*Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia*
vol. 19: 71–81 Kraków 2014
doi:10.4467/20843836SE.14.004.1647

Juha JANHUNEN (Helsinki)

# ON THE ETHNONYMS *Orok* AND *Uryangkhai*

**Abstract.** The paper discusses the etymology of the ethnonym *Orok*, as used for one of the aboriginal populations of the Island of Sakhalin. It has been generally assumed that this ethnonym is connected with the Tungusic term for 'reindeer', especially since the Orok, also known by the name *Uilta*, are reindeer herders. The author demonstrates the unlikeliness of this etymology and proposes instead a connection with the widespread generic ethnonym *Uryangkhai*. This term was transferred on the Orok via the languages of their neighbours, the Sakhalin Ainu and the Sakhalin Ghilyak.

**Keywords:** etymology, Tungusic languages, Orok, Orochen, Uryangkhai, Ainu, Ghilyak, ethnonyms.

*To the Memory of Jirô Ikegami (1920–2011)*

The Orok are a well-known, though a numerically very small, ethnic group living on central and northern Sakhalin. In the period 1905–1945, when Sakhalin was divided between Russia (the Soviet Union) and Japan, there were Orok living both on the Russian (Soviet) side (north of 50° N) and on the Japanese side (south of 50° N). Together with the Sakhalin Ainu (mainly in the south) and the Sakhalin Ghilyak (mainly in the north), the Orok form one of the three aboriginal populations of the island, to which a fourth member, the Sakhalin Ewenki (in the central part of the island), was added only in recent historical times (mid 19th century). Ultimately, all the languages spoken on Sakhalin are secondary, and all have close relatives elsewhere (Janhunen 1996: 113–117). Orok itself is a Tungusic language of the Nanaic subbranch, most intimately related to Ulcha in the Lower Amur basin (Janhunen 2012: 6). Sakhalin Ghilyak, on the other hand, is in a dialectal relationship with Amur Ghilyak, with both representing traces of the formerly more widespread "Amuric" language family of Continental Manchuria. Sakhalin Ainu, finally, is a branch of the Ainuic language family, which has its origins on Hokkaido and further south on the Japanese Islands.

The Orok are known by two ethnonyms. The ethnonym *Orok*, transmitted into international usage via Russian *órok* (plural *óroki*) and Japanese *orokko*, is not

Publikacja objęta jest prawem autorskim. Wszelkie prawa zastrzeżone. Kopiowanie i rozpowszechnianie zabronione.
Publikacja przeznaczona jedynie dla klientów indywidualnych. Zakaz rozpowszechniania i udostępniania serwisach bibliotecznych

used by the Orok themselves, who use instead the name *Uilta*, Russian *úil'ta* and Japanese *uiruta*, which is today the politically correct appellation of this ethnic group. The ethnonym *Uilta*, phonetically [uʌta] ~ [uˈlta] and phonemically perhaps /wilta/, is of an unknown meaning and origin, but it is, in any case, a regular cognate of *Ulcha*, with the specific Orok deaffrication/depalatalization development **c* > *t* (and **j* > *d*) (Benzing 1956: 35–36). Although the opposite has been occasionally maintained, it may be taken for certain that there can be no etymological connection between *Orok* and *Uilta*, which means that the two ethnonyms must have separate sources. Since the name *Orok* is not used as an endonym, it is likely to derive from the language(s) of the neighbours of the Orok. At least as far as the Russian ethnic terminology is concerned, it is well known that ethnic groups in Siberia often received their names from the appellations used by their immediate neighbours in the west and/or north (Janhunen 1985).

While the Orok actively use the name *Uilta* about themselves, it has to be noted that the ethnonym *Ulcha* (~ *Olcha*) is not used as an endonym by the Ulcha, who use instead the name *naani*, a cognate of the ethnonym Nanai (*naa*+*nai* 'local people'). In earlier Russian literature the Ulcha have also been known by the name *Mangun* (from a local name of the Amur). Thus, although the forms *Ulcha* (*ulca*) and *Uilta* (*wilta*) represent two diachronic stages of a single name, this name seems always to have referred exclusively to the Orok, whose territory in historical times has been confined to Sakhalin. It was only in Soviet times that the name *Ulcha* was definitively established as the official Russian (and international) appellation of the continental population today known as the Ulcha (*úl'cha* : plural *úl'chi*). How this ethnonymic confusion came to being is not quite clear (cf. Smolyak 1966: 11–13), but it has to be concluded that the ethnonym *Ulcha* has historically been known also on the continent. Leaving this problem aside, the following discussion will focus on the origins of the ethonym *Orok*.

## ***Orok* vs. *Oroch*, *Orochen*, *Oronchon***

Conventionally, it has always been taken for granted that the ethnonym *Orok* is derived from the Tungusic word (*)*oron* 'reindeer' (SSTM 2: 24–25 s.v. *oron*). This assumption (e.g. Petrova 1967: 5–6) is all the more natural as the Orok are reindeer herders, or, at least, reindeer husbandry forms an important part of their complex economy, which also comprises fishing and hunting, including hunting of sea mammals. Apart from being a source of food and raw materials, the reindeer is used by the Orok as a pack animal and for riding (Roon 1996: 60–100). This usage of the reindeer must be a trait introduced from the west and/or southwest, where there are several ethnic groups, most of them speaking Tungusic languages, that are characterized by a similar type of reindeer husbandry. The connection with the word for 'reindeer'

Publikacja objęta jest prawem autorskim. Wszelkie prawa zastrzeżone. Kopiowanie i rozpowszechnianie zabronione.
Publikacja przeznaczona jedynie dla klientów indywidualnych. Zakaz rozpowszechniania i udostępniania serwisach bibliotecznych

is further supported by the ethonyms *Oroch* (*Orochi*) and *Orochen* ~ *Oronchon*, as used in reference to some of these other Tungusic-speaking populations.

There are, however, problems involved in the conventional etymology. For one thing, the word *oron* '(domesticated) reindeer' is not present in Orok, which happens to be the only Tungusic language that lacks this Common Tungusic item, otherwise attested even in Manchu (CMED 299 s.v. *oron*). This is perhaps not a serious problem, as the ethnonym *Orok* is not used by the Orok themselves, but the absence of the Common Tungusic word for 'reindeer' in their language is nevertheless an interesting anomaly. A possible reason could be lexical taboo, but it is unclear why only the Orok, of all the Tungusic peoples, would have applied taboo to the reindeer. The Orok word for reindeer is *ulaa* (DUL 218 s.v.), which has a certain cognate only in Oroch (ORS 83 s.v. *ula:*). Incidentally, in view of the important role of the reindeer for the Orok, it has been proposed that *ulaa* could be connected with the ethnonym *Uilta* (Majewicz 1989: 127, 2011: 10–11, cf. also SSTM 2: 262–263 s.v. *ulta*). Unfortunately, this etymology can hardly be correct, as the derivational relationship would be unique.[1]

Another problem is that the form *Orok*, that is, *oro-k*(-), cannot be explained as a derivative from *oron* 'reindeer'. The final (-)*n* in *oron* is, of course, a secondary element, which can be absent before other suffixes. It is, in fact, absent in the derivatives underlying the ethnonyms *Oroch* (*Orochi*) and *Orochen*. The latter represent the Ewenki forms *orocii* and *oro-cien*, respectively (ÊRS 327 s.v. *orochī*, *orochēn*), and are conventionally analysed as possessive derivatives from *oron* 'reindeer' (Menges 1968: 31). The nasal is, however, present in the Manchu form *oronco* (CMED 299 s.v. *oronco i nyalma* 'reindeer herder') ~ *oroncon*, which yields the alternative form *Oronchon* (~ *Oronchun*), Chinese *elunchun* (鄂論春). The only derivative that could possibly be compared with the ethnonym *Orok* would be the Nanai possessive nominal *oron-ku* 'one who has reindeer' (NaRS 315 s.v. *orōn* : *orōnku gurun* 'reindeer herders'), but it also contains the stem-final nasal, while there is no nasal in *orok*(-). The marker for possessive nominals has the consonant (*)*k* also in Udeghe and Oroch, while the other Tungusic languages, including even Ulcha, show (*)*c*, making the reconstruction of this element particularly problematic (Benzing 1956: 91).

[1] As for the further connections of *ulaa* 'reindeer', a comparison with Mongolic **ulaxa*/*n* 'relay horse(s), post horse(s)' > modern *ulaa*, with a well-known Turkic original (and possible wider connections), has been suggested (TMEN 2: 102–107 no. 521) and may be recognized as a possibility, especially as the Orok use the reindeer also as a pack animal. Even so, it is curious that this item is present only in Orok and Oroch, but in no other Tungusic language. Manchu *ulha* 'livestock, domestic animal' (CMED 388 s.v. *ulha*) has also been mentioned in this connection (so also in SSTM 2: 263) and would be phonetically compatible with the Orok-Oroch data, but its semantic relationship with the Turko-Mongolic item remains less obvious.

Publikacja objęta jest prawem autorskim. Wszelkie prawa zastrzeżone. Kopiowanie i rozpowszechnianie zabronione.
Publikacja przeznaczona jedynie dla klientów indywidualnych. Zakaz rozpowszechniania i udostępniania serwisach bibliotecznych

Juha Janhunen
Department of World Cultures
Box 59 / Unionsgatan 38 B 122
FIN – 00014 University of Helsinki
[asiemajeure@yahoo.com]

## Literature

Alonso de la Fuente, José Andrés (2012). *The Ainu Languages: Traditional Reconstruction, Eurasian Areal Linguistics, and Diachronic* (*Holistic*) *Typology.* PhD Thesis, Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea [University of the Basque Country].

Austerlitz, Robert (1972). 'Reconstructio interna linguae Ghiliacorum.' Unpublished handout of a lecture given at the Finno-Ugrian Society. Helsinki.

Austerlitz, Robert (1976: 45–49). 'L'appellation du renne en japonais, aïnou et surtout en ghiliak.' [In:] Walther Heissig & John R. Krueger & Felix J. Oinas & Edmond Schütz (eds.). *Tractata Altaica Denis Sinor sexagenario optime de rebus altaicis merito dedicata.* Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Austerlitz, Robert (1980: 75–87). 'On the penumbra of questions surrounding the internal reconstruction of Gilyak.' Bernard Comrie (ed.). *International Review of Slavic Linguistics*, vol. 5. Edmonton.

Austerlitz, Robert (1990: 17–33). 'Typology in the service of internal reconstruction.' [In:] Winfred P. Lehmann (ed.). *Language Typology 1987: Systematic Balance in Language.* Papers from the Linguistic Typology Symposium (Berkeley 1987). Current Issues in Linguistic Theory, vol. 67. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Austerlitz, Robert (0000: 1–52). 'Nivkh-Ainu-Orok linguistic symbiosis on the Island of Sakhalin.' Unpublished manuscript, distributed as a xerocopied typescript.

Avrorin [В. А. Аврорин] (1959–1961). *Грамматика нанайского языка*, vols. 1–2. Москва-Ленинград: Издательство Академии наук.

Benzing, Johannes (1956). *Die tungusischen Sprachen: Versuch einer vergleichenden Grammatik.* Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Abhandlungen der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, vol. 1955/11. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Doerfer, Gerhard (1985). *Mongolo-Tungusica.* Tungusica, vol. 3. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Janhunen, Juha (1981: 129–146). 'Korean vowel system in North Asian perspective.' *Han-geul*, vol. 172. Seoul.

Janhunen, Juha (1985: 72–77). 'The Tungus peoples and the conquest of Siberia'. [In:] Gunnar Jarring & Staffan Rosén (eds.). *Altaistic Studies.* Papers presented at the 25th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference

Publikacja objęta jest prawem autorskim. Wszelkie prawa zastrzeżone. Kopiowanie i rozpowszechnianie zabronione.
Publikacja przeznaczona jedynie dla klientów indywidualnych. Zakaz rozpowszechniania i udostępniania serwisach bibliotecznych

(Uppsala 1982). Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien Konferenser, vol. 12. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

Janhunen, Juha (1996). *Manchuria: An Ethnic History.* Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne, vol. 222. Helsinki.

Janhunen, Juha (2012: 5–16). 'The expansion of Tungusic as an ethnic and linguistic process.' [In:] Andrej L. Malchukov & Lindsay J. Whaley (eds.). *Recent Advances in Tungusic Linguistics.* Turcologica, vol. 89. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

Jugel, Ulrike (1982). *Studien zur Geschichte der Wu-liang-ha im 15. Jh.* Teil 1: Die Vorbereitungen Koreas zum Nordfeldzug gegen die Wu-liang-ha der Südmandschurei. Tungusica, vol. 2. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Majewicz, Alfred F. (1989: 124–146). 'The Oroks: past and present.' [In:] Alan Wood & R. A. French (eds.). *The Development of Siberia: People and Resources.* Studies in Russia and East Europe. London: Macmillan.

Majewicz, Alfred F. (2011: 1–54). 'Introduction', 'Bibliographies.' [In:] Alfred F. Majewicz (ed.). *Materials for the Study of Tungusic Languages and Folklore.* The Collected Works of Bronisław Piłsudski. Trends in Linguistics, Documentation, vol. 15–4. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton.

Menges, Karl. H. (1968: 21–256). 'Die tungusischen Sprachen.' *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, vol. I.V.3. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Petrova [Т. И. Петрова] (1967). *Язык ороков* (*ульта*). Ленинград: Издательство «Наука».

Philippi, Donald L. (1982). *Songs of Gods — Songs of Humans: The Epic Tradition of the Ainu.* San Francisco: North Point Press.

Piłsudski, Bronisław (1912). *Materials for the Study of the Ainu Language and Folklore.* J. Rozwadowski (ed.). Cracow: Imperial Academy of Sciences.

de Rachewiltz, Igor (2006). *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century.* Brill's Inner Asian Library, vol. 7, 1–2. Leiden: Brill.

Roon [Татьяна Роон] (1996). *Уйльта Сахалина: Историко-этнографическое исследование традиционного хозяйства и материальной культуры XVIII — середины XX веков.* Южно-Сахалинск: Сахалинское областное книжное издательство.

Rybatzki, Volker (2006). *Die Personennamen und Titel der mittelmongolischen Dokumente: Eine lexikalische Untersuchung.* PhD Thesis, University of Helsinki. Publications of the Institute for Asian and African Studies, vol. 8. Helsinki.

Shastina, N. P. (1975: 231–244). 'Mongol and Turkic ethnonyms in the Secret History of the Mongols.' [In:] Louis Ligeti (ed.). *Researches in Altaic Languages.* Papers read at the 14th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (Szeged 1971). Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Shirokogoroff, S. M. (1933). *Social Organization of the Northern Tungus.* Shanghai: The Commercial Press.

Publikacja objęta jest prawem autorskim. Wszelkie prawa zastrzeżone. Kopiowanie i rozpowszechnianie zabronione.
Publikacja przeznaczona jedynie dla klientów indywidualnych. Zakaz rozpowszechniania i udostępniania serwisach bibliotecznych

Shternberg [Л. Я. Штернберг] (1927). *Гиляки, орочи, гольды, негидальцы, айны: Статьи и материалы.* Под редакцией и с предисловием Я. П. Алькор (Кошкина). Хабаровск: Дальгиз.

Smolyak [А. В. Смоляк] (1966). *Ульчи: Хозяйство, культура и быт в прошлом и настоящем.* Москва: Издательство «Наука».

Tulisow, Jerzy (1995: 183–187). 'New data on the Oroqen.' *Linguistic and Oriental Studies from Poznań*, vol. 2. Poznań.

Vasilevich [Г. М. Василевич] (1966: 56–93). 'Уранкаи и эвенки.' *Доклады по этнографии*, vol. 3. Ленинград: Геограгическое Общество СССР.

Wada Sei (1938: 41–102). 'The natives of the lower reaches of the Amur River as represented in Chinese records.' *The Memoirs of the Research Department, Toyo Bunko*, vol. 10. Tokyo.

Wittfogel, Karl A. & Fêng Chia-shêng (1949). *History of Chinese Society: Liao* (907–1125). Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, vol. 36. Philadelphia.

## Lexicographical Sources

CMED = Jerry Norman, with the assistance of Keith Dede and David Prager Branner. *A Comprehensive Manchu-English Dictionary.* Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press (2013).

DUL = 池上二良 [Jirô Ikegami]. ウイルタ語辞典 [A Dictionary of the Uilta Language Spoken on Sakhalin]. 札幌: 北海道大学図書刊行会 (1997).

EEW = Gerhard Doerfer unter Mitwirkung von Michael Knüppel. *Etymologisch-Ethnologisches Wörterbuch tungusischer Dialekte* (*vornehmlich der Mandschurei*). Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag (2004).

ÊRS = Г. М. Василевич. *Эвенкийско-русский словарь.* Москва: Государственное издательство иностранных и национальных словарей (1958).

MED = Ferdinand Lessing (ed.). *Mongolian-English Dictionary.* Third reprinting. Bloomington, Indiana: The Mongolia Society (1995).

NaRS = С. Н. Оненко. *Нанайско-русский словарь.* Москва: Издательство «Русский язык» (1980).

NiRS = В. Н. Савельева & Ч. М. Таксами. *Нивхско-русский словарь.* Москва: Издательство «Советская энциклопедия» (1970).

ORS = А. Х. Гирфанова. *Словарь орочско-русский и русско-орочский.* Санкт-Петербург: Издательство «Дрофа» (2007).

SSTM = В. И. Цинциус (ed.). *Сравнительный словарь тунгусо-маньчжурских языков.* Материалы к этимологическому словарю, vols. 1–2. Ленинград: Издательство "Наука" (1975–1977).

TMEN = Gerhard Dorfer. *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen*, vols. 1–4. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag (1963–1975).

Publikacja objęta jest prawem autorskim. Wszelkie prawa zastrzeżone. Kopiowanie i rozpowszechnianie zabronione.
Publikacja przeznaczona jedynie dla klientów indywidualnych. Zakaz rozpowszechniania i udostępniania serwisach bibliotecznych