

## The Kenga Sub-Dialect of the Selkup Language

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The rivers Kenga (Kjonga)<sup>1</sup> and Chuzik are the confluents of the Parabel' river, a left tributary of the Ob. This area belongs to the Bakcharski District in the south-west of the Tomsk Region. Officially 15 Selkups and 9 Khanty are listed in the records of Department of Statistics of Bakcharski District administration (these are the only people correspondingly registered in their passports). If one calculates descendants of Selkups also (including children), the Selkup population will come up to 35 persons. Strangely enough, this district has never been mentioned among the districts of Tomsk region with aboriginal population.

The local Selkups cannot say anything about the time of their ancestors' arrival to the Kenga and adjacent territories. Even more, the very assumption of them being not aboriginal there looks strange to them. They are quite sure that their ancestors inhabited the area long ago, and that this is their native land.

In 2001 two authors of this paper, Nataliya Tuchkova and Sergei Glushkov, undertook a trip from Tomsk to the Kenga village (which lies on the bank of the river with the same name), Bakcharski District<sup>2</sup>. Our aims consisted in studying the local Selkup sub-dialect and in gaining other data on the Kenga Selkups. The collected materials may be of certain value for scholars specially dealing with Selkup, and, as we hope, may as well present certain interest for Uralic studies. It is necessary to mention that until now the available information was restricted to a fairy tale recorded by N. Maksimova at Parabel' from a Kenga speaker, and thus published among other Parabel' tales in Bykonja 1996: 89–91. Neither linguistic nor ethnographical data have ever been collected in the area itself, and none of the researchers seems to have ever visited this part of the Southern Selkup area. It was believed that there

<sup>1</sup> Russ. Кёнга (in local pronunciation), on maps and in non-local pronunciation Кенга.

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were no Selkups in the Kenga river region (since the mid-20th century at least), and there was no sense in looking for them there. Hence the importance of the very fact of discovering Selkup speakers on the Kenga river. Besides, the area is of great interest as a part of territory inhabited by the Selkup peoples in the past and as the area of former contacts between different dialects of the Selkup language. Still, Kenga Selkup is more homogeneous than, for example, the mixed dialects between the Chaya and the Ob rivers; this adds to our knowledge of general trends in the Selkup dialectal interaction.

In this article we would like to present linguistic data from the Kenga sub-dialect in order to define its position among the dialects of the Selkup language. Most of these data stem from our main informants, Izosim Ipokov (b. 1929) and Maria Ipokova (b. 1933) – probably the southernmost Selkup speakers living today.

As Selkup can be described in terms of a dialectal continuum, which means that differences do not appear abruptly but accumulate continuously from one neighbouring dialect to another (Janurik 1978), it could be expected that the Kenga sub-dialect would show most similarities with immediately adjacent dialects. These are the Narym and the Chaya dialects. Here an interesting issue arises. The village of Kenga is located much closer to the Chaya dialect area than to the area of the Narym dialect. The shortest distance to the Parbig river (a source of the Chaya), which belongs to the Chaya dialect area, is only 40 km, whereas the distance between Kenga and the main part of the Narym dialect area is not less than 100 km. This territorial proximity suggests close ties between the sub-dialect of Kenga and the Chaya dialect.

At the same time there is an obvious and easy natural access from Kenga via the Parabel' river to the main centres of the Narym dialect. This, as we call, landscape proximity may also be conducive to dialectal ties and influences.

We recognise the importance of geographical factors in language and dialect distribution. Here two of them are at play: the factor of landscape proximity (common river) and the factor of territorial proximity. Are dialect communities formed by common rivers or by common territories (areas)? Though it seems that the first factor is of more importance for Selkup population, no proper research has ever been conducted to prove it. If the following analysis proves that the sub-dialect of Kenga belongs to the Narym dialect and not to the Chaya dialect, this will be an indication that the factor of landscape proximity prevails over the factor of territorial proximity in determining the Selkup dialect spread and distribution.

Before we analyse the dialectal attribution of the Kenga sub-dialect few words need to be said about the Selkup dialectal divisions in general. We start from the dialect classification proposed by T. Janurik (1978) and H. Katz

(1979) as the most detailed studies on this subject. These classifications (and similar views on Selkup dialectology), together with practically convenient lists of criteria for dialect classification suggested by E. Helimski (1985, 2000) and the equally relevant classification after the self appellations preferred by Tomsk scholars (A. Dulson, Yu. Morev), allow us to give a short outline of the dialectological picture to which we refer in the whole paper. The Selkup dialects of the Tomsk Region include the Tym and the Narym dialects, united also by a common self appellation (or its very similar variants) of the population. The common self appellation and the linguistic similarity justify, in our opinion, using the designation “the Tym and Narym (central) dialectal group”. The sub-dialects closely adjacent to the Ob river and having their peculiarities, differing them from the Kenga sub-dialect, are referred to as “the Ob sub-dialects (of the central group)”. The southern dialectal group is represented in the paper first of all by the data from the Ket dialect (see Alatalo 1998); there is also some materials from the Middle Ob, and comparatively little from the most southern dialects – those of Chaya, Chulym, and Upper Ob (cf. Castrén’s K and NP; MO; Tsch., Tschl., OO, respectively).

Below are the characteristic features of the Kenga sub-dialect in comparison with other Selkup dialects and their groups.

### 1. Correspondence $t'(\acute{c})/k$

This correspondence distinguishes more central from more southern Selkup dialects. Cf.: Kenga *čünd* ‘horse’, *čō* ‘belt’, Tym, Narym *čünd*, *čō*, but Ket *kündj*, *kū*.

### 2. Correspondence $qq(q)/\eta q$

This correspondence also distinguishes more central from more southern Selkup dialects. Cf.: Kenga *poq* ‘net’, *pēq* ‘elk’, Tym, Narym *poq*, *pēq/peqq*, but Ket *ponqj*, *pāηqj*.

### 3. Correspondence $l(l')/j$

This correspondence also distinguishes more central from more southern Selkup dialects, though not always in a straightforward way. Cf.: Kenga *tīl* *ʔup* ‘Tatar’, *tēbīl bō* ‘rotten tree, wood’, *šāqola/šāqoja/šaq* ‘cuckoo’, *hōl* ‘throat, gullet, neck’, Tym, Narym *tīl qup*, *tēbīl bō*, *šāqoja*, *ōl*, but Ket *tīj qup*, *tēbīj*, *sāqoja*, *sōj*.

### 4. Correspondence VV (long vowel) / $V_1V_2$ (diphthong)

This correspondence distinguishes central and southern (Tym, Narym, Middle Ob, Ket with Nats-Pumpokol) from most southern (Upper Ob, Chaya, Chulym) Selkup dialects. A brief analysis of Castrén’s materials easily demonstrates vowels correspondences between these groups of dialects:

MO (Middle Ob), K (Ket), NP (Nats-Pumpokol)	OO (Upper Ob), Tsch. (Chaya), Tschl. (Chulym)
<i>ā</i>	<i>oa, ua, aa, ai</i>
<i>u, ē</i>	<i>ye, ie</i>
<i>ō</i>	<i>uo</i>
<i>ū</i>	<i>ü/ū</i>
<i>ū</i>	<i>u/ū</i>
<i>i/ī</i>	<i>ie/i</i>

Thus, long vowels, except *ū* and *ū*, in the central and southern dialects correspond to diphthongs in the most southern ones. The greatest variety is found for the vowel \**ā*. Here are the forms with this vowel: Kenga *māt* ‘house’, *āmbigu* ‘to yawn’, *āmdigu* ‘to sit’, Tym, Narym *māt*, *ām(b)igu*, *āmdigu*, Ket *ammugu*, *āmdigu*, MO, K (Castrén) *āmmaŋ* ‘(I) yawn’, MO, K, NP (Castrén) *āmdaŋ* ‘(I) sit’, but OO, Tsch. (Castrén) *muat*, OO (Castrén) *uammaŋ*, Tschl. (Castrén) *oamaŋ*, OO (Castrén) *uamdaŋ*.

### 5. Correspondence *š(š)/s*

This correspondence also distinguishes more central from more southern Selkup dialects. Cf.: Kenga *šedja* ‘two’, *šū* ‘snake’, *šē* ‘tongue’, Tym, Narym *šedja/šidja*, *šū*, *šē*, but Ket *šittj*, *sū*, *sē*. In the Kenga sub-dialect we registered some words with a non-palatal *š* where one could expect a palatal *š* by analogy with the above examples: Kenga *ši* ‘sable’, *šāq* ‘salt’, *šāqola* ‘cuckoo’, cf. Tym, Narym *ši*, *šāq*, *šāqoja*. In the Kenga the initial palatal counterpart is anyway more regular than the non-palatal one. Compare also the examples from the Ket dialect with regular for southern dialects *s* here: Ket *sī* ‘sable’, *sāq* ‘salt’, *sāqoja* ‘cuckoo’.

### 6. Correspondence *h/s*

This correspondence distinguishes the forms in the Ob sub-dialects from their Tym counterparts. Cf.: Kenga *hōl* ‘neck’, *hāŋg* ‘wood-grouse’, *hola-k* ‘spoon’, *haj* ‘eye’, *hūrup* ‘animal’, *hīž* ‘heart’, *hīr* ‘cow’, *hēr* ‘snow’, *hanžirgu* ‘to play’, *hēlž* ‘seven’, Laskino *hōl*, *haŋg*, *hola-k/ola-k*, *haj*, *hūrup*, *hīž/īž*, *hīr*, *hēr*, *hanžirgu*, *hēlž*, but Tym *soj/sōj*, *sāŋgi*, *solak/sola-k*, *saj/sej*, *surup/sūrup*, *sīž*, *sīr*, *sēr*, *sanžirgu*, *sēlž*. Compare also the examples from the Ket dialect with a regular *s* here: *sōj*, *sēŋgi*, *sollaŋ*, *sajji*, *sūrim*, *sīčj*, *sīr*, *sīrri*, *sānžirgu*, *sēlčj*.

### 7. Correspondence *h / Ø*

This correspondence distinguishes the Kenga sub-dialect from the Narym sub-dialect. Cf.: Kenga *hāŋg* ‘wood-grouse’, *hōl* ‘neck’, *hōtku* ‘to sew’, *hola-k* ‘spoon’, *hwa bō* ‘good (healthy) tree’, *hīž* ‘heart’, but Narym *āŋg*, *ōl*, *ōdešpigu*, *hola-k/ola-k*, *hwā/fā/wā pō*, *īž*.

### 8. Correspondence *-p/-u/-m* (1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing., present tense)

This correspondence may with certain reservations be regarded as distinctive in regard to central (*-p*), southern (MO, K) (*-u*), and most southern dialects (OO, Tsch., Tschl., NP) (*-m*). Cf.: N (Castrén) *meap* ‘(I) made’, *pudap* ‘(I) ferried (smth.) over’, MO (Castrén) *miegau*, K (Castrén) *mēau*, *pūttau*, OO, Tsch. (Castrén) *miegam*, *pūdam*, NP (Castrén) *meiggam*, *pūttam*. The modern materials from the Middle Ob dialect usually have *-p* for this ending: Middle Ob *meap*. For this paper it is important that in the Kenga sub-dialect only *-p* (but not *-u* or *-m*) is regularly used: Kenga *mēšpap* ‘(I) did’, *awīlžap* ‘(I) forgot’, *ora-lbap* ‘(I) have caught’, *ūdalbap* ‘(I) drank’, *īlap* ‘(I) took, raised’.

### 9. Correspondence *ʔ* (pharyngeal, glottal stop, ‘Knacklaut’)/*q* (uvular stop)

This correspondence distinguishes the Kenga sub-dialect from all other dialects of Selkup. Cf.: Kenga *ʔara* ‘crane’, *ʔanž* ‘sledge’, *ʔabor* ‘shirt’, *ʔē* ‘birch tree’, *ʔwēl* ‘fish’, *ʔō* ‘ear’, *ʔup* ‘man’, *ʔob* ‘hide’, *ʔāyil* ‘sleigh’, but Tym, Narym *qara*·, *qanž*, *qabor(g)* ‘dress’, *qwē*, *qwēl*, *qō*, *qup/qop*, *qob*, *qaił/qāyil*, Ket *qarra*·, *qanžj*, *qawij mī*, *qwe*, *qwēlī*, *qō*, *qup*, *qoppi*, *qāyil*. The sound *ʔ*, which occurs in place the uvular stop *q* of other dialects, produces the auditive and acoustic impression of an abrupt pharyngeal disclosure, yet the articulation details are difficult to identify (no instrumental examination has been conducted). It should be emphasised, that this peculiar sound is characteristic of Izosim Ipokov’s individual pronunciation (since there are no other speakers, it is next to impossible to check if it is really a relic of a special dialect). Maria Ipokova seems to pronounce a „normal, standard“ (uvular) *q*-, but her speech is also in other respects closer to other Narym sub-dialects. Izosim Ipokov certainly knows how to pronounce and can pronounce an uvular *q*- in word initial position before vowel or spirant *-w*-. Uvular *q*- is preserved in his speech in the following words: Kenga *qāž/hāž* ‘hair’, *qory/ʔory* ‘bear’, *qāt* ‘forehead’, *qat* ‘nail, claw’. This circumstance speaks in favour of the hypothesis of the really dialectal rather than individual origin of this pronunciation feature. In word final position, between vowels, and in consonant clusters *q* is preserved or alternates with a voiced uvular stop, voiced or voiceless fricative counterparts, same as in all other dialects of Selkup: Kenga *pēq* ‘elk’, *poq* ‘net’, *pūqa* ‘bubble’, *pēqačgu* ‘to hunt elks’, *loya* ‘fox’, *ńāryi* ‘willow’ and others. However, in consonant clusters three words from our records show a pharyngeal *ʔ* where an uvular *q* is to be expected: Kenga *ʔošʔat* ‘bad, foul’ (cf. *māta qoškālęk tūmpa* ‘(The) door (is) badly closed’ in Katz 1979: 84), *ńarʔ<sup>(a)</sup>/ńary<sup>(a)</sup>* ‘purple/rose willow’, *njnʔa/njnʔe* ‘mosquito, gnat’.

### 10. Quantitative oppositions

The oppositions *a-ā*, *o-ō*, *u-ū* are of phonological relevance: Kenga *mat* ‘I’ – *māt* ‘house’, *qat/qad* ‘claw, nail’ – *qāt/qād* ‘forehead’, *nop/nob* ‘God’ – *nōp/nōb* ‘mitten’, *puqa* ‘cone’ – *pūqa* ‘bubble’. As it is known, some of the corresponding words in Narym sub-dialects are often treated as having a phonologically relevant distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants: Narym, Laskino *qad* – *qat/qāt*, *nop* – *nob* (Morev 1977: 21; Helimski 1985; Kuper, Pusztay 1993). Though there are no reasons to doubt or else to disprove this conclusion we need to mention that in the Tym dialect voicing of consonants is phonologically irrelevant (Katz 1975: 5–18), and long and short vowels are different phonemes (Katz 1975: 19–29). Most probably the same is correct for the entire central dialectal group, as evidenced by the phonological interpretations suggested by H. Katz. The two opinions can be (and have been) harmonised by stating that the sub-dialects closely adjacent to the Ob river demonstrate to some extent changes in their phonological systems. According to the expert opinion of N. Denning, (a) voiced consonants in the Tym dialect are secondary in respect to the voiceless ones (Denning 1981: 17, 121), yet (b) the difference between long and short vowels is here phonologically irrelevant (Denning 1981: 75). Our materials show that in the Kenga sub-dialect the words in question differ in their vowels’ length, while consonants’ voicing is utterly voluntary and unsteady.

In the lexical domain the materials from Kenga mainly coincide with the word-stock attested in the Narym Selkup dictionary (Kuper, Pusztay 1993), except for some words. For example, the mythological vocabulary of Kenga Selkups includes the word *kura-k* for wood-goblin; another word they also use for this concept is *lō*. The designation *mažil’ lō* for wood ghost is well known in the area of Tym and Narym but not on the Kenga river. As far as we know, the word *kura-k* is used mostly on the Ket river, where it is pronounced as *qura*, and is in any way peculiar to the more southern dialects of Tomsk region.

Southern location of the Kenga Selkup has some influence on it, but this influence is not extensive, especially if one considers that other southern dialects are geographically closer to it than the Narym and Tym dialects. Besides of the already mentioned word *kura-k*, attention may be drawn to the name of the river – *kōnga*, which is regularly used along with *tōnga*. Even those Selkups who do not speak their native language know both names, though pronounce them with a short vowel *ō*. Our informants pronounce it with *-n-* (cf. probable correspondence in Katz 1979: 79 – *kōŋ*). An *-n-* instead of expected *-ŋ-* is pronounced also in *nin?a-/nin?e-* ‘mosquito, gnat’. The river name *kōŋ* stems (in H. Katz’ interpretation) from the materials recorded by A. Kuž-

mina from F. N. Kilikajkin in Napas: *köŋ-ā warʏe k̄l̄ ... köŋ t̄imnan ütčuga ěk* ‘Köŋ is not a big river... Köŋ is smaller than Tym’ (Katz 1979:80). Though there are conflicting data as to what river is meant here (a river ‘between Kargasok and Tymsk’ or a tributary of the Parabel’ – see Katz 1979: 79), we think it is probable that the river mentioned by Kilikajkin is Kenga. The alternation *kōŋa/tōŋa* obviously reflects the dialectal *k/t* correspondence treated above (No. 1), which divides more southern and more central dialects. In this connection we can make the supposition that southern and central Selkup groups could come in contact in the Kenga river basin, either directly or due to Russian mediation (local Russians always call the river Кёнга).

The above analysis of characteristic features of the Kenga sub-dialect allows some conclusions to be made in regard to its dialectal attribution.

The sub-dialect of Kenga, though geographically located in the southern part of the Selkup area, linguistically certainly belongs to the central dialectal group. This may be proved by the usage of *t'(č)* in place of *k* (No. 1 above), *qq* (*q*) in place of *ŋq* (No. 2), *l(l')* in place of *j* (No. 3), long vowels in place of diphthongs (No. 4) and *ś(š)* in place of *s* (No. 5). The Kenga sub-dialect is similar to the central dialects also in using the ending *-p* (1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing., No. 8). The Kenga data in most respects coincide with the Narym ones. The Kenga Selkups’ self appellation *čomil' ʔup* is also practically identical to *čumil' qup*, the self appellation of the Parabel', Narym, Tym and some of the Ob Selkups. Nevertheless there is a number of features that allow us to differentiate the sub-dialect in question from other dialects of the central group: in the sub-dialect of Kenga (like in the Ob sub-dialects) *h* is used instead of *s* of the Tym sub-dialects (No. 6), initial *h-* is preserved in all cases when it falls out in the Narym sub-dialect (No. 7), *ś-* is mostly used instead of initial *š-* of the Narym and the Tym sub-dialects (No. 5), *ʔ-* is used instead of initial *q-* (and in few other cases) of other central sub-dialects and of other dialects of Selkup (No. 9), and the opposition of long and short vowels is phonologically relevant unlike in the Ob sub-dialects of the central group (No. 10).

Thus it can be concluded that the sub-dialect of Kenga belongs to the Narym dialect, having certain features in common with the southern dialects. Returning to the issue of landscape and territorial proximity as geographical factors influencing the spread and unity of Selkup dialects, the linguistic analysis of the Kenga sub-dialect shows that the landscape factor has greater importance for this sub-dialect than the factor of distance. Disregarding territorial proximity of Kenga to the southern dialects (first of all to the Chaya dialect) and its remote position in regard to the Narym dialect, the factor of landscape proximity (a common river) plays greater role in its dialectal affiliation.

### Transcription

$\gamma$  – uvular voiced fricative, allophone of the phoneme /q/;  $h$  – back voiceless fricative similar to the final sound in German *nach*. In other cases we keep to the Finno-Ugric Transcription.

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