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## Linguistic Diversity and National Borders of Tungusic

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## Linguistic Diversity and National Borders of Tungusic

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The Tungusic family comprises ten distinguishable languages, each of which can be subdivided into several dialects. All these languages and dialects are distributed in Russia and China, with the exception of Evenki, which is possibly also spoken in Outer Mongolia. In the present paper, the correlation between linguistic diversity and national borders is discussed from the points of view of population, classification, distribution, and typology. The discussion of typological differences focuses on morphology and syntax, with special attention being paid to the typologically peculiar Manchu language, as well as to Nanay and Evenki, both of which are distributed across the border. The observations presented reveal some state-specific features, especially on the Chinese side, which allow conclusions to be drawn concerning the influence of prestige languages.

### 1. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF TUNGUSIC

#### 1) Classification and distribution.

The Tungusic family is generally divided into the following ten languages: (1) Evenki (Evenk, Ewenki), (2) Even (Ewen, alias Lamut), (3) Solon (*Ewenke* in Chinese), (4) Negidal (Neghidai), (5) Udehe (Udege, Udeghe), (6) Orochi (Oroch), (7) Nanay (Nanai, alias Gold, Goldi), (8) Ulcha (Ulchi, Olcha), (9) Uilta (alias Orok), and (10) Manchu. They are genetically classified in four groups as follows [IKEGAMI 1974]: I. Evenki, Solon, Negidal, Even; II. Udehe, Orochi; III. Nanay, Ulcha, Uilta; IV. Manchu.

Of these ten languages, six (Negidal, Even, Udehe, Orochi, Ulcha, and Uilta) are distributed exclusively in Russia, if a few Uilta speakers who emigrated to Hokkaido are not considered. Two languages (Solon and Manchu) are only spoken in China. The remaining two, Evenki and Nanay, are spoken on both sides of the Sino-Russian border. However, the Chinese official taxonomy recognizes five Tungusic minorities in China: (1) Ewenke, (2) Orochen (*Elunchun*), (3) Hezhe (*Hezhe*), (4) Manchu (*Man*), and (5) Sibe (*Xibo*). There are some problems in this classification. Ewenke here comprises two or three linguistically different groups: the major Solon group (Solon-Evenki) plus those groups who speak dialects of Evenki proper (Khamnigan-Evenki and Oluguya-Evenki, the latter of which will not be mentioned hereafter due to the shortage of grammatical material). Orochen is linguistically another dialect of Evenki proper (Orochen-Evenki). Hezhe is the

appellation for Nanay on the Chinese side, here referred to as Kilen-Nanay according to its main dialect. Finally, Sibe can be identified as a dialect of Manchu (Sibe-Manchu).

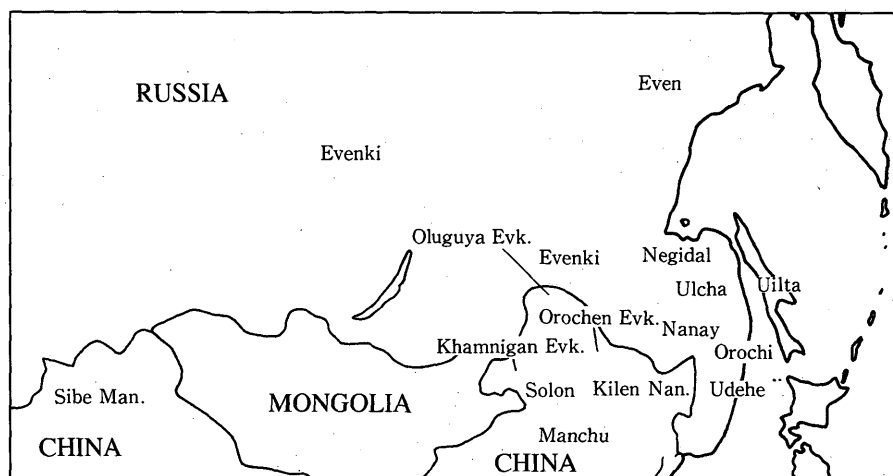
The geographical distribution of these languages, including the above-mentioned dialects, is shown on the Map. A more detailed map is found in [IKEGAMI 1989a]. On this basis, we can recognize three areas which correspond to an areal-political classification of Tungusic, with partial overlapping for some languages:

- the Manchurian area comprising: Manchu (including Sibe-Manchu), Solon, Khamnigan-Evenki, Orochen-Evenki, Kilen-Nanay;
- the Lower Amur area comprising: Nanay, Ulcha, Uilta, Orochi, Udehe, Negidal; and
- the East Siberian area comprising: Evenki and Even.

To be precise, it is true that Sibe-Manchu is spoken not in Manchuria but in Xinjiang and may have its own areal features, and that Kilen-Nanay is more likely to be connected with the Lower Amur region. Nevertheless, the above classification can be defended and will have relevance to the discussion of linguistic diversity below. Ikegami [IKEGAMI 1983, 1989b] recognizes the Lower Amur region as extending across the border and emphasizes its peculiarity against East Siberia, mainly on the lexical basis.

## 2) Population and language retention.

Table 1 shows the population of the Tungusic nationalities in China in 1982 and 1990. Since no official information is available on the native language retention rates, I give here only estimated numbers of speakers [HU et al. 1988], which possibly include those who speak a Tungusic idiom as a second language. Most of



Map. Distribution of the Tungusic Languages.

the speakers are bilingual in Chinese and their ethnic language, while some are multilingual involving some kind of Mongolic language especially among the Ewenke and Orochen peoples. The general increase of each population, which is partly a result of the change of attitude and interest on the minority side, will not give much advantage to the future of their native languages. The small absolute numbers of the Hezhe and Manchu (not including Sibe) speakers, combined with their general old age, indicate the critical situation of these languages.

**Table 1.** The Tungusic populations in China.

	1982	1990	Number of speakers (1988)
Ewenke	19,343	26,315	17,000
Orochen	4,132	6,965	2,240
Hezhe	1,476	4,245	40
Manchu	4,299,159	9,821,180	70
Sibe	83,629	172,847	26,760

In Table 2 we can see the population shift of the Tungusic nationalities in Russia during the past several decades, with the percentage and numbers of the native speakers of the languages concerned. The absolute numbers of speakers were calculated from the percentage given in each census. As is the case for most other Siberian peoples, the gradual increase of the total population is accompanied by a steady, in some case dramatic, decrease of the percentage of native speakers. In other words, the status of the aboriginal languages is generally declining from the status of a first language to that of a second language, and then to nothing among the younger generation. See [JANHUNEN 1991b] concerning the general prospects of the northern languages in Russia.

**Table 2.** The Tungusic populations in Russia.

	1959	1970	1979	1989
Evenki	24,000	25,000	27,300	30,000
percentage	54.9%	51.3%	42.8%	30.4%
speakers	13,176	12,825	11,684	9,120
Even	9,100	12,000	12,500	17,000
percentage	81.4%	56.0%	56.9%	43.9%
speakers	7,407	6,720	7,113	7,463
Negidal	incl. in Evenki	500	500	600
percentage	-	53.3%	44.4%	28.3%
speakers	-	267	222	170
Udehe	1,400	1,500	1,600	2,000
percentage	73.7%	55.1%	31.0%	26.3%
speakers	1,032	827	496	526
Orochi	800	1,100	1,200	900
percentage	68.4%	48.6%	40.6%	18.8%
speakers	547	535	487	169
Nanay	8,000	10,000	10,500	12,000
percentage	86.3%	69.1%	55.8%	44.1%

speakers	6,904	6,910	5,859	5,292
Ulcha	2,100	2,400	2,600	3,200
percentage	84.9%	60.8%	38.8%	30.8%
speakers	1,783	1,459	1,009	986
Uilta	-	-	-	200
percentage	-	-	-	44.7%
speakers	-	-	-	89

## 2. LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES ACROSS THE BORDER

1) As the first step towards understanding the linguistic diversity of Tungusic, let us start with **Manchu**, which is often viewed as separate from Tungusic proper, as is also suggested by the terms Tungus-Manchu or Manchu-Tungus. Ikegami [IKEGAMI 1979] establishes the following grammatical peculiarities of Manchu, as compared with the other Tungusic languages:

- Difference in the 3rd person pronouns. Manchu has its own 3rd person pronouns (sing. *i*, pl. *ce*), while it has no forms corresponding to the general Tungusic root *nungan*. The demonstratives, with or without a noun, also often play the role of 3rd person pronouns.
- Absence of personal and reflexive endings. The Tungusic languages generally have personal and reflexive endings, which indicate the possessor in the nominal declension and the agent in the verbal conjugation. Manchu lacks them in both the nominal and the verbal inflections.
- Absence of the alienability suffix. Most Tungusic languages have the category of alienability and its specific suffix, used in the possessive construction: e.g. Uilta *ulise-ngu-ni* meat-Alien-3 'his meat' vs. *ulise-ni* 'his flesh'. Manchu makes no such distinction.
- Special features of the nominal case system: existence of a genitive case; absence of the designative case; convergence of the dative and locative cases. The total number of separate case forms in Manchu is smaller than in any other Tungusic language.
- Zero ending in the imperative. The Manchu imperative form is identical with the verb stem with no particular ending, except for a few irregular verbs, which have endings. The latter are regarded as a remnant of the general Tungusic imperative [IKEGAMI 1957].
- Presence of a postverbal negative construction. Most Tungusic languages have a negative construction with a preposed negative verb followed by the negated verb in participle form, while in Manchu the negated verb in participle form is followed by and fused with a negative particle: cf. e.g. Evenki *e-se-m xaa-r* not-Pres-1S know-Part 'I don't know' vs. Manchu *gene-raq* go-Part + not (< *-re+agu*) 'does not go.' In the prohibitive construction, however, Manchu preposes a prohibitive word, which might be a fossilized form of the Tungusic negative verb (cf. [IKEGAMI 1979: 147, 1983: 170-171]): *ume gene-re* don't go-Part 'don't go!'.

Ikegami [IKEGAMI 1979] assumes that many of these differences can be attributed to the Mongolian influence on Manchu. He also suggests the possibility that Solon, also due to the influence of Mongolian, has come to share some of these features.

2) There are also differences between the Nanay dialects, as spoken on both sides of the Sino-Russian border. In a previous paper [Tsumagari 1993] I pointed out the existence of noticeable morphological differences between Kilen-Nanay [AN 1968], a main dialect on the Chinese side, and Nanay in Russia (represented by the Naikhin dialect [Avrorin 1959, 1961]). I also suggested that many of these differences are connected with the influence of Manchu on the former dialect. This point of view is supplemented by the following notes, which concentrate on illustrating the points on which Kilen is different from Russian-Nanay (called simply Nanay below) and similar to Manchu.

- Presence of a genitive case and its instrumental usage. The Kilen genitive case ending can also be used as an instrumental, though the dialect also has a separate instrumental case ending. Note that the Manchu genitive case ending has the additional function of an instrumental, or, in other words, has the same shape as the instrumental case ending.
- Other features of the nominal case system: absence of the designative case; convergence of 'from' and 'than'. The Kilen allative combines the function of the ablative 'from' and the comparative 'than', while Nanay has separate endings for each function. In Manchu the ablative case also functions as the comparative case.
- Differences in the possessive construction. The Kilen possessive construction is expressed by either the genitive case form of the possessor, or the personal marking of the possessee, or both. There is no alienability suffix. On the contrary, since Nanay has no genitive case in either the nominal or the pronominal declension, it depends on the obligatory personal marking of the possessee, with an obligatory alienability suffix in an alienable relation. In addition, Kilen has neither any reflexive ending nor any oblique personal marker. In Nanay, the oblique personal marker has to be used whenever a personal form takes an oblique case: e.g. Nanay *ogda-go-i-wa* boat-Desig-1s-Obl 'as my boat'. Kilen, like Manchu, inclines towards constructions with less head marking.
- Differences in the pronominal systems: distinction between the exclusive and the inclusive plural in the 1st person; declension of the 3rd person pronoun, and the use of a demonstrative pronoun to express the 3rd person. The Kilen 1st person pronouns make a distinction between the exclusive and the inclusive plural, though the distinction is not retained in the nominal and verbal personal endings. Nanay, as well as the other members of Group III (Ulcha and Uilta), have no such distinction. In the 3rd person pronouns, Nanay follows the personal declension (e.g. *ñoan-do-a-ni* he-Dat-Obl-3S 'to him', *ñoan-do-a-ci* -3P 'to them'), while Kilen takes no personal suffixes: *niani-du* or *ti-du* 'to him', *ti gurun-du* 'to them' (lit. this people-to). The last Kilen example shows the usual 3rd person plural construction

which contains a demonstrative pronoun plus a noun.

- Emphatic reduplication of adjective. In Kilen we find a partial reduplication of adjective roots for emphatic use: e.g. *tob tondo* 'extremely straight', *ub uyan* 'very thin (liquid)'. The process seems to be productive in Kilen, but is not found in Nanay, nor in Manchu.
- Specific features of the imperative forms: zero ending in the imperative; absence of the future imperative. Each Kilen verb shows two-way imperative formations: one with an imperative ending as in Nanay, and the other with zero ending as in Manchu. The latter seems to be an innovation under the Manchu influence. Another similarity to Manchu is the absence of the so-called future imperative, which is found in Nanay and most other Tungusic languages.
- Absence of number distinction in impersonal converbs. The Nanay impersonal converbs have number distinction (e.g. the simultaneous converb sing. *-mi* vs. pl. *-maari*), while neither Kilen nor Manchu makes such a distinction: Kilen *-mi*, Manchu *-me*.
- Absence of the preverbal negative construction. Along with the general Tungusic preverbal negative construction, Nanay often employs postverbal negative endings. The Kilen negative construction, however, totally depends on the latter means except for the prohibitive, making the picture very similar to Manchu.
- No agreement between modifier and noun. The so-called agreement between a modifier (adjective or numeral) and a noun is found in Nanay and the other Tungusic languages, but is not attested in Kilen, nor in Manchu. It is true, agreement in Nanay is attested only under certain restricted conditions, making it a phenomenon rather different from the agreement of Evenki or Even [KAZAMA 1994]. We will return to this problem below.

It is easy to recognize that all the Kilen peculiarities above are common with or similar to Manchu, with the single exception of emphatic reduplication. For the latter feature it may be noted that the same kind of emphatic reduplication as in Kilen is attested in Sibe-Manchu [LI et al. 1986], as well as in Solon [HU et al. 1986] and Orochen-Evenki [HU 1986]. The only available material on Khamnigan-Evenki [JANHUNEN 1991a] makes no mention of it. Since this construction obviously originated in Mongolian (and further in Turkic), Khamnigan-Evenki might potentially have it its Mongolian-dominated environment. We must also take into consideration the possibility that this kind of emphatic expression might be so colloquial that it is not attested in Written Manchu, even if it may have been present in Spoken Manchu. Incidentally, we come across a phrase *tob tondo* 'honest, fair' in a recently-published Manchu dictionary [AN et al. 1993], though the word *tob* (an onomatopoeic word for being) 'straight' can also be used independently and gives no evidence of being derived by reduplication from *tondo* 'straight, fair'.

3) A third language distributed across the border is **Evenki**. Chinese-Evenki (either Orochen-Evenki or Khamnigan-Evenki, or both) can be distinguished from

Russian-Evenki (which, of course, also consists of various dialects) in the following respects:

- Presence of a genitive case for both nouns and pronouns. It is true, most dialects of Russian-Evenki have absolute possessive pronouns (like English 'mine'), which are occasionally used as genitive forms of the corresponding pronouns. However, this usage seems to be emphatic ([KONSTANTINOVA 1964: 63], cf. also [BULATOVA 1987: 47]) and cannot be regarded as a genuine genitive. By contrast, both Orochen-Evenki and Khamnigan-Evenki have a well-established genitive case in the nominal and pronominal paradigms.
- Absence of the alienability suffix.
- Emphatic reduplication of adjective. As mentioned above, the existence of this feature in Khamnigan-Evenki is an open question.
- Existence of postverbal negative construction. This feature is present in Khamnigan-Evenki, but not in Orochen-Evenki.
- Absence of agreement between modifier and noun. This point should be taken with some reservation, since the available sources make no particular mention of it.

It is noteworthy that all of these features are on the same line as the above-mentioned Manchu and Kilen peculiarities. This leads to a more general concept of the peculiarities of Chinese-Tungusic, as compared with Russian-Tungusic.

4) On the basis of the above discussion we may now list the state-specific features of **Chinese-Tungusic**. With minor reservations, they are common to all the Tungusic languages spoken in China:

- Presence of a genitive case for both nouns and pronouns.
- Absence of the alienability suffix.
- Absence of the designative case.
- Emphatic reduplication of adjectives.
- Absence of agreement between modifier and noun.

The areal significance of the genitive case has already been observed by [TAMURA 1991, 1992]. The presence of a genitive case has, in fact, a close correlation with the absence of the alienability suffix, a circumstance that has been pointed out earlier by the present author [TUMAGARI 1992] and discussed in a more general context by [NICHOLS 1988]. Typologically Chinese-Tungusic shows a preference for dependent-marking in the possessive construction: the possessor (either a noun or a pronoun) in the genitive case form is followed by the possessee with optional person marking, but without any alienability suffix. The *preference for dependent-marking*, which may also be understood as an inclination towards *less head-marking*, is part of the general typological complex characterizing both Manchu and Mongolian. The fact that these languages make little or no use of personal endings in either nouns or verbs (cf. [NICHOLS 1986: 96]) is a manifestation of this same typological complex.

The prevalence of these and other features on the Chinese side may historically be explained by the influence of the Manchu and Mongolian languages, both of



which once enjoyed official status with a literary impact. Manchu itself, as has already been seen, was a language that had been exposed under a heavy Mongolic and Sinitic influence.

The Manchu influence was, of course, originally not confined within the present borders of China. We therefore find the following linguistic features which are at least partly common to Manchuria (on the Chinese side of the modern border) and the Lower Amur region:

- Presence of a pronominal genitive. For pronominal possession some Amur Tungusic languages and dialects, along with Even in the East Siberian region, use either a genitive form or an oblique-stem form of the personal pronouns. The latter may be functionally viewed as a reduced genitive form. Such 'genitive' constructions are found in Ulcha, Bikin-Nanay, Uilta, and Negidal. The latter three idioms can also dialectally use nominative pronouns for the same purpose (cf. [IKEGAMI 1993]).
- Absence of the alienability suffix. We cannot find any mention of the alienability suffix in the description of Bikin-Nanay by [SEM 1976]. If this means that suffix is absent, it may be best explained by the location of this dialect in the immediate neighbourhood of China.
- Presence of the postverbal negative construction. The postverbal negative construction is found in Manchu (including Sibe), Kilen-Nanay, and Khamnigan-Evenki on the Chinese side, and also in Nanay, Ulcha, and, to less degree, in Uilta [IKEGAMI 1990: 156] on the Lower Amur side.
- Relative-like usage by juxtaposed interrogatives. This is another noteworthy peculiarity found in both areas across the border. AVRORIN [AVRORIN 1961: 255–256] makes mention of this construction in Nanay with some examples. Tsumagari [TSUMAGARI 1990: 144, 1991: 3] points out two cases from the textual materials of Bikin-Nanay and Solon. The following is the Solon example [CHAOKE et al. 1991: 26]: *ooxi gadakkisi ooxi buugde* 'I will give you as many as you want' (lit. 'how many if you take, how many I will give'). This is structurally parallel to its Chinese equivalent: *yao duoshao gei duoshao* (lit. 'take how many give how many'). In this respect, the construction may be attributed to the direct influence of Chinese. Although its occurrence in Tungusic has not been fully attested due to the general insufficiency of syntactic information, we come across occasional examples in Sibe-Manchu [HU et al. 1986: 131], Solon, Nanay, Bikin-Nanay [SEM 1976: 116], and Ulcha [SUNIK 1985: 88]. Some other languages could possibly be added after a closer inspection of the textual materials.

Hattori [HATTORI 1989: 76] also refers to the presence of relative-like interrogatives in the Altaic languages, quoting examples from Tatar and Mongolian. His examples are, however, different from the construction mentioned above, in that they contain a demonstrative instead of a repeated interrogative: cf. Tatar *kaya teliyseng, šunda kuy* 'put it where you like' (lit. 'where you want there put'). This construction, in turn, has a parallel in Russian. In this respect, it is noteworthy that Evenki has an interrogative used as a subordinate conjunction just

like the Russian equivalent *kogda* 'when': *ookiir minduu biceen juur annganiingiw amiim buceen* 'when I was two years old, my father died' (lit., when to-me were two years...) [KOLESNIKOVA 1966: 228].

### 3. THE HIERARCHY OF LANGUAGES

We have reviewed above some manifestations of grammatical diversity within Tungusic, and the possible internal and external influences that may lie in their background. We will now examine the relevant dominant languages and their hierarchy in terms of time and space, taking the Sino-Russian border into consideration.

In Manchuria and the Lower Amur region, Manchu used to play an important role as a primary language of influence. Manchu, in its turn, had been heavily affected by Mongolian and, on a more long-term basis, by Chinese. The emphatic reduplication of adjectives in Chinese-Tungusic may well be the result of direct Mongolian influence on the Tungusic areas concerned. As an example of direct Chinese influence we can mention the relative-like juxtaposed interrogatives. Direct Turkic influence is possibly present in Sibe-Manchu, which, being isolated in Xinjiang, has developed a system of nominal personal endings.

In East Siberia, as long as grammatical structure is concerned, we observe very little direct influence from Manchu, Mongolian, or Chinese. Instead, some peculiarities, for instance, the agreement in case and number between a modifier and a noun, and the use of interrogatives in the function of subordinative conjunctions, suggest the possibility of Russian influence. Another zone of contact has been formed with Yakut, a Turkic language of vital importance in East Siberia. Romanova et al. [ROMANOVA et al. 1975] deal with the mutual influences between Evenki and Yakut, paying much attention to lexical borrowing. Ikegami [IKEGAMI 1993] assumes the presence of Yakut influence in Evenki and Western Even in the use of nominative pronouns as indicating the possessor. Contrary to the general dominance of Yakut over Tungusic, some grammatical innovations in Yakut, such as the case system (including the loss of the genitive case) and the category of future imperative, are regarded as Tungusic features.

The dominant languages mentioned constitute a potential hierarchy in terms of their relative prestige, which, considering also the areal positions of the languages, can be shown schematically as follows:

Chinese	>	Mongolian	>	Manchu	>	Tungusic	<	Yakut	<	Russian
		Manchuria		Lower Amur				East Siberia		

Thus, the linguistic diversity within Tungusic reflects past contacts with the prestige languages in each area. Today the impact of the modern national language in each country is so overwhelming and inevitable that the indigenous languages are simply being abandoned. In this general trend leading from diversification to unification, we should, nevertheless, pay attention to any extra-linguistic factors that might

favour the retention of minority languages. It goes without saying that much remains to be done in this respect with regard to the Tungusic languages. Also, much language material remains to be collected before it disappears. In particular, we have only limited descriptions of syntax at our disposal.

As for the sources we have, it should be borne in mind that the grammatical descriptions available may not always correspond to the actual linguistic reality. Both Chinese and Russian scholars have their own traditional frameworks of description, with varying standards of exactitude. Occasionally, it seems that the sources exaggerate some of the actual linguistic differences. Today, when the entire Tungusic territory is accessible to scholars from all over the world, it is possible and, in fact, necessary for all Tungusologists, domestic or foreign, to collect and exchange fresh field information. What is important is, of course, to distinguish the substantial differences from descriptive ones, and to improve the overall level of description by bringing together information from both sides of the national border.

A note on the sources: Unless otherwise specified, language material is quoted from [NOVIKOVA 1968] for Even, [CINCIUS 1982] for Negidal, [SHNEJDER 1936] and [SUNIK 1968] for Udehe, [AVRORIN & LEBEDEVVA 1968] for Orochi, and [POPPE 1931] for Solon.

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