

ETHNONYMS OF SIBERIA AND THEIR ADJECTIVIZATION IN ENGLISH

ORIENTAL INQUIRIES INTO ENGLISH LEXICOGRAPHY

ALFRED F. MAJEWICZ

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Ethnonyms of Soviet Asia in the linguistic, ethnographic and anthropological literature written in English offer an interesting example of a terminological confusion in disciplines for which the English terminology has not been standardized. Words denoting exactly the same objects or phenomena differ from author to author, due to their extraordinary endings they seem to be totally alien to English, their extraordinary internal structure (as far as both phonetics and word-formation are concerned) sometimes misleads the authors of the scholarly works themselves.

The purpose of the present paper is to discuss certain suggestions concerning a number of Siberian ethnonyms in English. These suggestions could lead to the standardization of these words in English or, at least, to help lexicographers working on the standardization of English scientific terminology in their (inevitable in some near future) efforts at establishing terms acceptable to the linguistic competence of native speakers of English and simultaneously acceptable to specialists acquainted also with languages — sources of those loans.

While reviewing recent English-language publications in the fields concerned,¹ one may easily discover the tendency to replace long-established, traditional Siberian ethnonyms, such as Yukaghir, Yenisei-Ostyak, Gilyak, Kamchadal, Koryak, Gold, Tungus, Lamut, Ostyak, Vogul, Cheremis, etc.,

¹ The ideas presented in this paper came to me when I was asked to write a review of C. F. and F. M. Voegelin's *Classification and index of the world's languages*, New York — Oxford — Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1977; to avoid the imputation of groundless opinions I decided to use initial data for the following remarks from the publication.

by new terms denoting the same peoples, respectively: Odul, Ket, Nivkhi, Itel'men, Nymylan, Nanai or Nani, Evenki, Even, Xanty, Mansi, Mari, etc. The justification of this tendency is that the newly-introduced terms are allegedly derived from original ethnonyms of the peoples related to. The following discussion should prove that this opinion is in many cases a terminological inexactitude.

The oddity of some of the above-mentioned words is salient. How to read, for instance, the word Xanty, what lexical or grammatical category is it? The adoption of foreign lexical items must be executed with respect to the subsystems of the native tongue and certain criteria must be observed. First of all, forms should be derived from *roots* of foreign items by means of derivational affixes proper to English; the introduction of words with foreign affixes should not be admissible. Inadmissible is also servile and thoughtless transliteration of Russian characters into Latin letters. The inobservance of these criteria resulted in such funny forms as Nivkhi, Evenki, Xanty, used as nouns and as adjectives. Contrary to what the authors of works where these formations appear say, the formations themselves are simply Russian nouns in Nominative Plural: *нивхи, эвенки, ханты*, only the latter of them being similar to the original Ostyak ethnonym.

The Gilyaks call themselves [n'ivx] (those living on the Amur River) and [n'iyvŋ] or [n'ivŋŋ] (those living in Southern Sakhalin). General name for them is [n'ivyu], meaning "people, nation"; this name is proposed as the basis for the English ethnonym. The form Nivhu (or Nivxu) is proposed here as parallel to already well-established English word "Ainu".

For Tungus the noun Evenk and its adjectivized form Evenkish is proposed (Nom. Pl. of a noun: Evenks). If the traditional ethnonym Tungus is maintained, the term to denote the linguistic family should be Tungusic (parallelly to Turkish: Turkic).

The ethnonyms to denote the Ostyak people to be proposed here are: Khant/Hant or Khanti/Hanti (Nom. Sg.), Khants/Hants or Khanti(s)/Hanti(s) (Nom. Pl.); adjectives: Khant/Hant, Khanti/Hanti or (best, in this author's opinion) Khantish/Hantish. As Ostyaks do not constitute a homogeneous nation (e.g., considerable dialectal differentiation resulted in the formation of four different literary forms of the Hantish language), the term Khantic/Hantic (also parallel to Turkic) is proposed for special purposes. This ethnonym is most probably of Mansi and not of Hantish origin.

The new term to denote Yenisei-Ostyaks — Ket — should be preserved as a noun Nom. Sg.; for Nom. Pl. the form Kets and as an adjective the form Kettish are proposed (analogous sets of ethnonyms are numerous in English).

The ethnonyms Olča should rather be written Olcha or Ulcha, the adjective being Olchan/Ulchan. The original ethnonym of Ulchas is [nan'i], sometimes incorrectly identified with [nanai], a name denoting Golds in their own language. New terms to name Golds in English should be Nanai (noun Nom. Sg.), Nanais (Nom. Pl.) and Nanaian (adjective) — analogous sets are also numerous.²

As far as the name for Lamuts is concerned, Even may be maintained throughout the three categories (namely, noun Nom. Sg., Nom. Pl., adjective) or Evens (Nom. Pl.), Evenish/Evenian (?) may be introduced.

Oroč should be rather written as Oroch (Nom. Sg. and adjective), the plural form Oroches being suggested here as possible.

Oročon and Orok is the same people, contrary to some authors, therefore one name only should be selected for further use. Here forms Orok, Oroks, Oroch are proposed; Orochon was a name given to Oroks by Russian settlers in Sakhalin. The original name is [ulta] or [ujlta].

Itel'men should be simply Itelmen³ (as noun Nom. Sg. and adjective) and Itelmens (Nom. Pl.). Forms Mari (Nom. Sg., adjective), Maris (Nom. Pl.) for Cheremis; Mansi (Nom. Sg. and adjective), Mansis (Nom. Pl.) for Voguls are proposed (in a way parallel to Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, etc.).

The name Altai would better serve in English as a geographical name only; in linguistics, ethnography and anthropology it is safer to use the old term Oirot. The term Altaic should, however, be preserved with the traditional, well-established meaning.

The form Kumandy should rather be changed to Kumandian(s). The adjective formed from Turkmen should rather be Turkmenian while noun Nom. Pl. should be Turkmens. If Mordva is adjectivized to Mordvin then would it not be correct to adjectivize Tuva into Tuvian or even Tuvianian?

Finally, ethnonyms Odul for Yukaghirs and Nymylan for Koryaks should be rejected as improper. Odul is the original name only for Southern Yukaghirs from the Kolyma River basin. Northern Yukaghirs from the tundra call themselves [βadul]. Similarly, Nymylan is a poor imitation of the original word [nimilyin] denoting Koryaks living in settlements; nomadic reindeer breeders call themselves [t]aβt[iβ] or [t]aβt[βan]. Therefore in both cases the preservation of the old terms Yukaghir(s) and Koryak(s) is the best solution.

² Both [nanai] and [nan'i] have the same etymology: *na* "earth, ground" + [n'i][nai] "human being" = "people from the territory"; the word Olcha/Ulcha is most probably of Orok origin.

³ [itenme'n] "those who live, exist".

It will not be difficult to conclude that suggestions presented above were formulated on the basis of the following three criteria: the use of English derivational suffixes in the formation of the loans under concern, fidelity to principles of English orthography and orthoepy, and preference of forms analogous to ethnonyms already well-established in English.⁴

⁴ On the basis of the same criteria ethnonyms like *Nennish* and *Ennish* have been coined and used in the Soviet ethnographical literature in English. Needless to say, they should replace mediocre incompetent respective imitations from Russian *Nenec* = *Nenets* and *Enec* = *Enets* = *Yenets*.