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Yenisseian Etymology of the North Kazaxstan
 Toponym Selety?

by
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 (Příbram, Czech Republic)

There are three toponyms with the same name: the river Selety (1) which empties into the lake Seletytengiz (2) and the winter settlement Selety-Buguly (3) which is extinct now all in Kzyltu district of Kokčetau region (Northern Kazaxstan).¹

The name Selety is not etymologizable on the basis of Turkic languages. The comparison with Mongolian forms² as Xalxa *tšulū*, Durbut *šolō*, etc. "stone", cf. Written Mongolian *čilayun*,³ is improbable for phonological reasons. The author of the preceding etymology says in his later work: "The sense is not clarified."⁴

O. A. Sultaňjaev⁵ presents a new etymology on the basis of interpretation of the name Selety-Buguly as the compound of quasi-synonyms with the meaning "stag" (adj.), cf. Kazax, Čaghatai *buyu* "stag", New Uighur *buya* id., etc., Written Mongolian *buyu* "stag (male)".⁶ The first component is connected with the toponym Sogety known from the Eastern Alatau. Sultaňjaev supposes the relationship with Mongolian (Xalxa) *sogoo(n)* "stag (female)", cf. adj. *sogoty*.

- 1 Sultaňjaev, O. A.: *Spornye ètimologii nekotoryx toponimov Kokčetauskoj oblasti*. In: *Onomastika Vostoka*, Moskva 1980, p. 115.
- 2 Konkašpaev, G.: *Geografičeskie nazvanija mongol'skogo proisxoždenija na territorii Kazaxstana*. *Izvestija AN KazSSR. Ser. fil. i iskusstvovedenija*. Vyp. 1(2). Alma-Ata, 1959, p. 95.
- 3 Poppe, N.: *Introduction to Mongolian Comparative Studies*. Helsinki, 1955 (MSFOu, 110), p. 112.
- 4 Konkašpaev, G.: *Slovar' geografičeskix nazvanij Kazaxstana*. Alma-Ata, 1963, p. 102.
- 5 Op. cit., pp. 115–116.
- 6 Räsänen, M.: *Versuch eines etymologischen Wörterbuchs der Türksprachen*. Helsinki, 1969, p. 86.

Although the semantical interpretation of "toponymical bilingual" seems to be plausible, the Mongolian etymology of the toponym Selety is not probable again for phonological reasons.

I see a possibility to seek the origin in reflexes of Yenisseian *sēr¹e "stag": Ket sé:l'i, sé:lə, Yug se:^hr, Kott séli and especially Pumpokol *salat*⁷ id. (Miller: *ssalat* "rangifer")⁸ with following deformation in Turkic neighborhood (vowel harmony?). The presence of Yenisseian substratum is known in the Irtyš basin, cf. just the name of the river Irtyš, in Mongolian transcription Ircis⁹, with the second component -*tyš/-cis* "river"¹⁰ going back to Proto-Yenisseian *ses.¹¹ If the presented hypothesis is correct, the western limit of the Yenisseian language family extended beyond the Irtyš and approached the 72nd meridian.

7 Starostin, S. A.: *Praenisejskaja rekonstrukcija i vnešnie svjazi enisejskix jazykov. Opyt rekonstrukcii praenisejskoj zvukovoj sistemy*. In: Ketskij sbornik. Antropologija, étnografija, lingvistika. Leningrad, 1982, p. 156.

8 Xelimskij, E. A.: *Arxivnye materialy XVIII veka po enisejskim jazykam*. In: *Paleoaziatskij sbornik*. Leningrad, 1986, p. 210.

9 Ramstedt, G. J.: *Über den Ursprung der sog. Jenissei-Ostjaken*. *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 24, 1907, p. 4; Dul'zon, A. P.: *Ketskie toponimy Zapadnoj Sibiri*. *Učenyje zapiski Tomskogo gos.-ped. instituta* 18, 1959, p. 98, fn. 2.

10 Murzaev, E. M.: *Očerki toponimiki*. Moskva, 1974, pp. 246, 288.

11 Starostin, op. cit., p. 155.

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