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## LANGUAGE SURVIVAL AMONG THE IVDEL MANSI\*

**Abstract.** This article describes the linguistic situation among the Ivdel (Upper Ložva) Mansi, a small community residing mostly in the north of the Sverdlovsk region in Russia. The Ivdel Mansi dialect is actively used by speakers of all generations, while other Northern Mansi dialects (and most other indigenous languages of Northern Siberia) are spoken almost exclusively by elderly and middle-aged people. The article briefly presents the recent history of the Ivdel Mansi community, providing data on demography as well as on Ivdel Mansi settlements. Functions of the language, traits of the Ivdel Mansi dialect and education of Ivdel Mansi children are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Mansi, Ob-Ugric, linguistic situation, sociolinguistics, Siberia.

### 1. Introduction

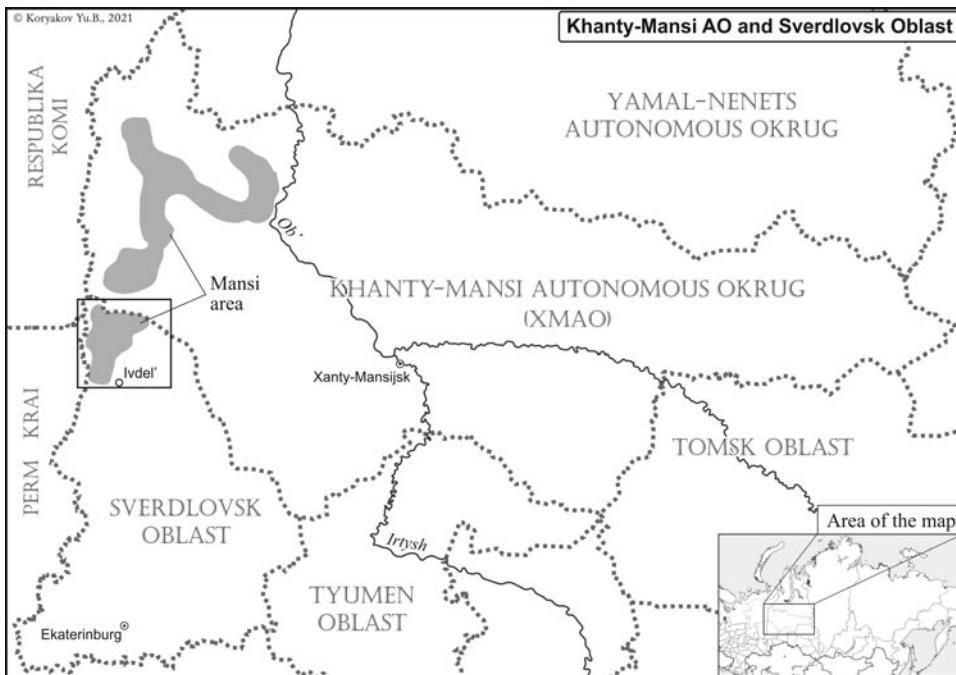
Mansi (Vogul; ISO 639-3: mns) is a group of languages spoken in Russia, in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug and Sverdlovsk Oblast (see Map 1). Traditionally considered a single language, they constitute a separate branch that belongs to the Ob-Ugric branch of the Uralic language family.

This article examines the linguistic situation and the recent history of the Mansi living in the north of the Sverdlovsk region, in the upper reaches of the Ložva and Pelym rivers. Since 1923 this area belongs to the Ivdel' district (now Ivdel' Urban Okrug), therefore this group is often called Ivdel Mansi. These Mansi speakers still actively use the Ivdel (or Upper Ložva and Upper Pelym) dialects of the Northern Mansi language, which are close to Upper Sosva (Njaksimvol) dialects. Linguistically, they differed markedly from the Mansi who lived in the lower reaches of the rivers Ložva and Pelym and spoke the Western dialects of the Middle Mansi language, which is now extinct.

A remarkable trait of the Ivdel Mansi is how well their language and its use have been preserved by all age groups in most everyday situations while the population itself is small. In the last 150 years their number has fluctuated within the range of 100–170 people. The situation is far different

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<sup>1</sup> The correct spelling of the toponym is *Ivdel'* (Russian *Ивдель*), but we will use *Ivdel* for the name of the ethnic group.



Map 1. The Mansi area in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug and Sverdlovsk Oblast

from that in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, where there are much more speakers (1,582 people claimed Mansi to be their mother tongue in 2010<sup>2</sup>), but they are mostly middle-aged or older and few children speak the language (Salminen 2007 : 262—263). In fact, preservation of the mother tongue among the Ivdel Mansi is much better than for most languages of Northern Siberia (with the exception of Yakut and Nenets). However, the small size of the Ivdel Mansi group and the rarity of in-group marriages can pose a serious threat to the preservation of the language.

An important marker of where the ancestors of modern Mansi speakers come from are their surnames. The initial set of surnames among the Ivdel Mansi is rather limited (about 10), therefore we present the surnames of the inhabitants of individual villages below.

## 2. History of the study of the Ivdel Mansi

In 1843—1844, the Ivdel Mansi were visited by the Hungarian scientist Antal Reguly, who created a handwritten map of the upper reaches of the Ložva and Pelym rivers. The work of Gábor Székely is devoted to the analysis of the toponyms on this map (Секей 2012a). In the 1880s, Hungarian explorers Bernát Munkácsi and Károly Pápai worked in the Upper Ložva region and made a map of their own travels.

In 1903 the upper reaches of the Ložva and Pelym rivers were visited by the Finnish linguist Artturi Kannisto (Nevalainen, Kannisto 1969). In Soviet times, the Russian ethnographer V. N. Černecov made two trips to the Ivdel

<sup>2</sup> Итоги переписи 2010 года. Том. 4, с. 285, таблица 9. [https://www.gks.ru/free\\_doc/new\\_site/perepis2010/croc/Documents/Vol4/pub-04-09.pdf](https://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/Documents/Vol4/pub-04-09.pdf).

Mansi (1925 and 1938) (Чернцов 1987a; 1987b). These researchers compiled detailed lists of Vogul settlements with the surnames of the heads of families. The location of Mansi settlements according to their data is shown on Map 2.

After WW II the Ivdel Mansi were scarcely studied by ethnographers or linguists. Only in 1968–1971 a group led by A. K. Matvejev from the Ural University gathered toponymic data in this region. In 1987–1988, some fieldwork was carried out there by J. G. Fjodorova, an ethnographer from St. Petersburg.

Later, in 2005, the Hungarian linguist G. Székely worked with Ivdel Mansi (Секей 2012b), and in 2017–2020 D. Жорник and S. Pokrovskaja carried out field trips to this area (Жорник, Покровская 2018).

A more detailed overview of research trips to the Ivdel Mansi is given in the work of G. Székely (Секей 2012b).

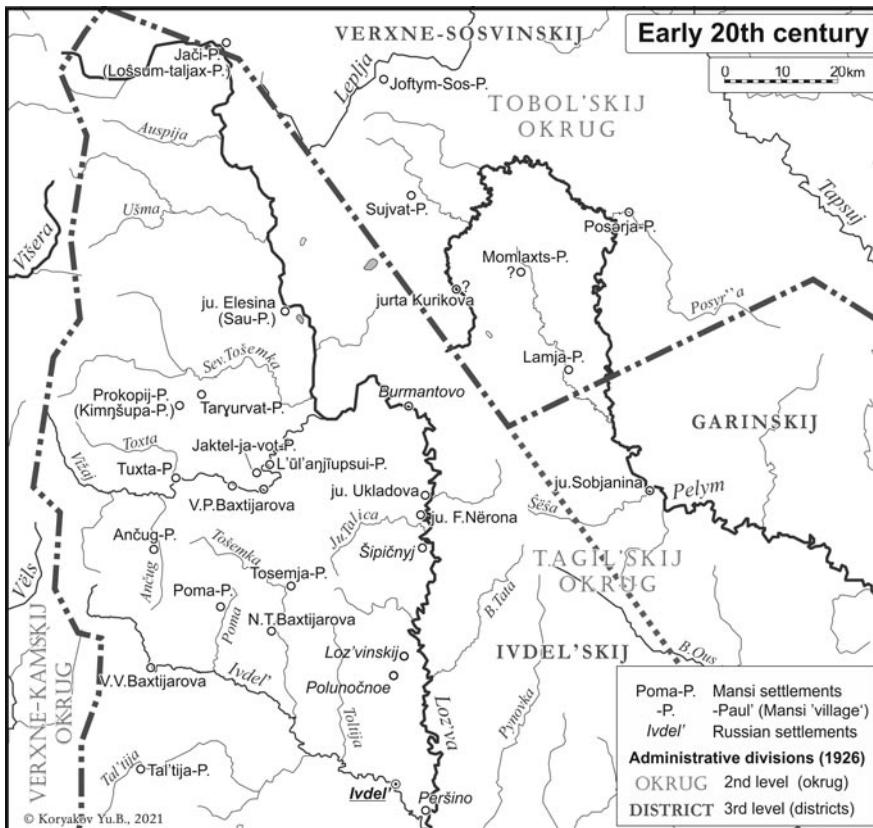
## **2.1. History of the Ivdel Mansi in the XX century**

Although the first Russian settlement beyond the Ural Mountains was founded here in 1588 at the confluence of the Ivdel' and Ložva rivers near present-day Peršino (Ložvinskij Gorodok, destroyed in 1598), active development of the Ivdel basin began only in the second quarter of the 19th century due to gold mining. The town of Ivdel' itself was founded in 1831 (<https://uraloved.ru/goroda-i-sela/sverdlovskaya-obl/gorod-ivdel>). The development of more northern regions by the Russians started only at the beginning of the 20th century. In those years, the villages of Burmantovo, Talica, Kedrovaja, Ložvinskij, Šipičnyj, Sobjaninskij, Seleznjovskij, and some mines appeared along the banks of Ložva to the north of Ivdel'. This led to a partial displacement of the Mansi from the river Ložva and some of its tributaries (Чернцов 1987a). At the same time, some Mansi from Northern Sosva, in particular the Chandybins, moved to the upper reaches of Pelym (Шакаев 2005).

In the middle of the 1930s, the upper reaches of Pelym (3 villages) and Ložva (Lusum-talakh-paul), which were previously part of the Njaksimvol rural council (Berjozovo district, Ostyak-Vogul national okrug), were added to the Sverdlovsk region (Плещков, Антонов 1928 : 74–79). In 1939, the settlements of Ljamlja-paul', Sobjanino, Sujevat (Sujvada) and Kurikovy juryt were transferred from the Verch-Pelym rural council of the Gari district to the Burmantovo rural council of the Ivdel' district. In the same year, on the site of Sujevat (Sujvat-paul', 7 people in 1926), the new settlement Sujevat-paul' was formed, where Mansi from several clans (including Kurikovs and Anjamovs) settled (Балакин 2019).

In the 1930s, an influx of Mansi from the Severnaya Sosva basin occurred. First, rich reindeer herders moved in to avoid dekulakization. Later, some Mansi moved to the Ivdel' district, since indigenous people were not recruited to war there (apparently due to the presence of camps) (<http://safe-rgs.ru/1089-tri-gruppy-mansi.html>). The Mansi who came from the north brought new surnames with them, so the Tasmanovs, Dunajevs, Anemgurovs and Adins appeared (and are still common) in the Northern Sosva region (Балакин 2019).

In 1937, Ivdel'lag, a local branch of the GULAG, was formed. The first labor colony appeared in the village of Burmantovo (83 km from the town of Ivdel'). Soon a whole network of camps was formed, mainly along the Ložva and Ivdel' rivers. In 1951, Ivdel'lag consisted of 15 departments, including 47 camps in



Map 2. Ivdel Mansi settlements in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

which more than 22,000 convicts were held simultaneously. The largest camp departments were located in the villages Talica, Peršino and Vižaj. Colonies also appeared in Ivdel' itself. Most of the prisoners were engaged in logging, and several mines were opened for the extraction of minerals (<https://www.oblgazeta.ru/society/2116/>).

Due to the extensive logging, the Ivdel Mansi had to abandon part of their territories, leaving their fishing and hunting grounds, camps and shrines. At the same time, owing to the presence of prison camps and corrective colonies, the Ivdel Mansi remained one of the most isolated groups of the Ob-Ugrians. Over time economic relationships developed between the Mansi and the employees of the forced labor camps. Mansi people brought products of reindeer herding, hunting and fishing for the prison authorities, and in return they received fuel, spare parts, assistance in transporting timber and in delivering food to their settlements (Перевалова 2012 : 71).

In the mid-1960s, the Anjamov family moved from Suevatpaul' and founded the village of Treskoľe, upwards along the Ložva river further from the mouth of the Ušma, where several other families moved to later (Балакин 2019). Back in 1988, a total of 29 people lived in Treskoľe, including the Anjamovs (13 people), the Bachtijarovs (8 people) and the Pelikovs (8 people) (Балакин 2019).

In the early 1990s, the camp system was greatly reduced, but it did not disappear completely. In the beginning of the 21st century, 6 divisions of the Federal Penitentiary Service remained here. They are located mainly

within the town of Ivdeľ and in the suburbs. The last northern colony, in the village of Ložvinskij, was closed in 2019 (<https://www.oblgazeta.ru/society/incident/41772/>).

All these years, transhumant reindeer husbandry was an important part of Ivdel Mansi life. It existed until the mid-1990s, after which the timber industry enterprises that aided reindeer herding disappeared and the state-organized slaughter of wolves ceased (Перевалова 2012 : 72). According to a local legend, the death of the herds was caused by the killing of 7 wolves in 1985–1986 by reindeer herder brothers from the village of Treskole (http://safe-rgs.ru/1089-tri-gruppy-mansi.html).

### **3. Demography**

Table 1 shows the total number of Ivdel Mansi, as well as their number in compact settlements (i.e. those where they made up the majority) according to various sources. The number of Mansi in settlements along the Pelym is given separately.

*Table 1  
Population dynamics of the Ivdel Mansi during the XX–XXI centuries*

Years	Total population	including compact settlements	including settlements along Pelym	Families/households	Source
1903	139	137	26	32	Nevalainen, Kannisto 1969
1925		84*	?		Чернецов 1987а : 15–16
1930	154				Фонд № 51
1961–1963	170	?	70		Балакин 2019 (household books)
1979	167				Фонд № 51 (1979 Census)
2002	131	76	13		Перепись 2002
2010/2011	113	64	11	27	Перепись 2010
2020	?	54	2		the authors' field data

\* The 1925 list did not include the Mansi along the upper reaches of the Pelym river.

As can be seen from Table 1, the total number of Ivdel Mansi increased at first, and then began to gradually decrease, although in general it remained within the range of 100–170 people. The most notable decline began in the last decade. The two main reasons are a large number of deaths from accidents (partly related to alcohol consumption) and a noticeable decline in birth rate.

The main reason for the low birth rate is that almost all Ivdel Mansi are more or less distant relatives of each other, and almost no marriages are concluded between them. Over the past decades, there were only a few marriages within the Ivdel Mansi community. Accordingly, the birth rate fell sharply (six times): between 1992 and 2002, 31 children were born (<https://regnum.ru/news/cultura/174383.html>), while there were only about ten newborns between 2002 and 2020.

At the same time, some Mansi women marry non-Mansi men and leave for other parts of the country. Such families exist in Severourašsk (Sverdlovsk region), Yekaterinburg, Russkinskaja village (Surgut district of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug), in the Vologda region and in the Moscow region. One local woman married a Mansi man from the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug. They live in Chulimsunt and continue to use the Mansi language in the family. Another part of Mansi women raise children as single mothers. Due to the existence of children from mixed marriages, a fatal decline in the size of the group has not yet taken place. However, new "Mansi" surnames arise: Černijev, Černobrovkin, Šemberberg, Chvorostov, Krjuček, Gridnev, Sobjanin, Petrov, Matvijenko, Nikotin (Перевалова 2012 : 70–71). Young Mansi men do not marry and remain bachelors.

#### 4. Settlements

Back in the middle of the 20th century, the Ivdel Mansi still lived along small rivers deep in the forest, with just one or two families in one place, since both hunting and reindeer herding needed large areas. However, by the beginning of the 21st century, Mansi settlements had changed a lot. According to the field data of 2020, only a few people lived in forest yurts,<sup>3</sup> while most Mansi were located either in the village of Ušma or in one of the two villages called Jurty Pakiny. Also, the Mansi population along the Pelym has almost disappeared. There are only two people left in Chandybiny Jurty. In addition, some families still own forest huts (*bor-kol*), though not 6–7 as before (Шакаев 2005), but rather one hut for each family.

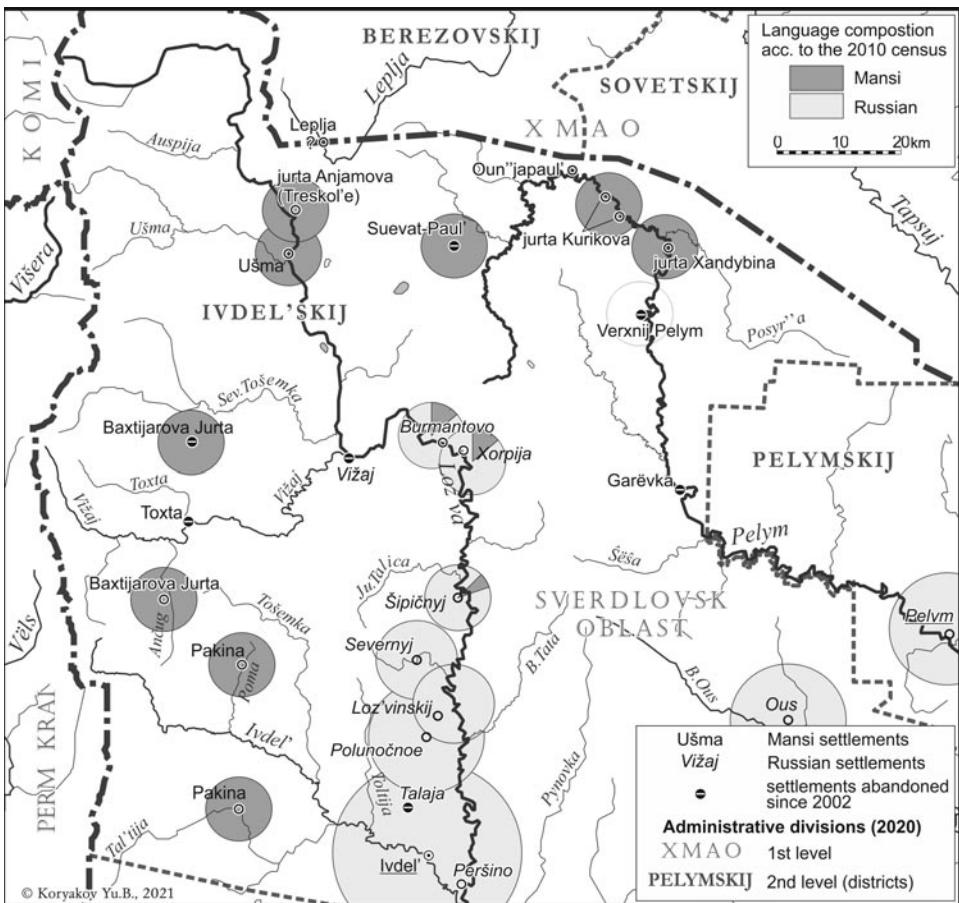
Below we present the main demographic data for individual settlements (mainly for 2000–2021). The location of the settlements and their linguistic composition according to the 2010 census are shown on Map 3.

##### 4.1. Upper Ložva and its tributaries

1. Jurta Anjamova (Treskoše, Mansi *keras-koləŋ-ja-paβəl*) is a settlement on the Kerasja river (a small tributary of the Ložva river). It had a population of 34 people in 2002, 10 people in 2010 (all of them Mansi), and a total of 12 families (together with Ušma) in 2011. This settlement was founded on the site of Nikolaj Kurikov's hut by the Anjamov family, who moved in from Suevatpaul' in 1964. They were soon followed by other inhabitants of Suevatpaul'. In 1988, 29 people (6 families) lived there: 13 Anjamovs, 8 Bachtijarovs, 8 Pelikovs (Балакин 2019). In 2004, there were 8 houses in the village, where Bachtijarovs, Tasmanovs, Pelikovs and Dunajevs lived (Лысенко 2005; Секей 2012b). In 2005 there was a great fire, that forced people eventually to move to Ušma. In 2019, the families of Anjamovs and Pelikovs lived there. Unfortunately, in August 2019, the mother of the Pelikov family and three children drowned in the Ložva (Балакин 2019), after which their father also moved to Ušma (<https://takiedela.ru/2019/10/pereval-pelikova/>).

2. Ušma (Mansi *βismat*, *βisum-tit-us*, *βisum-tit-paβəl*) is a settlement on the confluence of the Ložva and Ušma rivers. It was almost abandoned at the end of the 1970s, when the labor camp that had existed there since 1963 was closed. Five people lived there in 2002 (according to the census all of

<sup>3</sup> *Yurts* (Russian *юрты*, Mansi *paul'*, *pāwəl*) is a local name for a small Mansi settlement, often named after a clan.



Map 3. Ivdel Mansi settlements in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

them were Russians), and three people in 2005 (one Mansi and a Russian family (Лысенко 2005)). In 2010, the Ivdeł administration built 10 houses on both sides of the Ložva, including living houses, bathhouses, summer kitchens and diesel-electric power plants. Part of Treskoł'e's inhabitants moved there immediately, followed later by the rest. In 2010, 30 people (all Mansi) lived in Ušma according to the census. In 2011 there were 12 families in Ušma and Treskoł'e together. In 2020, families with the surnames Anjamov, Bachtijarov, Dunajev, Pelikov and Tasmanov lived in Ušma.

According to Balakin, the construction of Ušma played a rather negative role for the Mansi (Балакин 2019). The free housing turned out to be of poor quality. It was almost impossible to live there in winter (later the houses were insulated). To provide year-round transportation and medical care for the new settlement, large financial investments were required for the repair of roads and bridges. The choice of the place was also a mistake. Ušma is at a cross-roads of tourist routes, therefore "vodka flows like a river here". The Mansi from the forest camps do not seek to move to the village, but dream of returning to the abandoned ashes (Перевалова 2012 : 75). The Mansi who were deprived of state support at the end of the 1980s stopped reindeer herding. They do not work officially and are mostly occupied by hunting and occasional work with tourists. Many ruin themselves by drinking (Балакин 2019).

3. Bachtijarova Jurta is a single settlement according to the census data. 12 people lived there in 2002, and eight people (all Mansi) in 2010. However, there are two villages of this name: one of them (Tošemka-paul, *kiməŋ-śupa-paβəl*) is located on the river Vapssos (a tributary of the Severnaya Tošemka river), while another (Ančug-paul) is situated on the Ančug river (a tributary of the Vižaj river). One of the Bachtijarovs (born in 1956) lived in the former settlement until recently, then he moved to Ušma. In the latter village there are still two Bachtijarov families (Перевалова 2012 : 70–71).

4. Tochta is a settlement near the mouth of the Tochta river, a tributary of the Severnaja Tošemka river. According to census data, nobody lives there, but Perevalova writes that one family still lived there in 2011 (Перевалова 2012 : 70–71). The settlement was abolished in 2013.

#### 4.2. The Ivdel basin

1. Jurta Pakina is a single settlement according to census data, with 13 inhabitants in 2002 and five inhabitants in 2010, all of them Mansi (except for one person in 2002). However, there are two such villages, one of them (Verchnjaja Plotina) is located on the Tal'tija river (four families of Pakins in 2011), the other is situated on the Poma river (two families of Pakins in 2011). According to 2020 field data, 20 people in total lived in these two villages.

#### 4.3. The Pelym basin (downwards from the upper reaches)

1. Jurta Kurikova is the conventional name for a group of settlements on the upper Pelym river. According to census data, 11 people lived there in 2002, four people in 2010, and three families in 2011, all of them Mansi. The settlement is represented by several yurts. According to data from 2005, two Kurikov brothers (one of them with a wife and two children) lived in one of them (Uraj-paul', yurt of Pjotr Kurikov). Another one (Ovun-ja-paul'), where Semjon Kurikov lived (he died in winter 2010), was located 12 km upwards, although another Kurikov family was mentioned to live there in 2011 (Ахметзянов 2011). Further up the Pelym river there was a settlement called Achvasympolum-paul' (Jurta Sambindalova/Sambiktajeva) (Шакаев 2005). According to data from 2018–2019, Aleksandr Kurikov lived close to the mouth of the Vornik river (between Uraj-paul' and Ovun-ja-paul') (Балакин 2019).

2. Sujevatpaul' is a settlement on the Vatka-Tur-Acht river. Nobody lived here in 2002, but five people (all Mansi) were registered in 2010. It was one of the main Mansi villages in the middle of the XX century, but it was abandoned in the beginning of the 1960s, as most of its inhabitants moved to the new village of Tresko'le.

3. Chandybina Jurta (Ul'tem-Uraj-paul') is a settlement at the mouth of the Posyrja river. Three people lived here in 2002, two in 2010, and one family in 2011, all Mansi. The family includes a father (born in 1972) and his son, the grandfather died in 2008.

4. Upper Pelym was a village on the Pelym river where one person lived in 2002 (Mansi), and two people in 2010 (ethnicity unknown). It existed as a settlement near the Upper Pelym narrow-gauge railway station, which appeared during the times of Ivdel'lag and was later dismantled. The village was abolished in 2013.

5. Garjovka is a settlement on the Pelym river. Two people lived there in 2002, both of them Mansi (Šjoškins). Nobody lived there in 2010. The village was abolished in 2013.

#### **4.4. Upper Sosva basin**

1. Leplja (*leplja-paþol*, Jurta Tasmanova) is a village at the upper reaches of the river Leplja. The village is located in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, but it is closer to the Ivdel Mansi. In particular, its residents receive their pension in Ivdel', and their children study at a boarding school in Polunočnoe. It is not listed in the census and is not found on any maps. According to data from 2011, four families lived there. Only six people lived there in 2018, and four people (two Anjamovs, one Tasmanov and one Bachtijarova) in 2020.

#### **4.5. Russian villages**

Some Mansi lived in Russian villages (downwards from the upper reaches of the Ložva river).

1. Burmantovo is the uppermost Russian settlement on the Ložva river. There were seven Mansi out of a total population of 75 people according to 2002 census data. Five Mansi stayed there in 2010 (out of a total of 41 people). According to 2020 field data, Chandybin and Kurikov families live there, as well as one Černobrovkin (whose mother's surname is Bachtijarova). Šjoškin also lived there earlier but then moved to a nursing home in Polunočnoe.

2. Chorpija is the next Russian settlement on the Ložva river. There were 18 Mansi in 2002 out of a total population of 176, and 13 Mansi in 2010 (total 71). According to the field data of 2020, a Chvorostov family lives there.

3. Šipičnyj is a small settlement on the Ložva river. Four Mansi lived there out of a total population of 41 people (according to the 2010 census).

4. Polunočnoe is a large Russian settlement (2,473 people in 2010, 10 of them Mansi) close to the Ložva river. According to the field data of 2020, two Mansi families (Dunajevs and Bachtijarovs) live there. A boarding school for Mansi children is also situated in Polunočnoe.

5. Peršino is a former Mansi settlement that now forms a district within Ivdel'. A former chairman of the Burmantovo rural council, the Mansi Anjamov, has moved there.

5. In 2010, 17 Mansi lived in the town of Ivdel' (out of a total of 17,775 people), but some of them barely use the Mansi language.

### **5. Functions of the language**

The preservation of the Mansi language and the level of proficiency among the Ivdel Mansi remains very high. It is still the main language of communication between most Mansi, although interactions in Russian take place more frequently, especially among the middle and younger generations. The older generation is much more willing to use the Mansi language, and in communication with them younger speakers switch to Mansi. There are no Mansi-speaking monolinguals, with the exception of one elderly Anjamov woman from the Jurta Anjamova (Tresko'le) settlement.

Children learn the Mansi language naturally in the family and continue to use it at school. They also acquire some Russian before school, but they mostly learn it at boarding school.

Several Mansi living in Ivdel' and other places outside the traditional area barely use the Mansi language, but there is no exact data about them (Бахтиярова 2018 : 148).

According to a survey conducted in 2017 among the Mansi living in Jurta Anjamova and Jurta Pakina (58 people, most of them Mansi), the Mansi language is widely used in family communication (47%), with relatives (59%), and to a lesser extent with friends (38%) and at work (21% at school) (Бахтиярова 2018 : 152). In other functional areas the Mansi language is not used.

## 6. The Ivdel / Upper Ložva dialect

The Ivdel Mansi dialect is linguistically close to other Northern Mansi varieties (i.e. Sygva and Sosva Mansi), though some differences can be found. For example, the phoneme /γ/ is pronounced as [j] in Ivdel Mansi (Ivdel Mansi *sajrap* 'axe', Sosva and Sygva Mansi *sayrap* 'axe'), while the initial /t/ has transformed into [k] (Ivdel Mansi *kətβesum* 'I was sent', Sosva and Sygva Mansi *t'etβesum* 'I was sent'). Another feature found in the speech of younger Ivdel Mansi speakers is the simplification of the complex phoneme /kw/ into [k], e.g. *kwālty* > *kāliy* 'rope'. There are also numerous lexical differences, e.g. *śan-ás* 'parents' is usually found in Ivdel Mansi, while *oma-at'a* 'parents' is used in Sosva and Sygva Mansi, *ul'luβ* 'firewood' and *χājtnut* 'wolf' are found mostly in Ivdel Mansi while *najjiβ* 'firewood' and *sāliuj* 'wolf' are the respective Sosva and Sygva equivalents. There are no striking differences in grammar between the above-mentioned Mansi varieties.

The Ivdel Mansi dialect displays a higher degree of variation between speakers from different families and/or different age groups, as speakers of all ages actively use the language. Speakers of the Sosva and Sygva dialects are more homogeneous in terms of age and more acquainted with the Standard Mansi variety (which is actually based on the Sosva dialect), which also influences their language use.

## 7. Education

In 1935, the so-called Aboriginal Rural Council was created in the village of Tošemka. Later a school with a dormitory was founded there, where children of Mansi and other people from all yurts were taken to study (Фонд № 51).

In 1963, in the village of Polunočnoe, a boarding school for Mansi children and those living in remote areas was built (<https://polunoch3.uralschool.ru/site/pub?id=23>). Over the years, not only Mansi children studied there, but also Russian orphans. At the same time, not all Mansi children went to school. According to the human rights ombudsman, 12 Mansi children (six boys and six girls) under the age of 15 living in remote settlements did not receive any education in 2003 (Отчет уполномоченного по правам человека в Свердловской области Т. Г. Мерзляковой за 2003 г.).

In the years 2020—2021, eight children studied at the boarding school, all of them Mansi. Due to transportation difficulties, children only see their families during winter and summer vacations (Отчет уполномоченного по

правам человека в Свердловской области Т. Г. Мерзляковой за 2003 г.). In addition, several more Mansi children study in an ordinary school in Ivdel' and live with their relatives during the study period.

The Mansi language is not included in the educational curriculum of the Sverdlovsk region and it is not taught at school (Перевалова 2012 : 75). In recent years, Dina Vasil'jevna Gerasimova, a philologist from St. Petersburg, has been visiting the boarding school in Polunočnoe approximately once a month to teach the Mansi language during classes and as an extracurricular activity (<https://yandex.ru/turbo/oblgazeta.ru/s/society/37174/>).

It is not forbidden to speak Mansi in the boarding school itself, and according to the recollections of those who studied there before, it was not forbidden then either. This contrasts sharply with the memories of many speakers of the minor languages of Siberia (including Mansi speakers from the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug), for whom the harsh measures against their native language during their education in boarding schools became a decisive point in their transition to the Russian language as the language of communication with their children (Вахтин 2001 : 178, 231; Grenoble 2003 : 169). As a result, despite being separated from the family, Mansi children continue to communicate in Mansi while studying at boarding school, although interactions in Russian also take place. Most of the children learn Russian at boarding school, though they have mostly heard it before that time, for example, while communicating with tourists.

Despite the fact that Mansi is rarely taught, it is occasionally used in written form, for example, by children at school. Characteristic features of written Mansi by younger Ivdel speakers are significant reduction in comparison to the Standard Mansi norm and simplifying the phoneme /k<sub>β</sub>/ to κ (κε in Standard Mansi). On the other hand, some speakers consistently use the letter ы, which represents the velar nasal /ŋ/. The phoneme /ə/, represented in Standard Mansi by letters ы and u (depending on the preceding consonant), and in some cases, the phoneme /a/, is regularly written as y, especially after or before labial consonants. The letter ү is frequently added after u, which is not the case in Standard Mansi (Покровская, Жорник 2017).

Table 2  
Differences in writing between Ivdel Mansi children and Standard Mansi

Phonology (FUPA)	IPA	The writing of Ivdel Mansi children	The Standard Mansi norm
<i>moś, pumaś</i>	məʃ, pumaʃ	мошь, пумащь	мош, пумащ
<i>jotšl, jalasasum, xaništaxtasum</i>	jotəl, jələsəsəm, xanl̩iʃtəxtəsəm	ётул, яласусум, хаништахтасум	ётыл, яласасум, хаништахтасум
<i>ak<sub>β</sub>ay</i>	akaj	акай	аквай/акваг
<i>roxtasuβ</i>	roxtasəw	рохтысув	рохтасув

## 8. Economic activity in the area

As mentioned earlier, reindeer herding among the Mansi people ceased to exist as a separate economic activity in the 1990s. Since then, hunting has been the main occupation of the Mansi living outside urban areas. In addition, they sew fur boots or perform other types of handicraft, gather berries, and catch fish (Бахтиярова 2018 : 149).

For a long time, the main economic activity developed in the traditional Mansi area was logging, which was carried out mainly by convicts from the numerous labour camps of the Ivdel'lag system. In the early 1990s, the camp system was greatly reduced, and in the late 1990s and early 2000s many logging enterprises were also closed. In recent years the mining industry has begun to develop, in particular by the Svatogor mining enterprise (Перевалова 2012 : 71–72). In addition, survey work is underway for the future construction of a railway from Polunochnoe station along the Sujevat-Paul' road to the north of the Tyumen region. Also, a federal highway to Khanty-Mansijsk through the Ivdel' district is being designed.

At the same time, as Balakin writes, "there is not a single law in the region supporting minor nationalities, unlike, for example, in the neighbouring Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, which has one of the most extensive legislative bases. Some examples are the displacement of the Pakin families from the Tałtija river by the Svatogor enterprise and the sale of the lands along the Tochta and Tošemka rivers for lease to the hunting industry at an auction, together with the Bachtijarov family who had lived there for more than 250 years" (Балакин 2019).

In addition, several tourist routes run through the local woods, including the route to the famous Djatlov pass. Hunting is also becoming more popular, attracting hunters from different regions to the area. Both tourists and hunters bring along alcohol, which influences the local Mansi people in a negative way.

## **9. Conclusions**

Apparently, the main reason for the lasting survival of the language among the Ivdel Mansi was the fact that they lived in areas that were completely controlled by the Gulag system of the USSR. This allowed them to preserve their traditional lifestyle (the regional authorities were not interested in them and did not have the opportunity to exploit the territory controlled by the Gulag), and to successfully sell their hunting and craft products to the prison authorities, which gave them a means for existence. The boarding school, which was the main means of destroying the continuity of language transmission in other areas, did not play a negative role, perhaps because it was close enough to the Mansi's places of residence. Apparently, some children did not study there at all, while those who did returned to their homes afterwards and preserved the language.

However, in recent decades, there have been some negative trends.

First, the total number of the Ivdel Mansi is decreasing: marriages within the community are not concluded and children are born only from non-marital affairs.

Second, reindeer herding, which was one of the most important occupations of the Mansi, has disappeared. When occupied with reindeer herding, the Mansi were forced to spend a lot of time outside settlements (and have minimal contact with the Russian-speaking population), while also ensuring their livelihood.

Third, many small Mansi settlements in the forests disappeared, and the main place of living developed in the area where popular routes to the Urals intersect (in particular to the Djatlov pass) and where many visiting hunters stop. This in turn leads to the ruin of the local population due to drinking, abandonment of traditional crafts and the early contact of children with the

Russian language. However, there are Mansi who lead a sober lifestyle despite the difficult circumstances.

Although modern children speak and use the Mansi language, their further life is uncertain. While many males tend to return to their home villages (and earn money there due to the influx of tourists and hunters), the majority of females try to move to larger towns and cities and marry non-Mansi men. Because of this, the potential for creating new Mansi families disappears. Now only eight Mansi children are studying at the boarding school, and there are almost no children of preschool age (one in Ušma and probably one or two children among the Pakins).

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### **Abbreviations**

**JSFOu** — Journal de la Société Finno-ougrienne, Helsinki; **Перепись 2002** — Всероссийская перепись населения 2002 года. Микроданные переписей. ГМЦ Росстата. <http://www.lingvarium.org/russia/settlem-database.shtml>; **Перепись 2010** — Всероссийская перепись населения 2010 года. Микроданные переписей. ГМЦ Росстата. <http://std.gmcrossstata.ru/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml>; **Фонд № 51.** — Фонд № 51. Администрация Ивдельского городского округа. Период времени: 1992—2010 гг. <https://alertino.com/ru/162307>.

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## СОХРАНЕНИЕ ЯЗЫКА СРЕДИ ИВДЕЛЬСКИХ МАНСИ

В статье описывается языковая ситуация среди ивдельских (верхнелозьвинских) манси, небольшой группы, живущей на севере Свердловской области. Ивдельский диалект активно используется носителями всех поколений, в то время как другие мансиеские диалекты сохраняются в основном среди людей среднего и старшего возраста. Степень сохранения языка среди ивдельских манси выделяют их не только среди других мансиеских групп, но и в целом среди большинства коренных народов Северной Сибири. В статье кратко представлена недавняя история этой группы, приводятся данные по численности говорящих в течение последних 100 с небольшим лет. Также рассматривается ситуация функционального репертуара ивдельского диалекта и образования на родном языке среди местных детей.

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## MANSI KEELE IVDELI MURDE SÄILIMISEST

Artiklis kirjeldatakse Sverdlovski oblasti põhjaosas elavate Ivdeli (Ülem-Lozva) mantslaste keelelist olukorda. Ivdeli murret kasutavad aktiivselt kõik põlvkonnad, teisi mansi murdeid (nagu ka enamikku Põhja-Siberi põliskeeli) aga peamiselt ainult vannemad ja keskealised inimesed. Artiklis käsitletakse lühidalt selle rahvarühma ajalugu, esitades andmeid kõnelejate arvu ja nende elupaikade kohta. Vaadeldakse ka Ivdeli murde erijooni, keele kasutamisala ja emakeelse hariduse olukorda. Kahjuks on märke, et keele säilimise töönäosus on viimastel kümnenditel hakanud vähenema.