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**ON THE ISSUE OF THE NAME AND RENAMING OF THE FAR  
EAST**



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**Abstract**

The Russian Far East is located in the easternmost and northeastern parts of our country. This vast territory stretches from north to south for 4.5 thousand km from the Bering Strait to the Russian-Korean border. The Far Eastern territory is washed by the Chukchi, Okhotsk and Japanese Seas, the Arctic and Pacific Oceans, and is covered by mountain ranges that run parallel to the sea coast. The region is characterized by an extraordinary variety of natural zones where the Earth rarest animals live (Amur tiger, Ussuri leopard), unique plants grow (lemongrass, wild grapes, medicinal ginseng). The region currently includes such components as the Khabarovsk Region and the Magadan Region, Primorye, Amur Region, Kamchatka, Sakhalin with the Kuril Islands, Chukotka. The indigenous peoples (the Tungus-Manchu and the Paleo-Asians) that have long been inhabiting the territory of the Far East do not have a common name for their country in their history and culture. In general, the ethnonym “people using dogs” distinguishes the peoples of the Amur River in a special cultural niche in the region. The question of why the aborigines do not have their own name for their territory has no answer yet.

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*Keywords:* Russian Far East, Pacific Ocean Russia, problems of naming the region



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## **1. Introduction**

The various problems of the Russian Far East in recent decades have attracted an increasing number of domestic and foreign researchers in various fields of scientific, educational and political activity. The emphasis put by the Russian authorities on the process of enhancing Russia's presence in the Asia-Pacific region is of interest to transnational corporations. Unreasonable territorial issues constantly arise. Thus, the fate of our Far Eastern territories is associated not only with the Far East inhabitants, but also with all Russians, as a strategic national interest. Therefore, it is important to identify all the controversial issues of the historical past of the region, including possible variants of its name by former and modern ethnic societies.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The research problem, first of all, consists in solving the difficult question of the absence of the name of this territory in the culture of indigenous peoples. As an important difficulty stands the comparison of archaeological cultures with medieval state formations in the region, which had their historical names: Bohai (698-926), Tzin or the Golden Empire (1115-1234), East Xia (1215-1234) (Cities of Medieval Empires..., 2018; Gelman, 2006; Kradin, 2015; Nomadic Empires of Eurasia, 2019; Shavkunov, 2015). The existing identifications of archaeological and ethnic cultures on Far Eastern materials are made without sufficient scientific justification, and in the chronicles of medieval sources of the Amur region there are no clear, unambiguous ethno-defining signs (Dyakova, 1993; Vasiliev & Dyakova, 1987). However, in the works of archaeologists, historians, ethnographers, local historians, linguists and specialists of other disciplines, there is no mention of a single name for the whole country.

## **3. Research Questions**

Research questions that lie in the mainstream of this problem are connected, as before, with further studies of the ancient and medieval history of modern Primorsky and Khabarovsk territories, the Amur Region, the Jewish Autonomous Region; Ethnographic studies of mentality, mythology, folklore, a complex of beliefs and rituals of indigenous peoples of these subjects of the Russian Federation remain important.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to study the issue of ethnic names of certain territories of the Russian Far East, new paradigms on renaming this part of North Asia.

## **5. Research Methods**

To solve this problem, methods of a systematic approach were used, which allowed not only to analyze the components of the selected problem, but also to synthesize archaeological excavations, field

work materials of ethnographers and folklorists, hermeneutics methods for analyzing indigenous folk texts (Tungus-Manchu and Paleo-Asians).

## 6. Findings

In the archival sources of the XVIII century, the indigenous peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin region in the XIX-XXI centuries, have collected a large amount of folklore, ethnographic, historical and cultural material, in which there is a sufficient number of historical stories about the past of this territory, about contacts of aboriginal people with Eastern civilizations, with the Mongols, Chinese, Manchu, and Koreans: “The Legend of the Udehe struggle with the Manchus on the Kem River”, “Where did the Udehe come from”, “The Legend of Kuan Yun” and other texts (Arseniev, 1906, 1907, 1908-1909, 1914 -1925; Okladnikov, 1959; Startsev, 2007; Ivliev, 2020; Bereznitsky, 2020; Bereznitsky et al., 2018, 2019, 2020; Bereznitsky & Kulikov, 2019). Despite some successes in reconstructing the gaps of the medieval period and the history of the natives of the region, there are still no signs of a common name for the entire territory of the Far East. Until now, the hypothesis that as a result of the Mongol invasion of the coastal cities of the XIIIth century has not been conclusively proved, they ceased to exist, and the inhabitants, having abruptly changed the economic and cultural type from agricultural to hunting and fishing, dispersed in the taiga and reduced their level of social development. The discussion has been going on for several decades. In spiritual culture, in the folklore of the modern indigenous peoples of the Amur, certain aspects based on the memories of the Mongol invasion are preserved. For example, the GorinskyNanai people associate with this event certain places of the area, for example, the “throne of Genghis Khan”: a rocky elevation on the Huin River. According to the existing legend, it was to this place that Genghis Khan reached and "... after having sited on this throne ...", he gave the order to turn his cavalry back. Therefore, the first accurate information about the indigenous peoples of the Far Eastern region, when it began to appear no earlier than the XVIIth century, when the first detachments of Cossacks penetrated the Amur basin, reporting important information in their unsubscribes and tales: The fate of the Tungus-Manchu peoples, currently settled from Amur to Sakhalin and Kamchatka, from Chukotka to southern Primorye, is inextricably linked with the political and ethnic history of all of North and East Asia. According to the hypotheses of scientists, the homeland of the Tungus-Manchu peoples could be in the Baikal basin or in Manchuria, in the upper and middle reaches of the Amur. The second large ethnic group of the indigenous peoples of North Asia, the Paleo-Asians, also presents a great mystery in the field of ethnogenesis. But even they do not have a common name for the country.

It is known that the official name “Far East” was introduced into scientific circulation at the beginning of the 20th century. Since the beginning of the XXI century scientists have repeatedly proposed renaming this region into “Pacific Russia” (Larin, 2011; Shvedov et al., 2015). Employees of the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Far East Peoples of the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, especially those who support the initiative of V.L. Larin, have long ago changed the name “Far East” to “Pacific Russia” in their numerous publications.

But back to our problem. There are quite a few geographical and linguistic studies of toponyms, but one of the insufficiently studied issues, as before, is the question of the common name of the entire Far Eastern region. It is known that toponyms help to restore the distinctive ethnocultural features and features

of the historical past of people, to determine the boundaries of their settlement, to help present the previous distribution of languages, geographical, cultural and economic centers, trade routes, and seaports. It is indisputable that a study of the origin of the names of the inhabited places allows us to reconstruct the previous ethno-sociocultural image of the territory of the Far East, which is associated with the complex processes of formation of the population, economy and the whole territory, as well as reflecting the peculiarities of their culture. Geographical terminology, paradigms of ethno-regional studies, ethno-regional studies, ethnic geography in many ways allow reconstructing cultural layers. But such work is possible only if various methods of conducting historico-geographical analysis, etymological analysis, as well as sociolinguistic aspects of the study of toponyms are applied. Many toponyms of Primorye, Amur, Okhotsk, Chukotka, Kamchatka reflect the natural and geographical features of these territories, landscape, relief, water resources, historical and economic processes, as well as ethnolinguistic and cultural features of the indigenous peoples of these territories. The geographical names of the most significant toponyms of the Far East are the Tungus-Manchu and "Paleo-Asian". For example, the Sikhote-Alin, Amur, Kamchatka, Chukotka, Sakhalin, Kolyma, Dzhugdzhur, Kuril Islands, Ussuri Territory (Manchzh. "Usuri-Ula"), and so on, Sikhote-Alin - mountain range, which serves as a watershed for the rivers of the Amur basin, Sea of Japan and the Tatar Strait. Sea of Japan and the Tatar Strait. These places are the territory of traditional nature management of the indigenous peoples of the Far East. Here, the taiga north of Asia directly collided with its tropical south, forming a unique Ussuri taiga, which for thousands of years has been a home for Aboriginal people. The etymology of the name "Sikhote-Alin" is associated with the Tungus-Manchu languages: "sihte, sikte" - "needles, spruce" and "Alin" - "mountain range", that is, "a mountain range covered with coniferous forest."

A cautious assumption can be made about the strict relationship between the appearance of the name of a particular areas and civilizational components. Civilization in the European, Western sense implies the presence of several attributes: statehood, state, civil authorities, distribution, control, public protection and order, urban infrastructure and architecture, writing, written sources. The absence of these categories leads to the absence of a generalized name for the ethno-political structure. Therefore, when statehood was destroyed after the armed invasions of the Mongols, the name of the country disappeared. We can cite historical examples that refute this thesis. For example, the destroyed Trojan kingdom was preserved in the memory of people by the works of Homer. But close to the medieval ancestors of modern Nanai, Ulchi, Orochi, Udege, there were educated Chinese, Manchus, and Koreans who could record these events in the chronicles.

The famous Far Eastern ethnographer P.Ya. Gontmakher, in one of his many works, proposed his own version of the name of the Ulchi residence area: "Ulchiya" (Gontmakher, 2003). In it, P. Ya. Gontmakher showed the culture of an ethnos from the inside, with the eyes and language of its carriers, with particularities of mentality.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, the medieval empires, the states of the Bokhais and the Jurchen, actively contacted the eastern civilizations (China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan), as is evidenced by the trade routes that were preserved and explored by archaeologists, historians and ethnographers, import items, seaports, etc. Slavic immigrants

went to Siberia, knowing the name of this territory, a distant and mysterious country, it is reflected in the sources of that time. There is another version of the name of this region by the term “Tartaria”, which, however, requires a separate in-depth study. However, having entered the territory of the modern Far East, they could not collect such information. The pioneers consolidated the historical memory of their former homeland in thousands of names of geographical objects (Malinovka, Chernigovka, Kievka, etc.), by this partially destroying local toponymy, aboriginal names, and the indigenous face of the Far East. Nevertheless, the indigenous peoples gave most of the geographical names, which then went on to the geographical maps, entered the official names of cities, towns, rivers and so on. Gradually, these names entered the mentality of immigrants. A stumbling block is the lack of a common name for the territory of the Far East, which suggests further interdisciplinary research.

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