that folklore as well as other circumstances in the Nenets' life are promoting a new kind of identity for Forest Nenets and probably also for other indigenous peoples in Siberia who are losing their languages. Ethnic peculiarities are supplanted by a general "native" identity, which can fit best to present needs.

In real life the main gap, which is felt by both sides, is the one dividing newcomers, Russians³² from indigenous peoples. As ethnicity is less and less relevant for "Russians", it is being set to the side by the indigenous peoples.

The gap is first of all connected to the massive and disproportional presence of newcomers that feel superior to the aborigines in every matter; they also feel authorised not to respect the natives and express their contempt in different forms, even in desecrating places that are emotionally important for indigenous communities as cemeteries. In front of this everyday aggression, differences between the various ethnic groups are set to the side and this enhances an overall native identity.

This indistinct native identity is supported by several features.

Firstly, the Siberian aborigines have no hope of merging into the Russian society for racial reasons: their appearance, while quite similar between different native groups, cannot be mistaken with the Russian's. Children from mixed families are more easily drawn towards this model, while the belonging to the father's clan may also be more and more blurred. Natives share also the practice or the near remembrance of a peculiar way of life connected with nature, among game, reindeer and spirits. Other circumstances favour the emergence of this new identity, supported by the evolution in the last decades: the endangered position of the vernacular in community life has led, at least in most regions where Forest Nenets dwell³³, to a predominance of Russian in communication among the aborigines themselves. Different languages were certainly a

32 Of course the term Russian is not in this context an ethnic, but a « superethnic » one. Called *lutsa* throughout Siberia, they are the « white people », the non natives, who may be themselves bearers of different ethnicities. Still, in Siberian experience, they are people whose ethnicity is not relevant compared to the common features they represent versus the natives.

33 I have not been in the Pur region, where the language situation may not be so dramatic.

distinctive feature among natives (the Ob-Ugrien languages and Nenets are not mutually understandable), but this distinction is less and less relevant. I have mentioned community lore fall into oblivion. Moreover: the emergence of a common “enemy” has drawn to oblivion the memory of ancient thrifths between communities, and thus, increasing solidarity sets the conditions for identity merging.

Is something remaining from Forest Nenets peculiarities?

What is undoubtedly remaining are clan names. At the moment clan consciousness is pretty well preserved, at least as the sensitivity to which people a clan belongs. But how long will the younger generation keep it? At the moment the Forest Nenets share already many features with the Khanty in life style: some of them are directly borrowed, as the log houses (called in Nenets *kapi mja'*, Khanty house). Some differences are still existing in lifestyle between the communities. Actually (in the Agan basin at least) the distinguishing features are all coming from the Khanty side: they are more traditionalist than the Nenets (who have more pragmatically adapted, for example to Soviet rules), and, besides being more keen on the use of traditional dress and maintaining severe secret in spiritual manners, they practice still peculiar tabus that Forest Nenets ignore: not singing in the morning, but especially *izbeganie*, a female practice of covering one's face with the scarf in the presence of male inlaws. These tabus are not only practiced by the middle aged generation but also by younger women in several families. We may assume that Khanty identity is liable to resist longer than Forest Nenets.

How is this new identity expressed?

Blurring borders means not to distinguish any more the origin of some item that is borrowed, and not feeling the alienness inside the borrowed element. For exemple, I have heard tales told without mentioning whether it is a Khanty or a Nenets tale. The younger will have a mixed repertoire, about which they shall not know anything: while the grandfather knows wherefrom the tales are, for the younger, they are only connected with “us”. Probably a deep scholarly knowledge of the worldview expressed in the tale could allow to identity the actual origin. But this is an expertise not many of the younger generation will acquire.

Not only the origin of borrowed practices is no longer felt while they are incorporated into the new being, but they may be an active quest for

external influences. For example, women who sew and compose pearl decorations look for patterns used by other communities, to incorporate them into their own traditions. Thus, the new practices will be inspired from several Northern traditions, but nevertheless they will be culturally rooted.

Conclusion

In this article, I present the assumption that a new identity is growing by the Siberian natives, that is not interested in keeping the peculiarities of each group but looks for common features. I suppose that it is a possible development within an eco-system – I imagine a wide Western Siberian taiga identity, composed as a patchwork of Khanty, Mansi, Nenets, Komi and Russian features and whose bearers will forget the composition to internalise merely the merged result. Probably, facing this forest ensemble, in which Khanty elements will predominate for some time at the very least, the tundra nomads will present a homogeneous front – but they are all Nenets in this region.