

Northern Khanty epistemic necessity and guises of the past



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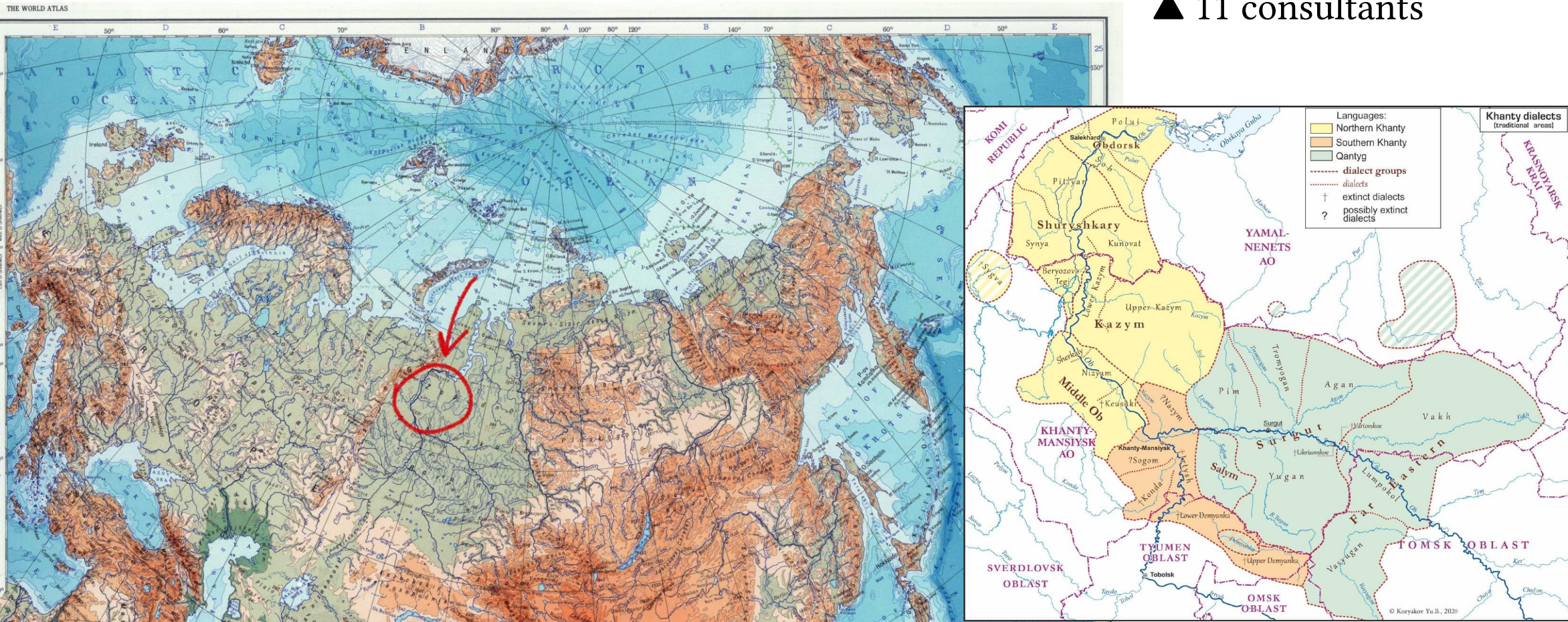
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Kazym Khanty, a dialect of Northern Khanty (Uralic>Khantic)

▲ Russia, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, Kazym village

▲ 4 (collective) fieldtrips during 2021-2023, Russian as contact

▲ 11 consultants



map by Yuri Koryakov

Methodology

- ▲ elicitation via **small stories around 3-4 sentences**, translated sentence-by-sentence
 - contextual elicitation, but **dialogue-like** context is in Khanty
 - “can you say it this way” – slight modification in the target sentence
 - + asking consultants to repeat the whole thing

- ▲ + occasional strings of narrative elicitation (Burton, Matthewson 2015; Louie 2015)
 - but! embeddings not good – *Masha said that X* involves non-finite forms

(1) [A: Where was Borya yesterday? He disappeared.

B: No idea. Did he have any urgent business?

A: Well, his exams are coming up]

λᵤw mosəŋ λᵤŋətti χot-ən tǎlaŋ χatəλ wə-s

(s)he maybe read-NFIN.NPST house-LOC entire day be-PST[3SG]

B: ‘He might have spent the whole day at the library’.

The puzzle

▲ **epistemic necessity**: non-finite form + ‘deed’ + copula

V- $\frac{\text{ti}}{\text{əm}}$ wɛr wə- $\frac{\lambda}{s}$

V-nfin $\frac{\text{npst}}{\text{pst}}$ deed be- $\frac{\text{npst}}{\text{pst}}$

(2) [A: Where is grandma?

B: Dunno. Well, her bag is not here, her shoes as well]

λɥw λapkaɟ-a mǎn-əm wɛr wə-λ

(s)he shop-DAT go-NFIN.PST deed be-NPST[3SG]

‘She must’ve gone shopping’

two variables!!

▲ Copula in (N)PST

▲ Non-finite form in NFIN.(N)PST

▲ what do they encode?

A note on Khanty

- ▲ Finite tenses - past(PST) and nonpast (NPST)
- ▲ no Sequence of Tense
- ▲ no regular aspectual markers
- ▲ Non-finite “tenses” NFIN.NPST/NFIN.PST used in relative clauses, sentential arguments, purpose clauses, temporal adjuncts, mirative forms... (Bikina et al. 2022)
- ▲ non-finite forms with ‘deed’ can be used as sentential arguments of some verbs (Starchenko 2019)

(3) puχ juχət-əm wɛr ma wə-λ-ɛm
 boy come-NFIN.PST deed I know-NPST-1SG
 ‘I know that the boy came’ (Bikina et al. 2022)

Idea

(Condoravdi 2002):

▲ **Temporal perspective (T_{Pe})** – time at which the modal base is evaluated

(in our case, the time at which the relevant epistemic state is valid)

▲ **Temporal orientation (T_O)** – the temporal relation between the T_{Pe} and the prejacent

▲ initial idea: **T_{Pe}** is encoded by the **finite tense of the copula**

T_O is encoded by the **non-finite tense of the prejacent**

▲ past T_{Pe} for epistemics is possible – (Rullmann & Matthewson 2018)

present TPe, present TO

- (5) [Sasha sometimes leaves some candy in the closet as a stash. She and her friend are having tea, but there are no candy on the table.

S: Look in the closet.

Fr: What for?]

šăta maw wəλ-**ti** wɛr wə-λ

there candy be-NFIN.NPST deed be-NPST[3SG]

S: ‘There must be some candy in there’ [#but I’m not sure]

	fut/pres TO	past TO
present TPe	V-ti wɛr wəλ	V-əɱ wɛr wəλ
past TPe	V-ti wɛr wəs	V-əɱ wɛr wəs

present TPe, future TO

(4) [I see Masha approaching the bus stop from one side and Borya – from the other]

mašaj-en boraj-en piλa avtobus-a oməs-ijəλ-ti χər-ən wəjtant-ti
M.-POSS.2SG B.-POSS.2SG with bus-DAT sit-FREQ-NFIN.NPST open_place-LOC meet-NFIN.NPST
wɛr-ən wə-λ
deed-POSS.2DU be-NPST[3SG]

‘Masha and Borya must meet at the bust stop (literally: at the place where you sit on the bus)’

▲ (circumstantial?)

	fut/pres TO	past TO
present TPe	V-ti wɛr wəλ	V-əm wɛr wəλ
past TPe	V-ti wɛr wəs	V-əm wɛr wəs

present TPe, past TO

(6) [We saw Masha on the street and she seemed unusually happy.

A: I wonder why is she so happy.]

waśaj-en piλa wəjtant-ijəλ-ə**m** wɛr wə-λ śit păt-a

V.-POSS.2SG together meet-FREQ-NFIN.PST deed be-NPST[3SG] that for-DAT

ampətət'λ'ə-ijəλ?

rejoice-FREQ.NPST[3SG]

B: 'She must've met Vasya - why else would she be so happy?'

	fut/pres TO	past TO
present TPe	V-ti wɛr wəλ	V-əm wɛr wəλ
past TPe	V-ti wɛr wəs	V-ə m wɛr wəs

past TPe, present TO

- (7) [Sasha sometimes leaves some candy in the closet as a stash. She and her friend are having tea when Sasha suddenly leaves to rummage in the closet.
Friend: Why were you rummaging in the closet?]

śata maw wəλ-**ti** wɛr wə-**s** pa antəm
there candy be-NFIN.NPST deed be-PST[3SG] ADD NEG.EX

S: 'There could've been some candy but there are none.'

(basically an ice-cream example
from (von Fintel & Gillies 2008))

	fut/pres TO	past TO
present TPe	V-ti wɛr wəλ	V-əm wɛr wəλ
past TPe	V-ti wɛr wəs	V-əm wɛr wəs

past TPe, present TO

(8) [A: Why did you carry flowers around yesterday?

B: You know, Masha adores flowers. I gathered some for her]

ma nɐməs -əm min ostanovkaj-ən wɔjtant-ijəλ-**ti** wɛr-ɛmən wɔ-s

I think.PST-1SG we.DU bus_stop-LOC meet-FREQ-NFIN.NPST deed-POSS.1DU be-PST[3SG]

‘I thought we were supposed to meet at the bus stop’

[but Masha got sick and I had to carry the flowers all day long]

	fut/pres TO	past TO
present TPe	V-ti wɛr wɔλ	V-əm wɛr wɔλ
past TPe	V-ti wɛr wɔs	V-əm wɛr wɔs

past TPe, past TO

(9) [Why were you calling out at Borya's windows for the whole evening yesterday? He wasn't at home]

ma nəməs-əm λɪw juχi juχət-əm wɛr-(əλ) wə-s

I think.PST-1SG (s)he home come-NFIN.PST deed-(POSS.3SG) be-PST[3SG]

'I thought he must've been home by then.'

	fut/pres TO	past TO
present TPe	V-ti wɛr wəl	V-əm wɛr wəl
past TPe	V-ti wɛr wəs	V-əm wɛr wəs

Partial system

- ▲ 5 of 11 consultants do not allow NFIN.PST at all
 - all of its functions are covered by finite past instead
- ▲ PST for both past TPe and past TO

	fut/pres TO	past TO
present TPe	V-NFIN.NPST deed be-NPST	V-NFIN.NPST deed be-PST
past TPe	V-NFIN.NPST deed be-PST	V-NFIN.NPST deed be-PST

Partial system

-- **past TPe, past TO**

(10) [Why were you calling out at Borya's windows for the whole evening yesterday? He wasn't at home.]

ma nɒməs-əm λɪw juχi juχət-**ti** wɛr-(əλ) wə-**s**

I think.PST-1SG (s)he home come-NFIN.NPST deed-(POSS.3SG) be-PST[3SG]

'I thought he must've been home by then.'

- ▲ quite possibly influence of Russian
- ▲ grammaticalization?
- ▲ not due to age difference or influence of other dialects

Beyond the wεr

- ▲ several other modal nominal constructions of the type V-NFIN+ NOUN + copula
- ▲ dynamic, circumstantial, bouletic
- ▲ can't have NFIN.PST due to the Diversity condition (need both p and $\neg p$ worlds in the modal base) (Condoravdi 2002)

(11) [Masha has a younger brother and she often has to babysit him. But yesterday he was staying at Grandma's and Masha was free for the whole day]

*muλχatəλ mašaj-en woš-a mǎn-əm sír tǎj-əλ

yesterday M.-POSS.2SGcity-DAT go-NFIN.PST ability have-NPST[3SG]

'Yesterday Masha could go to the city'

Circumstantial *wer*-constructions

▲ circumstantial + pst = counterfactual (Condoravdi 2001)

(12) λɯw χɯwən mǎn-ti wer-əλ wə-s tɔp bilet-əλ wətšə-s-λe
(s)he long_ago go-NFIN.NPST deed-POSS.3SG be-PST[3SG] only ticket-POSS.3SG lose-PST-3SG>SG
'She would've left long ago, but she lost the ticket'

▲ similar with Khanty conditionals – with PST being the only CF-marking

(13) tǎmχatəλ rʉtsə-ti χatəλ wə-s ki muj (λəλən) nəŋ wer-s-en?
today rest-NFIN.NPST day be-PST[3SG]if what (IRR) you.SG do-PST-2SG
'What would you do if today was a holiday' (uttered on Tuesday)

▲ if we assume conditionals are both epistemic and circumstantial (Khoo 2015)

▲ epistemic MB + PST = past indicatives

▲ circumstantial MB + PST = subjunctives

Weakening?

▲ copula in PST, as in past TPe, can convey uncertainty

(14) śāta maw wəλ-**ti** wɛr wə-**s**
 there candy be-NFIN.NPST deed be-PST[3SG]

S: ‘There may be some candy in there’ [but I’m not sure]

(Rullmann & Matthewson 2018) notice something similar with English *had to*

▲ is it an implicature?

Weakening

(15) [A: Where were Vasya? We lost him yesterday

B: No idea.]

#kinška	λɪŋət-ti	χot-ən	wəλ-ti	wɛr-əλ	wə-s
book	read-NFIN.NPST	house-LOC	be-NFIN.NPST	deed-POSS.3SG	be-PST[3SG]
χot-a	jǎŋχ-ti	wɛr-əλ	wə-s		
house-DAT	go-NFIN.NPST	deed-POSS.3SG	be-PST[3SG]		

Intended: ‘He might’ve been in the library and he might’ve been visiting (someone)’

Consultant: as if he were in two different places at the same time

▲ apparent weakening does not change the quantification

Links

1. Bikina, D., Rakhman, D., Potseluev, V., Starchenko, A., & Toldova, S. Non-finite constructions in Khanty: their unity and diversity // *Folia Linguistica*. 2022.
2. Condoravdi C. Temporal interpretation of modals-modals for the present and for the past // *The construction of meaning*. 2001.
3. Louie M. The problem with no-nonsense elicitation plans (for semantic fieldwork) // *Methodologies in semantic fieldwork*. 2015. P. 47-71.
4. Rullmann H., Matthewson L. Towards a theory of modal-temporal interaction // *Language*. Linguistic Society of America, 2018. Vol. 94, № 2. P. 281–331.
5. Von Stechow K., Gillies A.S. Must... stay... strong! // *Nat. Lang. Semant.* Springer, 2010. Vol. 18, № 4. P. 351–383.