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A note on *r* and *l* in Dolgan and Yakut

(ドルガン語とヤクート語の *r* と *l* に関する覚え書き)

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A note on *r* and *l* in Dolgan and Yakut

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This note is dedicated to the late Prof. Dr Shōgaito Masahiro, who always encouraged us to keep on studying Eurasian languages. Professor Shōgaito was a man of kindness and gentleness, full of wit and humour, as well as a great scholar. He often made fun of me, saying “All the teachers of Russian class are thinking your pronunciation of Russian is strange; why do you pronounce *dva* два ‘two’ as *dova*, or *drevne-russkij* древне-русский ‘old-Russian’ as *dorevne-russkij*?!” “Oh, Professor, it is from a natural tendency to insert an epenthetic vowel as often seen in Japanese!” I myself then asked Professor Shōgaito, “I am not sure, but I heard that a long time ago, there was a scholar who wrote *river* as *liver*—maybe you know very well who he was?!”

Four years have passed since Professor Shōgaito-sensei left us. My gratitude to Professor never decreases as does my deep sorrow.

1. Dolgan

The Dolgan language is a small Turkic language spoken in Taymyr, in the far northern part of the Krasnoyarsk region, and in Anabar area, in Sakha-Yakutia, the Russian Federation. The number of speakers was about 5,000 in the 2002 census, but in the 2010 census it was much lower, at about 1,000. This language formed in recent centuries—the 18th or 19th in Taymyr, where people of Evenki, Yakut, Nganasan and Russian extraction formed a community and selected the Yakut language as their common language. The form of Yakut spoken in this emergent ‘Dolgan’ community or ethnic group¹ developed into the today’s Dolgan language.

¹ According to the data from Dolgikh (1963: 128), the estimated proportion of the Dolgan community

Linguistically, Dolgan is a dialect of Yakut; thus, it might also be called the Taymyr dialect of the Yakut language. It differs not so radically from standard Yakut, in fact, mainly in lexicon with some minor differences in grammar and phonetics.

In this paper, I will discuss the occurrence of *r* and *l* in words recorded in the *Yakut Dictionary*, edited by E.K. Pekarskij (1858-1934) and published in 1907-1930, and in the *Dolgan–Russian Card Dictionary*, compiled by K.M. Rychkov (1882-1923) in the first decade in the 20th century (unpublished, see below). These two dictionaries contain words mostly collected in the latter half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. In my opinion, these materials were recorded as the recorders heard them, thus, in phonetic transcription.

2. *r* and *l* in Yakut words in Pekarskij’s Dictionary

Pekarskij’s Dictionary contains about 25,000 entries, including about 6,520 variations of words according to Okoneshnikov (1982: 54). Among these variations, we often see words that include variants of *r* and/or *l*, for example, *дураал* (*duraal*), *дураан* (*duraan*) = *дураар* (*duraar*) «спокойный, нетропливый, равнодушный» ‘calm, quiet, slow, indifferent’; *дураар* (*duraar*) = *дураал* (*duraal*), *дураан* (*duraan*) «медлительный, косный» ‘slow, inert’, *мычалыи* (v.) (*mychalyi*) = *мычарыи* (v.) (*mycharyi*) «улыбаться» ‘smile’, *сандалы* (*sandaly*) = *сандары* (*sandary*) «светлый, сияющий» ‘bright, shining’. There are about 150–200 entries² with variants.

Pekarskij’s Dictionary in 13 volumes was under publication for a long period, from 1907–1930. In the first volume there is a list of the resources from which materials for Dictionary entries was drawn, and not a few entries have indications of their materials as well. At the end of the last volume of the Dictionary, published in 1930 after the October Revolution, Pekarskij again presented this list of materials along with additional ones, most of which had been gained after the October Revolution. A Yakut alphabet based on the Latin alphabet had been developed in the mid-1920s, based on trials by Yakut linguist S. N. Novgorodov and others. Until that time, most written materials in Yakut had been produced by non-specialists, people from European Russia — merchants, officers, officials, political exiles, priests and so on. They recorded the words they heard the “natives” use in their own idiosyncratic ways of phonetic transcription; E. K. Pekarskij, as a specialist, used the so-called Kazan Alphabet, based

was as follows, though Dolgikh submitted tentatively: Tungusic (Evenki) people 50-52%, Yakut 30-33%, Russian 15% and Samoyed (Ngasan) 3-4%.

² In Pekarskij’s Dictionary, variants with *r* or *l* are sometimes independent entries referring to other *r* or *l* variants, and sometimes under one headword with one of the variants as their representative.

on Russian, an adaptation of one devised by O. Bötling (See Barashkov (1953, Chap.III)).

In the studies on Yakut phonetics, $r \sim l$ variation has attracted much interest, but what motivated this variation to occur remains under question (See D’jachkovskij (1977: 167)). We cannot attribute it to a single cause, nor to any definite phonetic conditions, except for some apparent cases of dissimilation or metathesis, for example, *сырым-* (*сырыт-*) ‘go, do’ has a finite form *сылдьар* (*syld’ar*) ‘he/she/it goes, does’, *ыарыы-* (*ыаруу-*) ‘feel sick’ has a finite form *ыалыдьар* (*yalyd’ar*), and *буруор* (*buruor*) has a l -variant *булуор* (*buluor*) «сумерки, полувет» ‘twilight, dusk’. Pekarskij had special support compiling and editing the Dictionary from scholars of the Russian Academy, especially experts in Altaic languages, as well as scholars in oriental studies: V. V. Radlov, B. Ja. Vladimirtsov, K.G. Zaleman, V. V. Bartol’d, A. N. Samojlovich, N. F. Katanov and others. They helped Pekarskij in his edition of the Dictionary generally and also from an etymological point of view, providing etymons, which fact suggests that the etymological sources do not give any clear insight into the reason for $r \sim l$ variation either. As for the alternation $r \sim l$ in Yakut stems, D’jachkovskij (1977: 89) tentatively proposed influence from one of the Tungusic languages in close contact with Yakut, namely the Evenki language, which often mixes r and l , and provided examples such as *уру:р-* (*iri:r-*) \sim *уру:л-* (*iri:l-*) «сойти с ума» ‘go mad’, *иргэ* (*irge*) \sim *илгэ* (*ilge*) «мозг, ум» ‘brain, mind’, *арча-* (*archa-*) \sim *алча-* (*alcha-*) «встретить» ‘meet’, *чургу* (*churgi*) \sim *чулгу* (*chulgi*) «капля» ‘drops’. As D’jachkovskij (1977) mentions, according to Vasilevich (1948: 164, 232, 332), such $r \sim l$ variants are found in many dialects of Evenki. D’jachkovskij (1977: 154-156) also refers to the metathesis of r and l in words originating from the Mongolian language, with examples such as *арал* (*aral*) \sim *алар* (*alar*) «бычий хомугъ» ‘cow’s collar’, *чилгэр* (*chilger*) \sim *чиргэл* (*chirgel*) «здоровый, твердый, свежий, ...» ‘healthy, firm, fresh’.

In the Turkic language group, however, consonants r and l are in principle clearly distinguished. Also, most of the recorders of Yakut, whether trained or untrained, were Russian speakers, who could also distinguish r and l precisely. So, we see here that there is a possibility that at least at the time when these materials were collected, r and l were in fact in free variation in at least some areas among Yakut-speaking people.

The norm of use of the Yakut alphabet based on the Russian alphabet was established by 1939, but after Pekarskij’s Dictionary it took many years for a solid new dictionary of Yakut to appear in 1972 by Sleptsov et al. In it, though there remain exceptionally traces of $r \sim l$ free variants such as *чилгэр* (*chilger*) \sim *чиргэл* (*chirgel*), as for most of $r \sim l$ variants, both forms are not adopted, namely only one form, r -variant

or *l*-variant remains in modern Yakut. We can infer that the entries in Pekarskij's Dictionary with phonetic variants are out of use, at least in the standard or literary language after its establishment. For example, a pair of *r* ~ *l* variants *илгэх* (*ilgekħ*) ~ *иргэх* (*irgekħ*) «самец» 'male animal' has only the latter form in the dictionary in 1972. Similarly, in Pekarskij's Dictionary, we find some entries for borrowings from Russian with distorted *l*-variants, for example, from *күлүк* (*külüük*) ~ *күрүк* (*kürük*) «крюкъ» 'hook' < Rus. *крюк* (*krjuk*); however, only the latter was selected for the entry *күрүүк* (*kürüük*) in the 1972 dictionary. The same was the case for *артыал* (*artyal*) ~ *алтыал* (*altyal*) 'member of an *artel*' > Rus. *artel*' 'artel (worker's or peasant's cooperative)'. Such borrowings were thus "corrected" in use of Yakut on the basis of the Russian.

The standard Yakut language is based on the dialect in the central part of the Yakut-speaking area (Korkina et al. (1982: 22), Sleptsov (1995: 297)); its usages may therefore have influenced the matter. However, in this paper we would like to leave the occurrence of *r* ~ *l* variants at the time of Pekarskij's understood as a case of free variants.

3. *r* and *l* in Dolgan words in Rychkov's Card Dictionary

As explained above, Dolgan was formed based on the Yakut language in the 18th and 19th centuries. Dolgan had no writing system for a rather long time, probably partly because when the Soviet government began to work on an education system for Dolgan people, the government regarded Yakut, with which Dolgan was in close contact and to which it is similar enough, to be sufficient to serve Dolgan speakers as a literary or standard language. In the 1970s, Ogdo Aksjonova, a Dolgan poet, and her colleagues began to create an indigenous Dolgan alphabet and in 1981, the first Dolgan reader for primary school was officially published. During about half a century after the October Revolution, namely under the Soviet structure of educational system, without its literary language but with Yakut standard as its substitute, Dolgan had "developed" and changed its "appearance", modelling itself after the Yakut norm. Nowadays, we may say that Dolgan has nothing radical to differentiate itself from Yakut. This is also the case with *r* ~ *l* variants: in modern Dolgan, there is no *r* ~ *l* variation; every word with *r* or *l* has its constituents fixed as in modern Yakut.

The linguistic data on Dolgan before speakers of the language experienced learning of literary Yakut can be perceived in Pekarskij's entries which reflect V. N. Vasil'ev's field reports and those of other researchers at the time of, or before Pekarskij. In Pekarskij's Dictionary, we find more than 300 entries drawn from studies by V. N. Vasil'ev, N. Pr. Kostrov, P. E. Ostrovskij, and P. I. Tret'jakov, who left the reports on

their expeditions to Dolgans in Taymyr. Besides these researchers, we should note K.M. Rychkov, an ethnologist and a contractor-researcher who collected linguistic materials mainly on Tungus (Evenki) in the first decade of the 20th century in Taymyr. For us it is interesting to see that Vasilevich (1948: 158-159), as well as her own fieldwork materials on the Ilimpiiskij dialect of Evenki in 1930s, referred to the materials of Rychkov and Vasil'ev on the dialect of the Evenki language. Taking into account that in the process of the formation of the Dolgan language many Evenki people changed their language to Yakut, the occurrence of $r \sim l$ variants in Ilimpiiskij dialect may reflect their occurrence in Turkic.

Let us consider some Dolgan words cited in Pekarskij's Dictionary. Among about 300 words which we regard as Dolgan materials, we have one from Vasil'ev's marked as (Вас.)³, indicating the source in Pekarskij's; *харгыи* (*xargyi*), *халгыи* (*xalgyi*) = *хоргуи* (*xorgui*) (clm. 3354) «голодать, отоцать» 'starve, become thin'; *харгыиан ёл* (*xargyjan jol*) «умирать отъ голода» 'die of starvation'; *халгыиан сиэ* (*xalgyjan sie*) «естъ отъ голода» 'eat greedily'. Among the Dolgan words in Pekarskij's, we found few with $r \sim l$ variants, as if Dolgan had only exceptional $r \sim l$ variants or they were found only sporadically. .

However, we have another important source of Dolgan material at the beginning of the 20th century: Rychkov's Dolgan–Russian Card Dictionary, with 1534 words (cards)⁴. Among these, we cite here a few examples of $r \sim l$ variation:

(a) *илибэр* (*iliber*) «въ руке» 'in (my) hand'

ирита хок (*irita hok*) «рук нет, безрукий» 'he/she/it does not have a hand; armless'

(b) *талариныр* (*talarinyr*) «валяться» 'lie about, roll'

таралыната (*taralynata*) «валялся» 'he lay about, he rolled'

(c) *тили* (*tili*) «шкура» 'skin, hide'

тыри (*tyri*) «пашина, пьжь, кожа, кора» 'fur of young deer, skin, leather'

(d) *тэхэл* (*tegel*)⁵ «долганъ» 'Dolgan'

Regarding (a), the modern standard form in Dolgan is *iliber*, or *ilii* 'hand', *-ber*

³ (Вас.) is a mark in Pekarskij's Dictionary to present the entry word or example or phrase to give an illustration of usage is found in the material by V. N. Vasil'ev (Васильев), so as other sources are also marked as Kostr., Ostr. and so on..

⁴ The *Card Dictionary* by Rychkov is not published but is preserved at the Archive of Orientalists in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, under number 49-6. According to the letters from K.M. Rychkov to his instructor, professor V. L. Kotvich in St. Petersburg University dated on the 5th and the 9th December in 1911 (the numbers of the documents in IOM RAN – 49-12-28 and 30 respectively), the Dictionary was compiled in the period from 1908-1911. (See Fujishiro (2011: 195-196).)

⁵ Rychkov used the letter h for voiced velar and uvular fricatives or stops, [g], [ɣ], [ŋ], [ŋ], [h]. In most cases, the letter corresponds to r in Modern Dolgan.

‘(affix of dative case, 1sg.) in my ...’ and *iliite huok*, or *ilii*, *-te* ‘(possessive, 3sg.) his/her/its’, *huok* ‘no, not’. *ilii* ‘hand’ is of course an item of essential body lexicon and almost certainly very frequently used. What then motivated the occurrence an *r*-variant of *ilii*, that is, *iri(i)*? We can infer that before the entry of Yakut and Russian languages into Taymyr, Evenki or partly Nganasan was used, and provided a linguistic substrate; however, it also distinguishes *r* and *l* clearly, though according to Vasilevich (1948), not always. In any case, judging from the modern Evenki language, it does not vary *r* ~ *l* freely as seen in Dolgan and Yakut did, and in addition we should note that Rychkov, though an eminent researcher in the region, was not a linguist or a Yakut speaker, so it is reasonable to regard his Dolgan transcriptions with caution. As for (b), we can regard the forms as a case of metathesis. A more striking situation is seen in (c), since the *l* ~ *r* variants here seems to be reinterpreted by the Dolgans at that time, as if a minimal pair, though the meanings are close. In modern Dolgan, the word corresponding to *tili* is a very common word, *mupuu* (*tirii*) «шкура» ‘skin, hide’, while the *l*-variant is out of use.

In (d) *tegel*, we see the proper noun of ethnic community, Dolgan. Ubrjatova (1985: 10–11) referring to Dolgikh (1963), A. A. Popov⁶ and Ogdo Aksjonova⁷, mentions that the Dolgan people called themselves *тыя куһумэ* (*tya kihite*), *дүлҕаан* (*dulgaan*), *haxa* (*hakha*), and other names. The form *tya kihite* consists of *tya* ‘forest’⁸, *kihi* ‘man’, *-te* “(possessive, 3sg.)” and conveys “people of forest”. The form reminds us of the Evenki affix *-gir*, which follows proper name of ethnic group and forms the proper noun for the ethnicity ‘people of ...’ as in *Chapo-gir* ‘the Chapo clan’, *Panka-gir* ‘the Panka clan’, *Baja-gir* ‘the Baja clan’ (See Vasilevich (1958: 751)). Rychkov’s *te* also corresponds to *tya*, since the diphthong [ya] in modern Dolgan often corresponds to [e] in Rychkov as also in modern pronunciation, which assures the possibility of analysing the word something like *tyager* as *te* “forest” along with the subsequent affix originating from Evenki *-gir*, with *-gir* pronounced as *-gil* for some reason. In Evenki, affix *-gir* is very productive, so it is very likely that the Dolgan people as well as people around Dolgan at that time used *tegir* or something like it as their ethnic name, though the difference in vowels *e* and *i* is not solved. Furthermore it is also strange that Rychkov, who was very familiar with Evenki and much interested in the dialects of Tungusic people, such as *Chapogir* and *Pankagir*, recorded the name with *-gil*. If we suppose his recorded data reflect a phonetic transcription, then it may be that *tegir* could be substituted by *tegil* among Dolgan speakers at that time.

⁶ Андрей Александрович Попов (Andrej Aleksandrovich Popov) (1902–1960), ethnographer.

⁷ Огдо Аксёнова, Евдокия Егоровна Аксёнова (Ogdo Aksjonova, Evdokija Egorovna Aksjonova) (1936–1995), Dolgan poet, one of the authors of the first Dolgan *Elementary Book*.

⁸ The meaning might be not just “forest” but rather “not-tundra, southern-to-tundra area”.

4. Unsolved motivation behind the occurrence of the *r ~ l* words

Nor do we have any solution for the motive of occurrence of *r ~ l* variation; then, let us look at other languages surrounding the Dolgan community which might have participated in the formation of Dolgan. In the Samoyedic group, Nenets and Nganasan have both *r* and *l*, which their speakers distinguish as phonemes. One more language we find around Dolgan is the language of Ket, formerly called Yenisei Ostyak once regarded as an isolated language but now as the sole remaining representative of the Yeniseian languages along with the extinct language Yug. The Ket language is almost dead now and has been little studied compared to Yakut. Verner (2001) gives examples of Russian borrowings in Ket: *hal'es* < Rus. *напыс* (*parus*) 'sail', *sambal'* < Rus. *самовар* (*samovar*) 'samovar', where it is natural that Russian *r* is borrowed as *l*, since Ket does not have *r* sound. There is no record of Ket-speakers participating in Dolgan formation; Rychkov left nothing recorded about languages other than Evenki, Russian, and Yakut in the territory of the right bank of Yenisei River. If we analyse *r ~ l* variants not only in Yakutia but also in other northern parts of Eurasia, it might help provide us with a picture of the linguistic situation before written records are available.

Abbreviations

Pekarskij's Dictionary = Пекарский (1907–1930)

clm. = column

Transliterations

Rychkov & Pekarskij=Russian or Dolgan= Latin alphabet, - indicates "not used".

a=a=a	б=б=b	w=v=v	г (h)=г~г =g~г	д=д=d
ц=д'ь, ж=d'	и=и=i	ј=й=j	к=к=k	л, л=л=l
м=м=m	н=н=n	џ=џ=џ	о=о=o	ö=ö=ö п=п=p
р=р=r	с=с=s	х, h=h~г=h	т=т=t	у=у=u ѱ=ѱ=ѱ
ф=ф=f	ч=ч=ch	ш=ш=sh	ы=ы=y	е=э=e -=ë=jо
-=е=je	з=з=z	х=х=x~kh	-=щ=shch	-=ь=' ъ=ъ=-
е=э=e	-=ю=jy	-=я=ja		

Conventional spelling in English for the place names are used, regardless of the transliteration above. For example, Таймыр, Yakutia.

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ドルガン語とヤクート語の r と l に関する覚え書き

藤代 節

ペカルスキーのヤクート語辞書 (1907-1930) には、現在のヤクート標準語と見なされる語彙の他に多くの方言語彙や音のバリエーションをもつ語彙が見出し語としてあるいは参考語彙として記されている。これらのバリエーションの中に r と l をあたかも自由交替形式のように持つ語彙がある。この r と l の生起については、かつて説明が試みられたが十分に説明されていない。一方、ペカルスキーの辞書編纂時期とほぼ同時代 (20 世紀初頭) のドルガン語を記録したリュチコフ辞書にも現代ドルガン語彙とは r と l の生起を異にする語彙がみられる。本稿は、これらについて紹介し、ペカルスキーやリュチコフの辞書編纂の時代即ちヤクート語やドルガン語の規範となる標準語が成立していなかった時期の言語記録から、周囲の異系統言語との接触の痕跡を探る試みを書きとどめたものである。