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THE BEGINNING OF THE VOTIC LANGUAGE REVIVAL

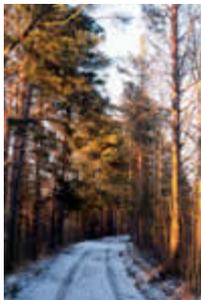
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Votic (Uralic, Balto-Finnic family) now is one of minor languages of Russian Federation, where as Votic is oldest of known populations in Ingria - the territory near contemporary Saint Petersburg. The ethnonym "Votic" appeared in Russian chronicles in XI-th century.

In the beginning of XIX century Votic speaking people were enough numerous: there were more than 5000 persons and they lived in a large territory near Saint Petersburg. In 1861 after the fall of serfdom Votic people had to go to nearest towns to earn money. So they began speak Russian.

However Votic people who lived on the Baltic Sea beach and near Luga river did not need to leave their place, because they could fish. Fishing was traditional Votic occupation, it was not only very hard but also very dangerous work - they fished in winter under ice and even women and children did it with men. Now the Votic language remains only in the villages on the Baltic Sea beach and near Luga river.



Votic landscape.



Some Votic people still live in traditional Votic houses with closed stone yard:

In the vicinity of Votics live Ingrians. Ingrian is also Balto-Finnic language, close to Votic. Ingrians have settled this territory in XVII-th century.

Votic dialects, which did not contact to Ingrian, are dead now.

Votic has never been written language and never been taught, in contrast to Ingrian which became written language in the beginning of 30 years of XX-th century. So in XX century Votic children went to school together with Ingrian ones. Functionaries did not distinguish Votics and Ingrians. As the result now some Votic people sometimes call themselves "Ingrians". So the first 1 or 1,5 years in school they all (Votic children as well as Ingrian ones) got there education in Ingrian and after that in Russian. When children went to school they did not know any word in Russian, because Russian people appeared there only before the II World War. Ingrian was taught at school till the middle of 30-th years of XX century. Now Russian is the only language of school education there.

During the II World War Votics as well as Ingrians were moved to Finland. They all returned, but they were not allowed to live in their place. After the death of Stalin they might at last to come back, but they were not permit to speak their mother tongue. So adults were afraid to speak Votic to children. Now, as a result of the language policy of 1930 - 1950 years, only about 10-15 persons in the age of 65-85 years who can speak Votic remain in some villages. This entire people speak Russian and use Votic very seldom.



Votic speaking people.

In our days, when only senior generation can speak Votic, the language policy has changed. But last year for the first time in the history a Votic speaking woman began to teach this language (as not written) at a village school.



T.F. Prokopenko, the old lady, which teaches the Votic language at school.

Children are interested in Votic language and culture, they sing Votic folk songs that their parents do not know.



Children sing Votic songs at the Votic festival in the village school.

It is difficult now to do some forecast, but we can see the first step to the revival of the language, which was considered almost died.