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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

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 [uʎta] ~ [uⁱlta] 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 ethnonym *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'

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).

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[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.

Even more importantly, the connection of the ethnonyms *Oroch* (*Orochi*) and *Orochen ~ Oronchon* with *oron* 'reindeer' is not quite as certain as it might seem. The Oroch, Russian *óroch* (plural *órochi*), whose language is closely related to Udeghe, call themselves, like the Ulcha, by the name *naani* and do not keep reindeer. Although the similarity of the ethnonyms *Oroch* (*Orochi*) and *Orok* has been seen as evidence of a connection (Shternberg 1927: 397–398), the cultural difference between the two groups is considerable, and there is no evidence of any direct historical link between them. The ethnonym *Orochen*, Russian *orochón* (plural *orochóny*), on the other hand, is applied to several Tungusic-speaking reindeer-herding populations in Siberia, including, occasionally, even the Orok. The Orochen proper in Manchuria, today better known under the Pinyinized spelling *Oroqen* (Tulisow 1995), belong, however, to the context of the Manchurian Horse Tungus, documented already during the Qing dynasty (Wada 1938: 97–98).

In spite of the fact that ethnonyms are easily transferred from one population to another, and although they may preserve traces of otherwise lost cultural circumstances, it cannot be ruled out that some occurrences of the names *Oroch* (*Orochi*) and *Orochen ~ Oronchon* are actually not based on *oron* 'reindeer' at all, but, rather, on other, homonymous, words. Possible bases could have been offered by *oron ~ xoron* 'top of the head' = 'mountain top' (SSTM 2: 334 s.v. *horon*) and *oron ~ oro* 'vacancy, place' (SSTM 2: 19 s.v. *onno*, CMED 299 s.v. *oron*), both of which have connections also in Mongolic (Doerfer 1985: 39 no. 85, 116 no. 399, cf. also EEW 668–670 s.vv. *oro*, *ŏrŏ*, *oročʼén*, *oróčen*, *oron*).[2] At least from the Birarchen dialect of Ewenki (Orochen), the form *oro-ci* has been recorded in the meaning '(local) resident' (Shirokogoroff 1933: 54–56). It has to be concluded that there is no unambiguous evidence on that the ethnonyms *Orok* and *Oroch* (*Orochi*) would be based on *oron* 'reindeer', or that either of them would necessarily be connected with the ethnonym *Orochen*. Also, there is no compelling reason to assume that *Orok* and *Oroch* represent a single etymon.

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[2]   The wider etymological connections of these words are irrelevant to the present discussion. Suffice it to say that the word *oron ~ xoron* 'top (of the head, mountain)' goes back to Proto-Tungusic **pora.n*, which stands in a non-trivial relationship with Mongolic *oroi* (*orai*) < *xorai < **pora.i* id. and must, in any case, involve a very ancient connection. The word *oron ~ oro* 'vacancy, place', on the other hand, involves a recent borrowing (or a set of parallel borrowings) from Mongolic *oron* 'place, land, territory, locality, domicile' ~ *oro/n* 'vacancy, bed', a word with further connections in Turkic and also connected with the Mongolic verb *oro-* 'to enter' : *oro-si-* 'to be in(side), to reside'. In view of the cultural and geographical situation, Manchu *oron* 'reindeer' may also be a secondary loanword from the other Tungusic languages, though formally it looks like a regular reflex of Common Tungusic *oron < Proto-Tungusic *oran.

Orok vs. Orngarh, Orakat, Uryangkhai

To gain more insights concerning the origins of the ethnonym *Orok* it is necessary to see how the Orok are called by their immediate aboriginal neighbours. The Ghilyak (Nivkh) on the Amur use the term *ornger* : plural *ornger-ku*, in which *ng* represents the velar nasal [ŋ], while *e* stands for the unrounded mid-high central vowel [ə]. The corresponding shape in the Sakhalin dialect may be phonemized as *orngarh*, in which *rh* = [ɍ] stands for the universally rare sound of fricative trill (like Czech *ř*) (NiRS 247 s.v. *orngyr*). These terms denote not only the Orok (in NiRS mistakenly referred to as "Oroch"), but also the Ulcha, which shows that the close historical and linguistic relationship between these two groups has been well known to the neighbouring peoples.

Although there is no direct documentation available concerning the history of Ghilyak, both internal reconstruction and external (areal) comparisons give important information on the earlier stages of the language. It is, for instance, known that the Ghilyak system of vowels, like that in many neighbouring languages, has participated in the Northeast Asian vowel rotation (Janhunen 1981), while the exceptionally complex consonant system was formed from a considerably simpler original system by a number of combinatory developments (Austerlitz 1972, 1980, 1990). Also, it is known that Ghilyak has lost most vowel segments in non-initial syllables, resulting in a large number of secondary consonant clusters. Using this information, Sakhalin Ghilyak *orngarh*, which would seem to represent the more original shape of the ethnonym, may be reconstructed as deriving from the earlier shape **urVngat(V)*, with the regular changes **u > o* (vowel rotation) and **t > rh* (development of postvocalic stop consonants to continuants). Amur Ghilyak *ornger* would, correspondingly, presuppose the earlier shape **urVngVd(V)*, assuming that the quality of the vowel in the original third syllable has been obscured by a neutralizing development.

Sakhalin Ainu, today an extinct language, is considerably less well documented than Sakhalin Ghilyak, but the ethnonym denoting the Orok is well attested in Sakhalin Ainu in the basic shape *orakata* (*orákata*). In sandhi position, especially in the phrase *orakat_utar* (*orákat utara*) 'Orok people', the shorter variant *orakat* (*orákat*) is also attested (Piłsudski 1912: 66–102 passim). The ethnonym *orakat(a)* normally seems to refer to the actual Orok on Sakhalin, although it may also refer to the Ulcha on the continent. In some contexts, however, it might rather refer to more generic neighbours and enemies of the Ainu, and, in any case, it may be seen as a primarily folkloric term. In non-folkloric sources, the Sakhalin Ainu appellation for the Orok is *orohko* (cf. e.g. Petrova 1967: 5), which is identical with Japanese *orokko* (*oroqko*, in the premodern orthography rendered as *orotsuko*). The phonetic relationship between *orakat(a)* and *orohko* is not without problems, but, in principle, the latter could be derived from the former by assuming sporadic

truncation (> *oraka*) and gemination (> *orakka*), followed by a more or less regular levelling of the vowel qualities (> *orokko*) and the typical Sakhalin Ainu preaspiration of geminate stops (> *orohko*).

The exact derivation of the shape *orohko* remains, consequently, slightly unclear, and it cannot be ruled out that it has been influenced retroactively by Japanese *orokko*. Focusing on the more archaic variant *orakata*, however, it is easy to see that it corresponds almost exactly to the Ghilyak reconstruction *urVngat(V)*. Clearly, the Ainu item was borrowed from Ghilyak at a time when the Ghilyak vowel system had already undergone rotation (*u > o*), while the vowels of the non-initial syllables were still intact. The Ghilyak prototype on which Ainu *orakata* is based may be reconstructed as *orangata*. The only difference between these two shapes is the correspondence of Ainu *k-* (velar stop) to Ghilyak *-ng-* (velar nasal). This is, however, a regular correspondence in loanwords from Ghilyak to Ainu, as is confirmed by the term for 'reindeer', Sakhalin Ghilyak *tlangi* < *tVlangVi* → Ainu *tunakai* → Japanese *tonakai* (Austerlitz 1976). The substitution *-ng-* → *-k-* was due to the absence of a velar nasal phoneme in Ainu.

It may be concluded that the Ainu borrowed their appellation for the Orok from the Ghilyak, who, obviously, had come to know the Orok earlier. Thanks to the information from Ainu, the internally reconstructed Ghilyak shape *urVngat(V)* may now be replaced by the externally supported shape *urangata*. This shape opens a new path for further external comparisons, in that *urangata* can hardly be separated from the widespread ethnonym *Uryangkhai* and its variants. Without going into the problem concerning the ultimate origin of this ethnonym, we may note that it is a generic term referring to several 'forest peoples', extending from the modern Turkic-speaking populations of the Sayan region (the Tuva group) and the Lena basin (the Yakut) to a number of historical and protohistorical groups in the Khingan region and further east in Manchuria. The ethnonym is well attested in sources relating to the northern frontiers of the Khitan Liao (Wittfogel & Fêng 1949: 98), the mediaeval Mongols (Shastina 1975: 240–241), and late mediaeval Korea (Jugel 1982). Groups with this ethnonym are also present in the composition of the Ewenki (Vasilevich 1966). It is perhaps relevant to note that the word is recorded from Ewenki also in the appellative meaning 'human being' (ÊRS 450 s.v. *urankai*).

The formal variation of *Uryangkhai* (~ *Uriangkhai* ~ *Uriyangkhai*) concerns two details. On the one hand, the initial part of the ethnonym occurs either with or without the medial palatal element [*]*-i/y-*, i.e., either as [*]*uryang-* (~ *uriang-* ~ *uriyang-*) or as [*]*urang-*. The former variant is present in Mongolian *uriyangkai* (MED 883 s.v. *urijangxai*) and Chinese *wuliangha* (兀良哈) ~ *wulianghai* (烏梁海), while the latter is present in Ewenki *urangkai* (SSTM 2: 283 s.v. *urankaj*) and Korean *urangkai* > *orangkae*. On the other hand, the final part of the ethnonym occurs

with the variants -*ka* ~ -*ka-i* ~ *ka-n* : plural -*ka-d* : "ethnicon" -*kadai*, all of which are attested in Middle Mongol (Rybatzki 2006: 155–156 s.v. *uriangqadai*, cf. also de Rachewiltz 2006: 256). The elements -*i* ~ -*n* (: plural -*d*) may be recognized as Mongolic class suffixes, which would suggest that the other items with a final -*i* (~ -*y*) are also of a Mongolic origin, but this is difficult to verify, and it is possible that Para-Mongolic languages (Khitan) were also involved. In any case, it is obvious that Ghilyak **urangata* = **uranga-ta* represents the variant **urangka-*, without the medial palatal element (***)-*i/y-*.

The other details of the Ghilyak item and its Ainu reflexes are impossible to explain with full certainty. It is, for instance, not known when, and how, the development (***)-*ngk-* [ŋk] > -*ng-* [ŋ] took place: this may or may not have been a regular process in Pre-Proto-Ghilyak. It is also not certain what the final element **-ta* in Ghilyak **uranga-ta* and Ainu *oraka-ta* stands for. An interesting possibility is that -*ta* represents the Tungusic collective suffix **-tA*, well attested in Manchu, but also present in the other Tungusic languages, especially in the composition of the complex suffix **-g-tA* (> Manchu -*hA*) (Benzing 1956: 71–72). In Manchu, **-tA* is mainly used on kinship terms and other items defining social relations, as in *sengge* 'old' : *sengge-te* 'elders' (CMED 316 s.vv.). Even so, the possibility deserves to be reckoned with that **-tA* was once also used in ethnonyms, in which case Ghilyak **uranga-ta* could be directly based on a Tungusic collective form of the type **urangka-ta*. It may be noted that Orok itself has several clan names ending in -*ttA*, as in *gee*(-)*tta* (DUL 66 s.v. *Geetta*). It is, however, uncertain whether this ending is connected with Tungusic **-tA*. Also, contrary to what has been claimed (Majewicz 1989: 127, 2011: 10–11), the ethnonym *Uilta* (*wilta* < **ulca*) does not contain this element.

General conclusions

Irrespective of how the details are explained, there is no doubt that the Ghilyak term *ornger* ~ *orngarh* 'Orok, Ulcha' represents a reflex of the generic ethnonym *Uryangkhai*. This ethnonym must have been in use in the Amur basin in reference to some sections of the local population, perhaps specifically sections speaking Tungusic idioms. We do not know if this term was used by these Tungusic speakers about themselves, though this possibility cannot be ruled out in view of the similarity of the Ghilyak reconstruction **urangata* with the hypothetical Tungusic collective form **urangka-ta*. However this may be, the term was adopted by the linguistic ancestors of the Ghilyak, who ultimately came to use it in reference to the specific Tungusic speech community from which both the Ulcha on the continent and the Orok on Sakhalin linguistically descend. It may be taken for

certain that the Ghilyak language entered Sakhalin from the continent before Orok, and quite probably, the term *urangata* was used by the linguistic ancestors of the Ghilyak already before they expanded to Sakhalin.

From the intermediate Ghilyak shape *orangata*, the ethnonym was transmitted to the Ainu, who expanded to Sakhalin from the south. Like the Ghilyak, the Ainu used the term basically to refer both to the Orok on Sakhalin and to the Ulcha on the continent, though it may also have received more generic applications. For the Ainu, the Orok personified the complexity of northern non-Ainu peoples, with whom the Ainu had waged wars since their expansion to Hokkaido. To the Hokkaido Ainu, these northern peoples were known by the folkloric name *rep-un-kur* 'sea people' (Philippi 1982: 40–44), who may be identified with the archaeologically well-established mediaeval Okhotsk Culture on Sakhalin and northern Hokkaido. We do not know, what language the people of the Okhotsk Culture (with both Manchurian and Beringian connections) spoke, though Tungusic is one possibility. In any case, there is a certain continuity from the prehistorical Ainu conceptions of the Okhotsk people to their historical contacts with the Orok (Alonso de la Fuente 2012: 4 note 8). Even so, the term *orakata* seems to have been adopted by the Ainu only after their arrival on Sakhalin.

The history of the ethnonym *Orok* serves as an illustration of the "linguistic symbiosis" of the aborigines of Sakhalin (Austerlitz 0000). The three aboriginal languages of the island entered Sakhalin in this order: Ghilyak, Ainu, Orok. Both the Ghilyak and the Ainu saw in the Orok a more recent intrusion from the continent, which may be one reason why the Orok came to be known by a variant of the continental ethnonym *Uryangkhai*. Unlike the Ghilyak and the Ainu, but also unlike the Ulcha on the continent, the Orok embraced reindeer husbandry as one of their basic economic activities. How this happened is an interesting problem for historical ethnography, but we know now, at least, that the name of the Orok is older than their reindeer husbandry.

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