

On the Classification of Ritual Terminology in the Nanai Language

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The Khabarovskiy and the Primorsky *krai* and the Sakhalinskaya *oblast* of the Russian Federation are home to the Nanai low-number indigenous people (totaling 12,160 in 2002) whose language is assigned to the southern Manchu-Tungus branch of the Altaic family of languages. The scholars study the Nanai ceremonial and religious concepts, their perception of the world and philosophy of life related to the ethnic vocabulary and special terminology. The author attempts at classifying the ritual terminology of baby delivery, wedding, and funeral rites, presents academic interpretations of individual terms, briefly explains their lexical meaning, and ways of forming the Nanai ritual word stock. Certain terms are used in spoken Nanai with no reference to a specific rite but are still related to the latter. Words in general use at times acquire a general figurative and symbolic meaning as ritual terms. The classification presents 4 groups of ritual terms: Ritual terms proper (in performing a specific rite); Ritual terms proper (with their lexical meaning unchanged, in several rites); Ritual terms in spoken speech (with no reference to a specific rite); Words and word combinations in general use (which have acquired a figurative and symbolic meaning and are used as ritual terms). The Nanai ritual terminology with regard to changes in social life is an invaluable source for studies of spiritual and material culture of the ethnos, its ethnogeny, historical development and vocabulary (etymology, phonetics, word- and form-formation), etc. The ritual terminology in the Nanai vocabulary is still to become the subject-matter of in-depth study.

Keywords: Nanai, Manchu-Tungus, Ritual terms, classification, wedding, funeral, Shaman, taboo, ceremonial and religious concepts

1. Introduction

The Khabarovsk and Primorsky *krai* and the Sakhalin *oblast* of the Russian Federation are home to the Nanai, an endangered indigenous people whose language is in the southern Manchu-Tungusic branch of the Altaic language family. According to the 2002 Russian National Census, the Nanai have a population of 12,160. Most of them, 10,993 people live in the Khabarovsk *krai* and 1,167 are residents of the Primorsky *krai* and Sakhalin *oblast*¹⁾. According to unofficial data, the number of the Nanai living in the Heilongjiang province of the People's Republic of China is estimated to be in the range of 3,000 to 4,000²⁾.

Historically, the Nanai people depend primarily on fishing and hunting combined with wild plant gathering for their livelihood. Their lives and livelihoods are characterized by the diverse traditional ceremonial based on their religious concepts, worldviews, and their philosophy formed from life. This aspect of the Nanai lives has attracted the attention of many scholars both in Russia and abroad from the mid-nineteenth century. Shrenk (1883, 1899, 1903) describes a mourning ritual where a spirit of the dead is seen off to the other world, and also rites related to the birth of a child, hunting as well as a bear celebration. Of scientific value is Shimkevich (1897) which is research in shamanism, folklore, and various aspects of livelihood, beliefs, and family lifestyle of the Nanai people. An in-depth study into the family and marriage kinship system, religious beliefs and based on them rites of the indigenous people of Priamur, including the Nanai was conducted by Shternberg (1933). The widely known ethnographer I. A. Lopatin is among those who are engaged in research

1) *Krai* and *oblast* are types of administrative division in Russia, and there is no difference in legal status between them. The Russian Federation is divided into 83 subjects including 46 *oblasts* and 9 *krais*.

2) Hezhen are Nanais living in the province of Heilongjiang of the People's Republic of China.

on aboriginal culture (Lopatin 1922).

Of the fairly large number of scholars of the Soviet and post-Soviet eras who focused their research on history, various aspects of lives, livelihoods, and culture of the Russian Far East indigenous peoples, including the Nanai, the most prominent are A. P. Okladnikov, S. V. Ivanov, A. V. Smolyak, V. A. Avrorin, V. I. Tsintsius, O. P. Sunik, Yu. A. Sem, and P. Ya. Gontmakher. One can add the names of such researchers as Ch. M. Taksami, G. A. Otaina, Ye. A. Gayer, V. Ch. Beljdy, S. N. Onenko, N. B. Kile, Yu. A. Samar, A. P. Samar, L. Zh. Zaksor, and M. G. Temina "scholars from amongst the indigenous peoples of Priamur.

Indigenous material and spiritual culture, traditional practices, and religious views are considered by scholars in close association with ethnic lexis and special terminology. The reason for this being that language and meanings of a word, word combination and sentence help in understanding or explaining meanings of one or other subject, action, and indigenous ritual. Scholars V. A. Avrorin, T. I. Petrova, A. P. Putintseva, O. P. Sunik, S. N. Onenko, L. I. Sem, N. B. Kile, A. V. Stolyarov, and L. Zh. Zaksor made an inestimable contribution to the study of the Nanai language as part of the southern branch of the Altaic family of languages. Lexical specifics of the Nanai language were reflected in their scholarly works.

This study is an attempt to classify ritual terminology constituting one of the most important layers of the Nanai language for which the purpose the terminology of wedding, baby delivery, and funeral rites is analyzed. Academic interpretations of individual terms is presented, their lexical meaning is briefly explained, and the ways to form the Nanai ritual vocabulary comprised of modern and current words in connection with various rites are demonstrated.

2. Terminology of the wedding ritual

In the first half of the 20th century, a wedding rite was still performed by the Nanai in a very specific manner. As with other

rites, specific wedding terminology was used. Such terms as *medeliku* (мэдэлику), *e-si* (е-си), *degbeliku* (дэгбэлику), *giamata* (гиамата), refer to specific stages of the wedding ceremony.

medeliku (мэдэлику) semantically correlates with such words as *mede* (мэдэ)³⁾ meaning “piece of news, news” and *medesiuri* (мэдэсиури) meaning “to ask, to inquire”. *Dima-gosal sikun medeve olbi-kichi* (Дима-госал сикун мэдэвэ олби-кичи) means “The guest brought the latest news”. *Erde-gesi osini, neanchiachi medesiru* (Эрдэ-гэси осини, нёанчиачи мэдэсиру) means “If it is of interest to you, ask them about it”. In accordance with custom, parents whose son was an eligible bachelor, would ask this in other villages to determine if there were any unmarried daughters. This news traveled fast in nomad camps and villages. It could take parents more than one month to make a good match for their son. Once a possible match was found, parents of an eligible bachelor paid a visit to the family to ask parents of a prospective bride whether they agree to give her in marriage. *medesindzuri* (мэдэсиндзүри) is translated from Nanai as “to arrive or come to ask”. *Tei gurun gorodiadi pikteveri asigoani Poro asia pikteveni medesindekhechi* (Тэй гурун городиادي пиктэвэри асигоани Поро асия пиктэвэни мэдэсиндэхэчи) is translated as “These people came from a distance to ask Poro if he agrees to give daughter in marriage to their son”. Therefore, this stage of the wedding ceremony is designated as *medeliku* (мэдэлику) “a stage of inquiries or betrothal, seeking in marriage” (Gayer 1991: 64). The word is the morphemic composition of a root (*mede-* (мэдэ-)) and a word-forming suffix (*-li* (-ли-)).

There is no consensus of opinion among scholars as to the interpretation of *e-si* (е-си) as a stage following the *medeliku* (мэдэлику) stage of the wedding ceremony. Gayer (1991: 67) interprets *e-si* (е-си) as “wedding feast, refreshment, having meals, wedding celebration”. In Onenko⁴⁾ (1980: 184) *e-sileuri* (е-силэури), a derivative from *e-si* (е-си), is interpreted as “to seek in marriage”. *Molo piktei asigoani e-silendekheni*

3) In this paper, Nanai forms are presented in Roman alphabet with those in parenthesized Cyrillic alphabet.

4) S.N. Onenko is the first Nanai lexicographer scientist.

(Моло пиктэи асигоани е-силэндэхэни) is translated as “Molo came to arrange a match for his son”.

Considering that the *e-si* (е-си) stage, the period in which an engaged daughter stays at home until the dowry is paid in full, it seems not quite correct to interpret the term *e-si* (е-си) as wedding celebration or wedding feast. Neither it was just refreshments or having meals in the main lexical meaning of these words.

In Nanai there is another name for this stage of the wedding ceremony. It appears in Lopatin (1922: 151) as *toktolku* (токтолку) (a correct spelling of the word is *toktoliko* (токтолико): *tokto-* (токто-) (root), *-li-* (-ли-) and *-ko-* (-ко-) (word-forming suffixes)). It is derived from the verb *toktovori* (токтовори). Onenko (1980: 402) gives four meanings of the lexeme:

- 1) to come to an agreement, understanding about the price; to fix, set a price of something. *Tei nepulte khodavani toktovoriva geleuri* (Тэй непултэ ходавани токтвоворива гэлэури) “It is necessary to come to an agreement about the price of the furs.”;
- 2) to determine, fix, set a rate, wages. *Bue bāgilaipu turimbe einie-met toktokhachi* (Буэ бāгилайпу туримбэ эйниэ-мэт токтохачи) “Our wages have been fixed only today.”;
- 3) to take, make, come to, arrive at a decision, to pass, adopt a resolution. *Sagdil sue baitasu udeveni tui toktokhachi* (Сагдил сүэ байтасу удэвэни түй токтохачи) “The elders took the following decision on your matter.”;
- 4) to conclude, enter into an agreement. *Bue khemtudieri ulendi murchire, gese kheseveri toktokhapu* (Буэ хэмтүдиэри, улэнди мурчирэ, гэсэ хэсэвэри токтохапу) “After careful consideration we came to an agreement (entered into an agreement)”.

As one can see, the range of meanings of the word *toktovori* (токтовори) is fairly wide. If one excludes the second and the third meanings, which undoubtedly have recently developed as a result of changes in lifestyle, there will remain the first and the fourth meanings: a price acceptable to the interested parties and entering into an agreement on price.

Thus, it is the author’s opinion that meanings of the words *e-si* (е-си) and *toktoliko* (токтолико) in the context of the wedding ceremony are

similar: setting up a price to be paid off for a bride, entering into an agreement on the amount of bride-money. In this case *toktoliko* (токто-лико) is used not so much as and not only as a special ritual term but rather to refine the meaning of the ritual term *e-si* (е-си). Hence, *e-si* (е-си) is a stage of the wedding when the amount of bride-money is determined.

It must be remembered that the parties can fail to come to an agreement and leave empty-handed. Therefore, S. N. Onenko's interpretation of *e-sileuri* (е-силэури) as derived from the stem *e-si* (е-си) "to try to arrange a match" should be recognized.

The word *degbeliku* (дэгбэлику) meaning the third stage of the wedding ceremony as well as *medeliku* (мэдэлику) is used not only as a ritual term. According to Onenko (1980: 165), *degbeliku* (дэгбэлику) derives from the verb *degbeliuru* (дэгбэлиури) meaning "to open, to unseal, to remove by force", *Guiseve degbeliuri* (Гүйсэвэ дэгбэлиури) meaning "to open up a chest", *Tukuruve degbeliuru* (Тукурувэ дэгбэлиури) meaning "to uncork a bottle", *Dia diachiari laktokhan mosalba degbeliuri* (Диа диачиари лактохан мосалба дэгбэлиури) meaning "to pull apart frozen-sticks (of firewood)". The word *degbeliku* (дэгбэлику) is polysemous. It can be used to designate a device for opening or unsealing something: *Kagba degbelikuni dere oyalani bichini* (Карба дэгбэликунни дэрэ оялани бичини) "There was a device on the table to open a ceramic vessel". As mentioned above, *degbeliku* (дэгбэлику) is a certain stage of the wedding ceremony when a bridegroom was allowed to share bed with his future wife. The second meaning is undoubtedly figurative.

The term *giamata* (гиамата) is merely ritual. *giamata* (гиамата) "a bride", *giamata* (гиамата) "wedding". This word is never used in a different setting or circumstances: *Einie giamata inini* (Эйниэ гиамата инини) "A wedding ceremony will take place today". *nimeken Maila - giamata* (нимэкэн Майла - гиамата) "A bride is Maila living nearby".

The following lexemes are classified as terms of the wedding ceremony:

mirue (мируэ): "dowry";

sike (сикэ): “a wedding robe decorated with an image of the clan tree”;
karmadyan (кармадян): “the most beautiful and beloved daughter for whom the highest dowry is asked (Onenko 1980: 212). For this very reason she might never get married”;
ichogori (ичогори): “to leave husband on the grounds of being abused by him and return to the parents”;
sirbogokhan ekte (сирбогохан эктэ): “a woman who was given in marriage instead of the former fiancé who had died”;
tori (тори): “dowry”,
 and others.

3. The terminological semantic link of rituals and non-rituals

The above suggests that the wedding terminology comprises words used only while performing the wedding ceremony and those in common use in the Nanai language however semantically they are obviously related. Here are few examples:

dyuechin (дюэчин): “an exchange of brides between two families”. *Chokchodi Gadidi asia purilberi dyuechimeri ediguechi bāva-kichi* (Чокчоди Гадиди асия пурилбэри дюэчимэри эдигуэчи бава-кичи) “Chokcho and Gadi gave their daughters in marriage via exchange”. The word *dyuechin* (дюэчин) is also translated as to exchange or trade any objects (things, tools, kitchen utensils, etc.). *Palodiari dyuechigueri: si-gi khenyule bi* (Палодиари дюэчигуэри: си-ги хэнюлэ би) “Let’s exchange our hammers: yours is lighter.”;

saicha (саича): “very young children betrothal ritual (2- to 3-year olds and even younger)”. The word also has another meaning: mark, sign, symbol. The verb *saiori* (саиори) meaning “to mark, to indicate” is a derivative of the noun *saicha* (саича) while the participle *saiokhan* (саиохан) “marked, indicated” derived from the verb. *Tei naondekandi archokandi - saiokhan puril* (Тэй наондэканди арчоканди - саиохан пурил) “The boy and the girl are betrothed (marked)”. Figuratively speaking, these children are “marked” in advance for recognition purposes to get married later on, and nobody is authorized to dissolve their future marriage fastened by the pre-wedding ritual with the

exception of the death of one of them;

siragori (сирагори): “to meet a commitment according to the clan custom to marry a wife of the deceased elder brother”. *Gani buikin āgbi asivani siragokhan* (Гани буйкин āгби асивани сирагохани) “Gani got married to the widow of the deceased elder brother”. In general use the word *siragori* (сирагори) means “to tie ends, for example, of a torn rope” (Onenko 1980: 367). *Khetuekhen topto dueveni siragomi aya* (Хэтуэхэн топто дүэвэни сирагоми ая) “One can tie ends of a torn rope”. When a younger brother gets married to the widow of his elder brother it looks like family ties torn apart by the death are restored. It makes it possible to keep up the family hearth, i.e. to prevent a widow from leaving the clan thus ensuring its future.

The analysis of terminology of various Nanai rituals allows for similar observations regarding other rites. The following words are used only in rituals:

itoan (итоан): “a booth (cabin made of branches and straw, etc.) erected for the purpose of performing the *kasa* (каса) ritual”;

kasa (каса)⁵⁾: “a big funeral repast during which a shaman sends off spirits of the dead to the other world”;

piukhe (пиухэ): “a personal sacred tree as a place to worship and place sacrificial food”;

saōri (саōри): “a ritual of saying farewell to the deceased”;

tōro, *tōroan* (тōро, тōроан): “a sacred post or three poles with cross-beams for a shaman to pray and to make a sacrifice”;

khumegden (хумэгдэн): “a ritual stick over which drink was poured onto the grave of the deceased during his funerals and funeral repast”;

khergen (хэргэн): “a funeral repast on the 7th day after the funerals”;

epileuri (эпилэури): “a ritual of brushing diseases off a woman in childbirth using shavings”.

The following are examples of common words used as ritual terms when they acquire figurative, symbolic meanings are common in the Nanai language.

5) Without the ritual of “casa” the souls of the dead remain in the world of the living.

anaori (анаори): “to push, push out, to push off”. *Tei pikte, khupim diai anakhani* (Тэй пиктэ, хупими, диаи анахани) “The child pushed his friend while playing”. *Bārbi isigoachin pikte khadembani dolbo boala deredigwmbuvesi: orkin, pikteve bunichi anaori* (Бārби исигоачин пиктэ хадёмбани долбо боала дэрэдигувэмбувэси: оркин, пиктэвэ буничи анаори) “Personal things of a child under the age of 1 should not be left outside at night. It is bad: evil spirits will take away his soul”. It was believed that such actions pushed a child out of the land of the living. In the given sentence, the common verb *anaori* (анаори) in combination with *buni* (буни) “the other world” acquires figurative meaning and becomes a ritual term;

a-mai achogori (а-маи ачогори): a word-for-word translation is “to take off one’s mouth”: *a-ma* (а-ма) “a mouth”; *-i* (-и) “a reflexive suffix meaning “one’s own””; *achogori* (ачогори) “to take off”. This word combination in general use has a meaning “to fulfill a promise, to release oneself from responsibility for the said, to expiate or atone for”. When this phrase was used while performing sacrificial rites of atonement, or to fulfill a promise given to a shaman, a spirit, etc., it acquired a ritual meaning, i.e. an expiatory sacrifice: *Esi nēa-mai achogori* (Эси нэ а-маи ачогори) “A sacrifice is sure to be offered now.”;

iliochaori (илиочаори): “a ritual to save a child’s life”. *Bue nimekempu bākhambari pikteveri iliochaichi* (Буэ нимэкэмпу бāхамбари пиктэвэри илиочайчи) “Our neighbors take efforts to save their child’s life”. The term *iliochaori* (илиочаори) literally means “to try to set a child on his feet”. In this meaning it is used in everyday life. The word derives from the verb *iliori* (илиори) “to stand on one’s own feet”. A ritual to save a child’s life would be performed in those families where children died. There are many ways of performing the rite, some are detailed in Gayer (1991);

nāmambori (нāмамбори): “to give a hug, to embrace, to seize”. *Dāma mimbive masidi nāmamboriva ulesikheni* (Дāма мимбивэ масиди нāмамборива улэсихэни) “My grandpa loved to give me a tight hug”. The verb *nāmambori* (намамбори) acquires a terminology meaning when a bond of the deceased with living relatives is meant. *Bumbive na-galagokhan nai uive-de nama-gomi mutei* (Бумбивэ на-галагохан най уивэ-дэ нама-гоми мутэй) “A deceased relative can seize one of his living relatives, i.e. take a soul of a living

relative to the other world.”;

sirekteve khetuliuri (сирэктэвэ хэтулиури): in this phrase the word *sirekte* (сирэктэ) means “a thread” (word-for-word translation: “a fabric thread”), *khetuliuri* (хэтулиури) “to tear up, to break, to break off (with)”. Thus, the word-for-word translation of *sirekteve khetuliuri* (сирэктэвэ хэтулиури) is “to break a thread”. In the context of the funeral ritual the phrase acquires the following meaning: to perform a ritual of breaking off with the deceased. It was customary for a shaman to perform the ritual in the absence of him, for example, nowadays “the eldest outlander” (*a-dai nai* (а-дай най)).

Certain terms were used not in one but in several rites, their lexical meaning remained unchanged. Such words and phrases are abundant in the Nanai language as seen below:

baitai būguri (байгаи бугури): “an expiatory sacrifice” (the meaning of the phrase is the same as of “*a-mai achogori* (а-маи ачогори)”: *Tui bi inidu nēbaitai būguri* (Туй би иниду нэ байгаи бугури) “An expiatory sacrifice is sure to be made on such a day”. Here, a sacrifice to atone for a promise given either to the supreme forces or a shaman. In this case, a ritual or a ceremony is sure to be performed. The given phrase can be used in everyday life: *Vakadia khai-da, khaolia papadu baitai būgukhembī* (Вакадиа хай-да, хаолиа пападу байгаи бугухэмби) “It is so good I succeeded in fulfilling the promise made to my uncle”. In this case a rite must be performed: the younger kneels to the elder and makes a deep bow to touch the floor with his forehead; the elder gives him a kiss on both cheeks, then praises for the fulfilled promise or the kept word as if thereby accepting his expiatory sacrifice in the form of a bow;

kesi (кэси): “good fortune, good luck”. *Kesive geleuri* (Кэсивэ гэлэури) “to ask for good fortune or good luck”. In this meaning the word *kesi* (кэси) is used in wedding, baby delivery, hunting, fishing, and even funeral rites. A baby is born “bless him with good health and good fortune”. *Endur-Ama, Endur-Enie, baldikhanidu kesive būrusu* (Эндур-Ама, Эндур-Эниэ, балдиханиду кэсивэ бӯрусу). A daughter is going to marry “bless her with good fortune”. *Endur-Ama, Endur-Enie, giamatalaipu piktepuve kesikudi baldivandosu* (Эндур-Ама,

- Эндур-Эниэ, гиаматалайпу пиктэпувэ кэсикуди балдивандосу). A hunting or a fishing season started “pray for good luck”. *Mue Endurnie, khoni-da, kesikudi vaichavandu, botavandu* (Муэ Эндурниэ, хони-да кэсикуди вайчаванду, ботаванду);
- mikhorachiori* (михорачиори): “to bow”. *Boachi, Ciunchi, baldikhambi biachi mikhorachiori* (Боачи, Сиунчи, балдихамби Биачи михорачиори) “to bow one’s thanks to the Heaven, the Sun, the Month of one’s birth”. Expression by bowing is characteristic of many rituals and rites. Hence, the word *mikhorachiori* (михорачиори) is used during their performance;
- ōni* (ōни): “ritual utensils”. *ōni* (ōни) appear both in wedding and funeral rites. The difference is only in size, shape or some addition depending on the purpose they serve. In the case of the wedding rite, a bride would take a ritual cauldron as ritual utensils when she left her parents home and entered her husband’s home (a rite is named *ōnichi ovari* (ōничи овори)). *Giamata ōnini - chirikteme enyue* (Гиамата ōнини - чириктэмэ энюэ) “A cast-iron cauldron is bride’s ritual utensils”. Any kitchen utensils can be used in funeral rites as ritual utensils: a bowl, a small saucepan, a plate, a wicker dish and a piece of cloth (nowadays it is replaced with a headscarf or a towel). Ritual utensils *ōni* (ōни) are necessary only if the deceased is brought from a different place and funeral rites are performed not at his home. Following the handing of ritual utensils *ōni* (ōни) to the hosts the body of the deceased is brought in. *ōniva naidu būrusu, totapi-mat dekchi girmaksava īvuri* (ōнива найду бўрүсу, тотапи-мат дёкчи гирмаксава йвүри) “First deliver ritual utensils to the hosts and only then bring in the body of the deceased.”;
- saman* (саман): “a shaman”. The word is well known. Not many rites of the Nanai as well as other peoples of the Manchu-Tungus branch of the Altaic family of languages were performed without a shaman being involved. There were well-known shamans *sāori samansal* (сāори самансал); fledgling shamans *tepchiuri samansal* (тэпчиүри самансал); experienced shamans who gained recognition *dai samansal* (дāи самансал); the so-called *kasaty* (касаты) shamans who were entrusted to perform the *kasa* (каса) ritual to see off souls of the deceased to the other world (grammatically correct: *kasava tai samansal* (касава тай самансал), etc.;
- sorombori* (сoромбори): “1) to observe taboo; 2) sin, ill-luck; sinful”. This

word was remembered from childhood as the entire style of people's life was based on century-old customs and concepts, which clearly defined what could and had to be done and what could not or did not. If a young man, falling in love with a young girl knowing that she would never be allowed to marry him, secretly took her away, he would be severely punished including capital punishment. He was believed to commit a deadly sin by breaking the custom: a decision whom to give daughter in marriage is to be taken by her parents.

The Nanai baby delivery rites have many taboos, which are detailed in Ye. A. Gayer's monograph. Here is one of them: A woman expecting a baby never made baby's clothing in advance as it was strictly prohibited *sorombori* (соромбори). It involved severe ramifications: miscarriage, death of the pregnant woman or complicated childbirth (Gayer 1991: 47). A woman was prohibited from throwing out the water in which clothing of the child under 1 was washed. The water should be carefully poured out tilting the bowl outward. It was believed that one could throw out the baby's soul with the water. Hence, it was sinful to violate the prohibition *sorombori* (соромбори) as parents could be deprived of their baby.

The most conservative are the Nanai funeral rites. These rites are still observed in Nanai communities though some changes have occurred under the influence of the Russians. These rites are also performed according to the established canons. Thus, the number of clothing items put on the deceased and that of coverings must be odd. Everything put into the coffin to be used by the deceased in the other world is to be somewhat damaged as it is believed that in the other world everything is the other way round: all the things and belongings will regain the original appearance. Accordingly, their violation is classified as *sorombori* (соромбори);

sugdiuri (сугдиури): according to Onenko (1980: 212) "to entertain spirits; to bring food to spirits; we can add to this interpretation the word "ritual";

sugdin (сугдин): "entertaining spirits (to)" (Onenko 1980: 337). In our

opinion, this term has two meanings: entertaining (to) as a process, an action, and refreshments, such as food and drinks. Powerful spirits were entertained during hunting and fishing, wedding, baby delivery, and funeral rites. If it was a minor ritual, spirits were entertained to alcoholic drinks and food *sugdin* (сугдин), which were also consumed by people. *Sugdimbe bargiosu* (Сугдимбэ баргиосу) “Prepare refreshments”.

In certain cases, the entertaining of spirits was an integral part of the ceremony, for example, feeding of the Host of water – Temu. Shamans performed rites of entertaining spirits according to their strict canons. *Sevensel īgukhel, ulendi sugdiusu* (Сэвэнсэл йгухэл, улэнди сугдиусу) “Sevens came in, entertain them well”. In such cases special food was cooked, special kitchen utensils were used, and even certain time of the day was set.

Endur, Enduri (Эндур, Эндური): “God, the Almighty”. He was addressed in difficult times with prayers and requests of help and favor. Each rite was associated with his name. He was given different names: *Endur-Ama* (Эндур-Ама), *Endur-Enie* (Эндур-Эниэ), *Boa* (Боа), *Boa-NāEdeni* (Боа-НāЭдени) “God-the Father, Goddess-the Mother, the Heaven, the Host of the Heaven, of the Earth”.

4. Conclusions

Nanai rites, customs, rituals, and cults are determined to a great extent by their view of the world. Household rites permeate the entire lifestyle of the ethnos, of a single clan, family, and even person. They reflect historically developed standards of maintaining social relations among people, their relationships with the environment (Bereznitsky, S. V. et al. 2003: 194), which they always considered themselves an integral part of. Therefore, all could not but be reflected in the language of the people. It is not coincidental that many scholars-ethnographers make good use of the ritual terminology while Shternberg (1933), Smolyak (1991: 268-277), Sem (1973: 257-294), Gontmakher (1988: 118-124), and

Samar (Kile 1995: 128-141) accompanied their publications by ethnographic and subject-matter dictionaries.

The importance of the special vocabulary is difficult to overestimate while studying spiritual culture of any people. Each rite or ritual is not just actions but definitely speech in its different forms: request, prayer, lamentation, incantation, well-wishing, and shaman psalms. It is all made up of words and phrases combined into sentences expressing exactly the heart and meaning of certain actions or rites. That is why it is so important to analyze ritual vocabulary. Following is an excerpt from Smolyak (1991), wherein is given the translation of a small part of the ritual performed by the sick shaman D. Oninka from the village of Dipa on February 18, 1972:

Specific terminology was used to communicate with powerful spirits. As of now, only some of the elderly have a command of it. One can hardly find it in currently available dictionaries. The spirit *seven dyugbenggui* (сэвэн дюгбэнггуй), i.e. the one who enters somebody's body. In the Nanai village of Khuhmmi situated downstream, *dyulbuchi* (дюлбучи) (a shaman) asks a spirit to enter a hand-made doll representing a human being, *dyukinguini* (дюкигуйни) (a spirit) has entered her. *кya, кya* (Кя, кя) "an invitation to a spirit accompanied by burning down of ledum leaves as spirits like the smell of it". *punggichi* (Пунггичи) "to make smoke for *seven* (сэвэн) to take a sniff of it; to fumigate (to entertain spirits to smoke smell as the Nanai would say)"; *sugdi, sugdichi* (сугди, сугдичи) "to feed cooked grain or groats to a spirit"; it also means "to feed the deceased" (Smolyak 1991: 187). We shall venture here a minor refinement of the translation: a literal meaning of the verb *punggichiuri* (пунггичиури) (correct spelling is *pu-gichiuri* (пу-гичиури) "to take a sniff, to smell"; and *sa-nyambori* (са-нямбори) "to make smoke (derived from the noun *sa-nyan* (са-нян) "smoke")".

In the above excerpt, ritual terms are: *seven* (сэвэн), *dyugbenggui* (дюгбэнггуй), *dyulbuchi* (дюлбучи), *dyukinguini* (дюкигуйни), *кya, кya* (кя, кя), and *sugdichi* (сугдичи). Only one common word *punggichi* (пунггичи) in combination with the ritual word *seven* (сэвэн) is used in the rite.

All of the preceding makes it possible to recognize four groups of terms which have either gone out of use or are still in use in the Nanai ritual terminology:

- 1) ritual terms proper which are used while performing a certain rite;
- 2) ritual terms proper which are used while performing several rites with their lexical meaning unchanged;
- 3) ritual terms freely used in spoken speech with no reference to a specific rite;
- 4) words and word combinations in general use which have acquired a figurative and symbolic meaning and used as ritual terms.

With regard to changes that occurred in the people's life, the Nanai ritual terminology is an invaluable source for study of spiritual and material culture of the ethnos, its origin, and historical development. Ethnographically, we have a fundamental understanding of the subject, however in terms of linguistics, it is still to become the subject matter of in-depth study.

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