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Nivkh toponyms in the Amur-Sakhalin region of the Russian Far East*

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This paper offers a survey of the indigenous toponymy of a limited geographical region covering the lower course of the river Amur and the island of Sakhalin in the Russian Far East. Place names of this region come from both indigenous and colonial languages and reveal several historical layers. The paper focuses on the toponyms which originate from the genetically isolated Nivkh (Ghilyak) language and examines the structural and semantic patterns of their derivation. The analysis of the material confirms that toponymy encodes important information about the ways in which indigenous peoples conceptualize the world and perceive their immediate ecological environment.

Keywords: Amur, Sakhalin, Nivkh, toponym

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0. Introduction

Nivkh (also Gilyak, Ghilyak) is a moribund language spoken on Sakhalin Island and in the Amur region of Russia. It is considered to be a language isolate, genetically not connected with any other language spoken in the area or elsewhere, and following (Schrenck 1883), is classified as "Paleo-Siberian" or "Paleo-Asiatic." As a result of expansion from its assumed homeland in central Manchuria, and accompanied by contacts with substrate and superstrate languages, Nivkh has been formed as a continuum of several distinct varieties with a major split between Amur Nivkh (Nivkh proper) and Sakhalin Nivkh (Nighvng). Amur Nivkh comprises the Lower Amur, Amur Liman, West Sakhalin and North Sakhalin varieties, while the Sakhalin Nivkh (Nighvng) consists of East Sakhalin and South Sakhalin varieties. The Lower Amur and Amur Liman varieties are spoken along the Lower Amur on the continent and will in this paper be referred to as the Amur variety without further differentiation. Among other varieties, all of which are used on Sakhalin Island, the paper focuses on the West Sakhalin (Nivkh) and East Sakhalin (Nighvng) varieties.

The current number of fluent Nivkh speakers is hardly more than 30, with less than 10 for the Amur and Liman varieties, only 2 for the North Sakhalin variety, and less than 20 for the East Sakhalin variety. The South Sakhalin variety is already extinct.

Historically, the Nivkh were in contact with Tungusic-speaking indigenous groups both in the Amur area and on Sakhalin. These groups include the Neghidal, Ulcha, Nanai (Gold), Oroch, Udeghe, Ewenki (Tungus proper) and Uilta (Orok) peoples. On Sakhalin, the Nivkh contacted also with the Ainu, who speak another isolate "Paleo-Asiatic" language. Nearly all of these groups — except for the nomadic Ewenki and Uilta — were sedentary fishermen and hunters. They shared with each other similar social and cultural structures and had mutual family and clan ties. During various historical periods the Amur-Sakhalin region and its indigenous groups were under Jurchen-Manchu, Mongol, Japanese and Russian dominance.

Indigenous toponyms have been collected in the Amur and Sakhalin regions by explorers, sailors, researchers, and amateurs during different times and for different purposes. One of the earliest relevant databases can be found in the scientific works of the geographer and naturalist Alexander Theodor von Middendorff (1860), who carried out an expedition to Northern

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and Eastern Siberia, including the Okhotsk Sea region and the Lower Amur, in 1842–1845. Other early travellers were the zoologist, geographer and ethnographer Peter Leopold von Schrenck (1883), who explored the Amur area and Sakhalin in 1854–1856, the entomologist Grigorij Grum-Grzhimajlo (1894), and the anthropologist Lev Shternberg (1933), who investigated the indigenous peoples of Sakhalin during the years of his political exile in 1889–1897.

Important sources on Nivkh toponymy are also the ethnographic works of Chuner Taksami (1969, 1975, 2007, and others) and Erukhim Krejnovich (1973a, 1973b). Among publications specifically devoted to the indigenous and non-indigenous toponomy of Sakhalin and the Amur region, the book by Konstantin Braslavec (1983) and the dictionary compiled by Svjatozar Gal'cev-Bezjuk (1992) should also be mentioned. The first linguistic analysis of Nivkh place names was given in the article of Galina Otaina (1977), where she proposed the classification of geographical terms into general, hydrographical, orographical, geobotanical, and economic-geographical types, as well as terms characterizing types of settlements. She also identified several linguistic processes involved in the formation of Nivkh toponyms, including compounding, conversion, as well as semantic and morphological derivation. Research on Nivkh toponyms was continued in recent articles by Marina Temina (2018, forthcoming), in which she investigates the place names of the Lower Amur and Sakhalin, introduces several new etymologies and expands and deepens the semantic classification of toponyms.

The present paper incorporates the linguistic material from all the above sources with some additional data from the Nivkh grammar of Vladimir Panfilov (1962), the Nivkh-Russian dictionary of Valentina Saveljeva and Chuner Taksami (1970), and the authors' fieldwork in 2018. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to establish etymologies for all the toponyms mentioned in these works, which is why our paper includes only around 160 items whose etymological status may be considered as confirmed. In spite of this limitation, the sample is large enough to allow general conclusions to be made about the history and typology of Nivkh toponymy. Besides introducing the data, our goal is to focus on the linguistic analysis of the structural and semantic properties of the toponymic material. To our knowledge, this is the first paper to approach this topic in comparable depth. It is also the first paper in English devoted specifically to Nivkh toponymy.

The structure of the paper is the following. Based on historical evidence,

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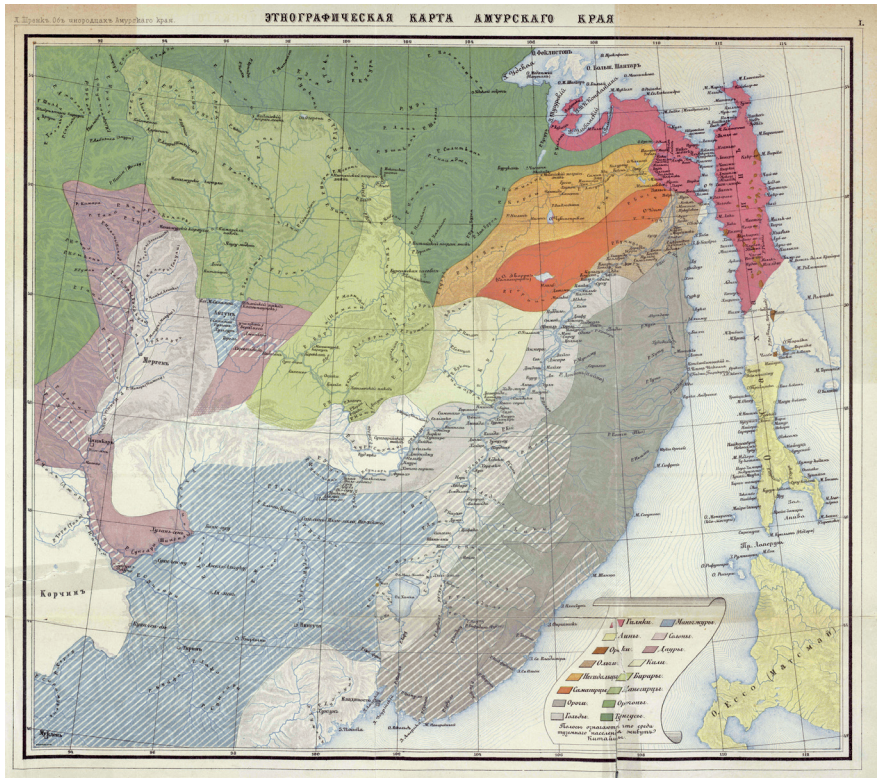
section 1 outlines the territorial expansion of the Nivkh ethnicity and language. Section 2 gives a preliminary overview and general characteristics of Nivkh toponyms. In section 3, the patterns of morphological derivation of toponyms are discussed, while section 4 deals with their semantic classification. Section 5 summarizes the findings.

1. The Nivkh ethnic and language area

Historically, the speakers of the Nivkh language inhabited the territory which formed a belt along the coasts of the Sea of Okhotsk (Охотское море) and the Tartar Straight (Татарский пролив), which separates Sakhalin Island (остров Сахалин) from mainland Asia. Another group of Nivkh people lived in the northern part of Sakhalin. Traditionally, both on the continent and on Sakhalin, the Nivkh resided in small scattered settlements located along spawning rivers, bays and seashores. Being a semi-sedentary people whose main occupation was fishing and sea mammal hunting, the Nivkh were organized into clans, with each clan occupying a relatively small area which comprised their summer and winter dwellings as well as their hunting and fishing territories.

The northwesternmost border of the Nivkh area is usually placed, basing on (Middendorf 1860: 526), on the river *Uda* (Уда) near the Udsk Fort (Удский острог), some 90 km upstream from its mouth in the Uda Bay (Удская губа), the westernmost bay at the Sea of Okhotsk. Taksami (1975: 196) points out that to the north of Uda Bay there is a river with the Nivkh name ***Langr*** 'Seal,' which suggests that the Nivkh were at least visiting areas even further to the north. According to some researchers, this territory around Uda Bay could have been a contact zone between the Nivkh and the Koryak. This contact would have been later cut off by the intrusion of the Ewenki. To the east of Uda Bay there is the archipelago of Shantar Islands (Шантарские острова), which is known to have been a place of Nivkh maritime hunting. The name *Shantar* is sometimes misleadingly identified as a Nivkh word, despite the fact that the Nivkh had their own name for this archipelago, which they called ***Kyvrmif*** (Saveljeva & Taksami 1970: 187–188; Krejnovich 1973a). This word is a compound consisting of two elements, only one of which, namely *mif* 'island, land,' can be easily identified. The dictionary (Saveljeva & Taksami 1970: 227) also gives the Nivkh name of one of the Shantar Islands, namely ***Ngarbaxx*** 'Blood Stone.'

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Map: The ethnographic map of the Amur region by (Schrenck 1883).

Personally, Middendorf got acquainted with the Nivkh during his expedition to Siberia and the Far East (1842–1845) on the more southern rivers *Tugur* (Тугур) and *Ul'ban* (Ульбан), which flow into the Tugur and Ul'ban Bays of the Sea of Okhotsk. Until today, these rivers are considered to be excellent places for fishing, which is why it is no surprise that Middendorf observed along them several Nivkh summer and winter dwellings. On the ethnographic map published in (Schrenck 1883), the mouth of the river Tugur is defined as the northern border of the Nivkh territory which is marked in red. Shternberg (1933: 13) states that at the end of the 19th century the Nivkh did not live in the area permanently, but went there for hunting. Basing on these comments, we may conclude that the Nivkh area in the north was gradually shrinking due to the expansion of the Ewenki. By comparing Schrenck's map with modern maps, one can trace the changes

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in local toponomy. Notably, the cape bounding the Ul'ban Bay from the east used to be called Cape Giljak (Мыс Гиляк), an alternative name of the Nivkh. Its modern name *Tohareu* (Мыс Тохарey) is apparently of Tungusic origin.

East of Tugur, the Nivkh territory extended along the coastline to the north of the mountain range *Mevachan* (Мевачан) up to the Tartar Strait. It is known that the Nivkh were living in the vicinity of the lakes *Orel'* (Орель, Nivkh name ***Adu*** 'Downriver Lake') and *Chlja* (Чля, Nivkh name ***Kxedu*** 'Upriver Lake'). Taksami (1975: 196) mentions that there were several settlements with Nivkh names on the shores of these lakes. The settlement *Kul'chi* was shared with the Neghidal who lived to the west of the lakes along the river *Amgun'* (Амгунь).

Further, the Nivkh area continued along the right bank of the Amur River and completely embraced the Amur Liman (Амурский Лиман), which represents the enlarged estuary of the Amur and officially forms a part of the Tartar Strait. The Nivkh called it ***Mat'kerkk*** 'Small Sea' in contrast to the Sea of Okhotsk, or probably only the Gulf of Sakhalin (Сахалинский залив), which was called ***Pilagerkk*** 'Big Sea.'

Fishing in the Amur and its tributaries was one of the main sources of livelihood not only for the Nivkh, but for many other indigenous peoples of the river basin. The Nivkh name for Amur is ***La*** or ***Laeri***, *la* meaning 'wind, large water space' and *eri* meaning 'river.' The Russians first named this river when they came to the Upper Amur around 1650. The first local ethnic group they met were the Daghur, so the Russian name of the river is apparently based on a false dissection of the Daghur name *Kara mur* 'Black River,' which itself is a translation equivalent of the Manchu name of the river *Sahaliyan ula* 'Black River.'

The southernmost point of the Nivkh territory is currently considered to be the settlement ***Uxtr*** 'Cliff' on the left bank of the Amur, beyond which the Ul'cha territory begins, cf. e.g. (Otaina 1977: 72). Schrenck (1883: 13) points out two other border settlements, *Xjare* and *Tljals*, information of which has not been preserved. The territory to the east is limited by the river ***Chomi*** 'Inside Fish,' which flows into the Tartar Strait. This border is also marked on Schrenck's map, with the Oroch territory to the west. Drawing on the materials of the French naval officer and explorer Jean-François de Galaup, comte de Lapérouse, who visited this area in 1787, Shternberg (1933: 393–395) states that the Nivkh territory expanded even further

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south, down to Lake *Kizi* (Кизи) and Chikhachev Bay (Залив Чихачева) of the Tartar Strait. Until 1952, this bay bore the name De Castri Bay (Залив де Кастри), a name still reflected on old maps. According to Shternberg (1933) and Taksami (1975: 196), the Nivkh lived here in mixed settlements together with Ainu, Oroch and Neghidal. The presence of Nivkh in this area is confirmed by numerous Nivkh toponyms, especially river names, which comprise the element *i* 'river.' This suggests that these toponyms are in fact of Sakhalin Nivkh origin, since in the Amur variety 'river' is called *eri*. We are, therefore, dealing with some groups of Nivkh who secondarily moved to the Amur region from Sakhalin, possibly in connection with the Santan trade — an extremely active trade network which from the 17th to 19th centuries stretched from Japan to China via Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and the Amur.[1)]

In this connection it may be mentioned that the element (*e*)*ri* 'river' can be singled out from the names of largest tributaries of the Amur, *Sungari* and *Ussuri*, as well as from the names of several other rivers flowing into middle Amur. Together with other evidence, this has given rise to the hypothesis according to which original Nivkh homeland was located in central Manchuria, from where it started to expand approximately 2000 years ago along the Amur river towards its estuary (Amur Liman) and further to Sakhalin (Janhunen 2016).

The Amur Nivkh call Sakhalin ***Lyrmif*** 'Floating Island / Land' or ***Lermif*** 'Playing Island / Land,' and, indeed, in a coastal haze the island looks like a miraculous floating object or as a living being that alternately appears and disappears. The Sakhalin Nivkh call the island ***Yxmif*** 'Ultimate Island / Land,' which is a rather self-explaining name. The name *Sakhalin* comes from the Manchu name of the island *Sahaliyan ula hada* 'Black River Cliff,' i.e. the cliff at the mouth of the Amur. Possibly this name was also, or mainly, used not of actual Sakhalin, but of some minor islands and rocks between the Amur estuary and Sakhalin. The Russians then took the first element of the Manchu term and transferred it to the entire island of Sakhalin.[2)]

On Sakhalin, the Nivkh lived both on the eastern and the western coast, as

1) In the region around Lake Kizi, this trade is known to have been operated by the Ulcha, Nivkh and Oroch.

2) This misunderstanding may also have taken place in some other European languages (French, Spanish), whose speakers sailed in the North Pacific in the 17th and 18th centuries. On early West European maps the name of Sakhalin is often spelt *Saghalien*, which is closer to the Manchu original.

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well as on the Schmidt Peninsula (полуостров Шмидта) in the northernmost part of the island, which the Nivkh call ***Mift'ongrsh*** 'Land's Head' (Krejnovich 1973: 54). In the central part of the island, the Nivkh lived along the shores and tributaries of the river *Tym'* (Тымь), whose Nivkh name is ***Tymy*** 'Spawning Ground.' On the western coast the border between the Nivkh and Ainu territories passed through the settlement ***Pilvo*** 'Big Settlement' near the Korsakov Cape (Мыс Корсаков), where both ethnic groups lived together. In Ainu, the name of this settlement was *Porokotan* 'Big Settlement.' On the eastern coast the southernmost settlement was ***Chamrvo*** located near the Cape De l'Isle de la Croyére (Мыс Делиль-де-ла-Кройера). The longest Sakhalin river is known under the Ainu name *Poronai* 'Big River,' but it has also the Nivkh name ***Plyj*** 'Full River' or, according to another intrepretation, 'Main River.' The Poronai flows from the north into the Gulf of Patience (Залив Терпения) at the southestern coast of Sakhalin. Although the territory along Poronai and around its mouth was traditionally inhabited by the Ainu, there were still several small Nivkh settlements in this area, both on Sakhalin and on the islands of the Gulf of Patience.

Finally, let us note that the Nivkh were obviously familiar also with the southern end of Sakhalin around the Aniva Bay (Залив Анива). This bay is formed by the capes Aniva and Crillon (Мыс Крильон), which the Nivkh called ***Mifngat'x*** 'Land's Leg(s).'

2. General characteristics of Nivkh toponyms

The traditional territory of the Nivkh is characterized by several layers of place names which come from different languages. Although toponyms are considered to be a rather stable area of lexicon, the movements of ethnic groups and language shifts have inevitably led to changes in the linguistic landscape. Most recently, many indigenous toponyms have been replaced by Russian names or have been "Russianised." As a result of historical processes, which affected both the peoples and the languages, the etymology of indigenous place names is often unclear and can be interpreted in different ways. All this paves the way for speculations, folk etymologies and false explanations, which, especially in view of the current situation of language endangerment, makes the study of place names a very challenging task.

This paper focuses on two groups of place names: (i) names of natural landscape features, which can be subdivided into (a) names of mountains

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and hills (*oronyms)* and (b) names of bodies of water (*hydronyms*), and (ii) names of human settlements (*oikonyms*).

Nivkh toponyms can be derived by various morphological means with an apparent predominance of compounding (see section 3). Such compounds typically comprise a head noun, which indicates the category of the geographical object, cf. e.g. ***Kxengalu*** 'Upriver Bay' < *kxe* 'upriver' + *ngalu* 'bay,' ***Magghvo*** 'Sand Settlement' < *maxx* 'sand' + *vo* 'settlement.'

A detailed semantic classification of Nivkh toponyms will be presented in section 4. In the following, we are giving a preliminary outlook on the place-naming practices and patterns. In general, Nivkh toponyms can be classified into one major and two minor groups, following the toponym taxonomy developed in (Tentand & Blair 2011).

The major group of Nivkh place names is formed by "descriptive" toponyms which indicate certain characteristics of the place they refer to (4.1). These characteristics may include size, e.g. ***Pilngi*** 'Big River,' other qualities, e.g. ***Uldy*** 'Deep Lake,' spatial orientation, e.g. ***Akrvo*** 'Downriver Settlement,' landscape features, e.g. ***Uxtr*** 'Cliff' (settlement), natural phenomena, e.g. ***Lungvo*** 'Wind Settlement,' and natural substances, e.g. ***Ormimif*** 'Clay Land.' Many places are called by the names of fishes, animals and plants that are typical of the place. The corresponding toponyms can be also treated as descriptive, cf. ***Tengivo*** 'Pink Salmon Settlement,' ***Hiskii*** 'Nettle River.'

The first minor group is comprised by so-called "occurent" toponyms, which relate to some event or activity that has taken place in the locality, e.g. ***Vangi*** 'Fighting River' (4.2). The second minor group is represented by "associative" toponyms, which make a link to an entity or concept connected with the place by some association, e.g. the name of the bay ***Tyk*** 'Birch-bark Basket,' which is based on the form of the bay, reminding the shape of the basket (4.3).

It is difficult to say if there have been restrictions on creating evaluative toponyms that reflect some emotional reaction of the namer, like 'good' or 'bad,' but the fact is that there are no examples of such names in our sample. What is strictly forbidden in Nivkh culture is the use of a personal name as a toponym. This is obviously connected with the general custom to avoid using a personal name in public in order not to attract evil spirits.

As in many other parts of the world, a typical practice is to use the same name for several related purposes, especially for topographic features and

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settlements, e.g. ***Langeri*** ‘Seal River’ (river and settlement), ***Txanggi*** ‘Far Away from the Coast Cape’ (cape and settlement), ***Ngabil*** ‘Big in Marine Animals’ (river, bay and settlement), ***Xoj*** ‘Siberian Taimen’ (river and cape). Usually, it is a river or a cape that has given the name to a settlement. However, there are some examples of apparently secondary naming, when the settlement has given the name to a river, cf. ***Arkkevo*** < *arkke* ‘big smelt’ + *vo* ‘settlement’ ‘Big Smelt Settlement’ (settlement and river). In the following discussion, we will take into account only the primary name, which in unclear cases is provisionally defined according to the hierarchy: river > bay > cape > settlement.

3. Derivation of Nivkh toponyms

This section examines the derivational patterns of toponyms.[3] The discussion begins with the less common ways of derivation from nominal (3.1) and verbal (3.2) stems and proceeds to the most common method of compounding (3.3).

3.1. Derivation from a nominal stem

Toponyms of nominal origin are most commonly derived from a plain nominal root without any additional morphological markers (3.1.1). There are also rare examples of derivation from a nominal root with an affix (3.1.2) or from a nominal root with a postposition (3.1.3).

3.1.1. Plain nominal root

Toponyms derived from a plain nominal root are attested in all Nivkh varieties both in the Amur region and on Sakhalin. This derivational model is especially common in oikonyms, but, as can be seen from the following examples, it is also applied for oronyms and hydronyms.

3) In the lists of toponyms below, the items printed in italicized boldface denote the original Nivkh names in a simplified transcription, followed by the actual phonetic shape (IPA) in square brackets. In cases when the toponym has an official Russianized form based on a Nivkh original, it is presented in italics (but not boldface) before the actual Nivkh form. In cases when the place has been completely renamed in Russian or in other language, the current name is given after the Nivkh data in brackets. For each item, the source region (Amur or Sakhalin) is also indicated in brackets. In the lists, the items are arranged in alphabetic order.

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Nivkh rivers most often bear the names of fishes and plants that grow in or along the banks of the river or somewhere in the vicinity. The river *Tym'* < ***Tymy*** [təmə] 'Spawning Ground' is the second longest river on Sakhalin. It used to be one of the richest fish rivers in the area, which unfortunately has become impoverished due to the recent industrial exploitation of the island. A river with the same name exists also in the Amur area.

Rivers
Arkke [arqe] 'big smelt' (Sakhalin), *Axzi* < ***Aghs*** [aɣs] '*Heracléum sibíricum*' (Sakhalin), *Eri* [eri] 'river' (Amur), ***Kenga*** < *keng* [keŋ] 'whale' (Sakhalin), ***La*** [la] 'wind' (*Amur river*), ***Langr*** [laŋr] 'seal' (Amur), ***Lax*** [*lax*] 'cloud' (Sakhalin), ***Ma*** [ma] 'dried fish' (Amur), ***My*** [mə] 'source of a river' (Amur), ***Paghi*** [paɣi] 'partridge' (Sakhalin), ***Pyrki*** [pərki] 'herb,' ***Tengi*** [teŋi] 'pink salmon' (Sakhalin), *Tym'* < ***Tymy*** [təmə] 'spawning ground' (Sakhalin), *Tymi* < ***Tymy*** [təmə] 'spawning ground' (Amur), ***Xoj*** [xoj] 'Siberian taimen' (Amur and Sakhalin), ***Unga*** [uŋa] 'glowworm' (Sakhalin), *Vassa* < ***Vaso*** [vaso] 'predatory carp' (Amur).

Bays are often named according to the sea animals that are found in the bay, or the plants that grow along the shores of the bay, or also according to the shape of the bay:

Bays
Kujngy [kujŋə] 'willow' (*Kuegdinskij bay*, Sakhalin), ***Pomrsh*** [pomř] 'beluga whale' (Sakhalin), *Pogibi* > ***Poxxvi*** [poχvi] 'worm' / 'turn' (Sakhalin), ***Tyk*** [tək] 'birch-bark basket' (Sakhalin).

The most common name of islands is simply 'island,' but islands can also be named according to the sea animals that are found on or around them:

Islands
Langr [laŋr] 'seal' (*Bajdukova Island*, Amur Liman), *Udd* < ***Ursh*** [uř] 'island' (*Chkalova Island*, Amur Liman), *Ush* < ***Ursh*** [uř] 'island' (Sakhalin).

The names of capes, hills and cliffs often rather transparently refer to the corresponding topographical feature:

Hills and cliffs
Puir < ***Pujr*** [pujr] 'elevation, hill' (Amur), *Uxta* < ***Uxtr*** [*uxtr*] 'cliff' (Amur).

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The name of the following mountain hollow is based on its shape:

Mountain hollow
Parkata < ***Pxarkk*** [p^{h}arq] ‘river beluga’ (*Parkatinskaja vpadina,* Sakhalin).

The names of settlements often coincide with the names of the geographical objects in the vicinity of which they are located. As can be seen from the following examples, the overall semantics of oikonyms is diverse and is often based on the names of sea animals, fishes, plants, geographical objects, or some other features, as discussed in more detail in section 4.

Settlements
Aas < [a:s] ‘*Heracléum sibíricum*’ (Amur), ***Chilma*** < *Chylm* [c^{h}əlm] ‘palm’ (Amur), *Irkir* < ***Yrkyrsh*** [ərkəř] ‘steep coast’ (Sakhalin), *Kol’* < ***Kul*** ‘dune’ (Amur), *Ljugi* < ***Laghi*** [laɣi] ‘salmon’ (Sakhalin), ***Lursh*** [luř] ‘ice’ (Sakhalin), *Prongi* < ***Pxronggi*** [p^{h}roŋgi] ‘smelt’ (*Nizhnee Pronge*, Amur), ***Tulks*** [tulks] ‘hole’ (Amur), ***Tor*** [tor] ‘sand spit’ (Sakhalin), *Xoe* < ***Xoj*** [xoj] ‘Siberian taimen’ (Sakhalin), *Vajda* < ***Vajrsh*** [vajř] ‘whirlpool’ (Amur).

3.1.2. Nominal root with a locative derivational suffix / nominalizer

In all Nivkh varieties, there is a very productive derivational suffix *-f* [f], one of whose functions is to derive nominal forms referring to a particular place. Most often, this suffix attaches to verbal roots, functioning as a locative nominalizer. Besides that, in our data, there are at least two toponyms which are derived with this suffix from nominal roots. The oronym *Ergraf* < ***Erkkf*** [erqf] is derived from the noun *erkk* [erq], which in the modern language is used either as a free noun or as a postposition with the meaning ‘side.’ The resulting toponym refers to a cape. The oikonym ***Muzf*** apparently goes back to the noun *muzrsh* [muzř] ‘pole’ and refers to a settlement where poles were made. An alternative explanation would be that this oikonym is verb-based and etymologically connected with the verb *muz-* [muz] ‘drag a boat.’

Cape
Ergraf < ***Erkkf*** [erqf] < *erkk* [erq] ‘side’ + *-f* (Sakhalin).

Settlement
Muzf < *muz(rsh)* [muzř] ‘pole’ / *muz-* [muz] ‘drag a boat’ + *-f* (Amur).

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3.1.3. Nominal root with a plural suffix

Nivkh nominal morphology distinguishes two numbers, unmarked singular and marked plural. The plural marker is A, WS *-ku/-ghu/-gu/-xu*, ES *-kun/-ghun/-gun/-xun*.[4] Toponyms can also contain a plural marker, however, this seems to be rather exceptional, since our data contains only one example of this kind. The attested hydronym ***Chamgu*** comes from Sakhalin, but on the basis of the shape of the plural marker *-gu* [gu] it must have been coined by speakers of the West Sakhalin variety. Note that in Nivkh the noun *cham* can mean both 'eagle' and 'shaman,' so the toponym itself can be translated as either 'eagles' or 'shamans.'

River
Chamgu [c^{h}amgu] < *cham* [c^{h}am] 'eagle, shaman' + *-gu* (Sakhalin).

3.1.4. Nominal root with a postposition

As in many other languages, in Nivkh, spatial relationships can be specified by postpositions which follow the nominal stem. The resulting nominal form typically functions as an (oblique) complement of a verb. The toponyms derived according to this model are fully lexicalized and have a broader distribution, since they can be used in any grammatical function, including subject. Such derivations are also infrequent — we have managed to find only two examples from the East Sakhalin variety. The hydronym ***Chomi*** literally means 'inside fish,' which possibly refers to a big amount of fish. The oikonym ***Evaj*** has the literal meaning 'under a comb,' where 'comb' points out to the shape of a mountain, under which the settlement is located.

River
Chomi < *cho* [c^{h}o] 'fish' + *mi* [mi] 'inside' (Sakhalin).

Settlement
Evaj < *e* [e] 'comb' + *vaj* [vaj] 'under' (Sakhalin).

3.2. Derivation from a verbal stem

Toponyms can be derived from a basic nominalized verb form (3.2.1) or from a nominalized form that contains an overt locative nominalizer (3.2.2),

4) The choice of one or another variant in each variety is determined by the general rules of morphophonological alternations.

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or a reflexive proclitic (3.2.3).

3.2.1. Basic nominalized verb form

Nivkh does not have adjectives as a separate word class. The meaning of state or quality is performed by verbs, which can be used both in finite and non-finite functions. All types of verbs in a nominalized form may modify a head noun, in which case they behave in the same way as participles in other languages. Synchronically, the attributive forms in the Amur variety are zero-nominalized, whereas in the East Sakhalin variety they may end in the nominalizer *-ng* [ŋ]. Our data shows that such verb forms are typically not used for deriving place names as such (though they are often used in compounds, see 3.3). The exceptions come mostly from the Amur variety, where, for instance, the nominalized form of the actional verb *txyr-* [t^h*ər*] 'look' has given rise to the name of the cliff *Tyr* < ***Txyr*** and the nominalized form of the qualitative verb *eghla-* [eɣla] 'be fast' has become the name of the settlement *Yali* < ***Eghli*** [eɣli]. In connection with the latter oikonym, it should be noted that the raising of [a] into [i] is a common process, which is used in Nivkh for emphasis. The Russianized name of the settlement *Tyvlino* goes back to the Nivkh name ***Tivla***, which is a nominalized form of the qualitative verb *tivla-* [civla] 'be cold.'

Cliff
Tyr < ***Txyr*** < *txyr-* [t^hər] 'look' (Amur).

Island
Ujzu < *ujzu-* [ujzu] 'be sacred / sinful' (Amur).

Cape
Tangi < ***Txanggi*** < *txanggi-* [t^haŋgi] 'move from the shore/coast' (Sakhalin).

Settlement
Kavla < ***Kkxavla*** < *kkxavla-* [q^havla] 'be hot' (Amur), *Tyvlino* < ***Tivla*** < *tivla-* [civla] 'be cold' (Amur Liman), ***Ul*** < *ul-* [ul] 'be high,' *Yali* < ***Eghli*** [eɣli] < *eghla-* [eɣla] 'be fast (about a river flow)' (Amur).

3.2.2. Nominalized verb form with a locative derivational suffix / nominalizer

Nivkh verbs can be nominalized with a number of suffixes, among which *-f* [f] is one of the most productive in all varieties (cf. also 3.1.2). This

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locative nominalizer can be attached virtually to any actional or qualitative verb, producing a nominal form with the meaning of a place of action, cf. *ler-* [ler] 'play' > *ler-f* [lerf] 'place for games,' a result of action, cf. *pxyt-* [p^{h}ət] 'crackle' > *pxyt-f* [p^{h}ətf] 'crack,' or a place that is characterized by a particular feature, cf. *urla-* [urla] 'be good' > *urla-f* [urlaf] 'good place.' One would expect that nominalized forms with the suffix *-f* are widespread as place names, however, this is not the case. Our data contains only four toponyms of such origin. The oikonym ***Chomokf*** [c^{h}omokf] is in fact a compound, which ends in the nominalized form of the verb *e-mkk-* [emq] 'cut.' Since the first element of this compound (*cho* [c^{h}o]) functions as an object to this verb, the verb is used in the bound form *-mokk* [moq].

Lake
Uf [uf] < *u-* [u] 'burn' + *-f* (Sakhalin).

Settlements
Chomokkf [c^{h}omoqf] < *cho* [c^{h}o] + *e-mkk-* [emq] 'cut' + *f* (Amur), ***Jyvf*** [jəvf] < *jyv-* [jəv] 'guard' + *-f* (Amur), *Kezf* < ***Kxezf*** [k^{h}ezf] < *kxez-* [k^{h}ez] 'set fishing nets' + *-f* (Amur).

3.2.3. Nominalized verb form with a reflexive proclitic

Nivkh is a predominantly suffixing language with a rather transparent agglutinative morphology. Only personal, reflexive and reciprocal markers can be attached to the verb as proclitics. Toponyms derived from a nominalized verb form with any affix/clitic are very rare, but there is at least one example: the name of the river *Psu* < ***Phsu*** can be literally translated as 'wash oneself,' since it represents a reflexive form *ph=su* [*p^{h}su*] of the nominalized actional verb *zu-* [zu] 'wash.' Note that the initial consonant of the verb stem *zu-* [zu] is devoiced after the voiceless reflexive clitic *px* [p^{h}]. The reflexive proclitic itself is a reduced form of the reflexive/emphatic pronoun *pxi* [p^{h}i].

River
Psu < ***Pxsu*** [*p^{h}su*] < *ph* [p^{h}] <reflexive clitic> + *zu-* [zu] 'wash' (Amur).

3.3. Compounding

In Nivkh, compounding is a very productive process and the most common way of forming place names in all varieties. Toponyms can be formed by compounding two, three or more elements. The derivational process is often

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accompanied by morphophonological alternations at the boundaries of the morphemes, including lexical stems.

In a compound form, the final element is the head nominal, while the preceding element(s) function(s) as its modifier(s). The head nominal typically refers to a certain category of place, e.g. 'river,' 'bay,' 'settlement,' etc. The toponyms presented below in sections 3.3.1–3.3.16 are grouped according to the meaning of their head nominals. Some exceptions, in which the head nominal does not denote a geographical object are listed in 3.3.17. The head nominal is typically a regular simple noun, though it can exceptionally also be a nominalized verb form, as in 3.3.18. The modifiers are distributed more or less equally between nouns and nominalized verb forms.

Let us consider several examples. The first element of the oikonym *Palevo* < ***Palvo*** [palvo] is the noun *pal* [pal] 'forested hill,' which is an attribute to the head noun *vo* [vo] 'settlement.' The Amur toponym ***Tyvgheri*** [təvɣeri] consists of the synchronically zero-nominalized verbal root *tyvgh-* [təvɣ] 'enter,' which modifies the head noun *eri* 'river.' The East Sakhalin toponym *Veni* < ***Vengi*** [veŋi] comprises the nominalized form of the verb *ve-* [ve] 'run (of animals),' the nominalizer *-ng* [ŋ], and the head noun *i* [i] 'river.'

3.3.1. Compounds with the head noun *eri* 'river'

The noun *eri* [eri] 'river' is used in the Amur and West Sakhalin varieties and is attested in the names of rivers both in the Amur area and on the western coast of Sakhalin. The first elements of these river names are not always easily identified, so we give here several examples with a clear etymology:

Rivers

Kxveseri < *kxves* [k^{h}ves] 'rowing pole' + *eri* (Amur), *Laguri* < ***Lagheri*** [laɣeri] < *lagh*(*i*) [laɣi] 'salmon' + *eri* (Sakhalin), ***Langeri*** < *langr* [laŋr] 'seal' + *eri* (Sakhalin), ***Lokksieri*** [loqsieri] < *lokk* [loq] 'flatfish' + *si-* [si] 'put' + *eri* (Amur), ***Longri*** [loŋri] < *long* [loŋ] 'moon' + (*e*)*ri* (Amur Liman), ***Tyvgheri*** [təvɣeri] < *tyvgh-* [təvɣ] 'enter' + *eri* (Amur).

3.3.2. Compounds with the head noun *i* 'river'

In the East Sakhalin variety the meaning 'river' is rendered by the noun *i* [i]. This element is attested mainly in river names on Sakhalin, but exceptionally also in the Amur area near Lake Kizi, which confirms that the Nivkh who

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once lived in this area, or were passing through, were "newcomers" from Sakhalin (see section 1). The first elements of the compounds with *i* 'river' are semantically of different origins (cf. section 4). An interesting example is presented by the hydronym ***Karsinivngi*** [karsinivŋi] 'Having Kerosine River,' which consists of three elements. The element *karsin* [karsin] is obviously a borrowing from the Russian noun *kerosin* 'kerosene.' It functions as an object to the transitive existential/possessive verb *j-iv-* [jiv] 'exist / have,' which in this context drops the personal prefix *j-*. The verb itself occurs in the nominalized form in *-ng* [ŋ], and the resulting object-verb complex modifies the head noun *i* 'river.'

Rivers

Due < ***Tui*** [tui] < *tu* [tu] 'lake' + *i* (Sakhalin), ***Hiskii*** [hiskii] < *hisk* [hisk] 'nettle' + *i* (Sakhalin), *Kavle* < ***Kkxavli*** [q^{h}avli] < *kkxavl(a)-* [q^{h}avla] 'be hot' + *i* (Sakhalin), ***Karsinivngi*** [karsinivŋi] < *karsin* [karsin] 'kerosene' + *j-iv-* [jiv] 'exist/have' + *-ng* [ŋ] <nominalizer> + *i* (Sakhalin), *Katangli* < ***Kkxatangi*** [q^{h}ataŋi] < *kkxata-* [q^{h}ata] 'be strong (of oil smell)' + *-ng* [ŋ] <nominalizer> + *i* (Sakhalin), *Langry* < ***Langri*** [laŋri] < *langr* [laŋr] 'seal' + *i* (Sakhalin), ***Mati*** [maci] < *mat'-* [mac] 'be small' + *i* (Sakhalin), ***Milki*** [milki] < *milk* [milk] 'devil' + *i* (Amur), ***Plyj*** [pləj] < *ply-* [plə] 'full' + *i* (*Poronai*, Sakhalin), ***Pilngi*** < *pil-* [pil] 'be big + *-ng* [ŋ] <nominalizer> + *i* (Sakhalin), ***Temrngi*** [cemrŋi] < *temrng* [cemrŋ] 'rudd' + *i* (Sakhalin), ***Vaŋgi*** [vaŋi] < *va-* [va] 'fight'+ *-ng* [ŋ] <nominalizer> + *i* (Sakhalin), ***Vengi*** [veŋi] < *ve-* [ve] 'run (of animals)' + *-ng* [ŋ] <nominalizer> + *i* (Sakhalin), *Vaasi* < ***Vaghsi*** [vaɣs] < *vaghs* [vaɣs] 'whitefish' + *i* (Sakhalin), ***Yrri*** [ərri] < *yr* [ər] 'mouth (of a river)'+ *i* (Amur).

3.3.3. Compounds with the head noun *ngyju / ngaju* 'stream'

The Nivkh noun for 'stream,' which can also have the alternative meaning 'gorge,' is pronounced in the Amur variety as [ŋəju] and in the East Sakhalin variety as [ŋaju]. The diffence in vowels is due to a regular (though unexplained) correspondence of [ə] and [a] in these varieties. Our data contains only one example with 'stream' as a head noun.

Stream

Pilangyju [pilaŋəju] < *pila-* [pila] 'be big' + *ngyju* (Amur).

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3.3.4. Compounds with the head noun *my* ‘source of a river’

In all varieties, the noun *my* [mə] has the meaning ‘source of a river.’ There is a settlement with the name ***My*** on the right coast of the Amur Liman. As a head word in the compounds, *my* is rather rare, and in our data there is only the single hydronym ***Chomy*** [c^{h}omə] ‘Fish Source.’ This river flows into the Amur Liman and is considered to be the southern border of the Nivkh territory in the Amur region (see section 1).

River

Chome < ***Chomy*** [c^{h}omə] < *cho* [c^{h}o] ‘fish’ + *my* (Amur).

3.3.5. Compounds with the head noun *ngalu* ‘bay’

The noun *ngalu* [ŋalu] ‘bay’ occurs in place names in the Amur Liman area, both on the mainland and on the western coast of Sakhalin. This area was historically occupied by speakers of the Amur and West Sakhalin varieties. Panfilov (1962: 83) gives this noun in the form of *ngala* [ŋala]. The speakers of the East Sakhalin variety, who lived on the eastern coast of Sakhalin, did not use this word, but employed the nouns *taru* [taru] and *ngyj* [ŋəj] ‘bay.’

Bays

Kxengalu [k^{h}eŋalu] < *kxe* [k^{h}e] ‘upriver’ + *ngalu* (Amur Liman), ***Lokksingala*** [loqsiŋala] < *lokk* [loq] ‘flatfish’ + *si-* [si] ‘put’ + *ngala* (Amur), *Maskngalu* < ***Mat’kngalu*** [mackŋalu] < *mat’k-* [mack] ‘be small’ + *ngalu* (Sakhalin), ***Pilangalu*** [pilaŋalu] < *pila-* [pila] ‘be big’ + *ngalu* (*Vereshhagina Bay*, Sakhalin).

3.3.6. Compounds with the head noun *kerkk / kershkkng* ‘sea’

The Nivkh living on the shores of the Amur Liman and the Sea of Okhotsk had a good idea about the surrounding water bodies and their proportions. The sea was referred to by the noun *kerkk* [kerq] in the Amur variety and *kershkkng* [keřqŋ] in the East Sakhalin variety. As we can see, the voiced [r] in the Amur variety corresponds to the voiceless [ř] in the East Sakhalin variety. Furthermore, the final nasal [ŋ], which may be identified as a morphophonologically “weak” nasal, has been retained in the East Sakhalin variety but has been lost in the Amur variety. The initial plosive of *kerkk* became voiced ([k] > [g]) in the toponym ***Pilagerkk*** [pilagerq] under the influence of the lost “weak” nasal [*ŋ], which functioned as a nominalizer: [*pilaŋ] > [pila].

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Seas
Mat'kerkk [mackerq] < *mat'-* [mac] 'be small' + *kerkk* (*Amur Liman*), ***Pilagerkk*** [pilagerq] < *pila-* [pila] 'be big' + *kerkk* (*Sea of Okhotsk*).

3.3.7. Compounds with the head noun *mif* 'land, island'

The noun *mif* [mif] is used in Nivkh in several meanings, including 'land,' 'earth,' 'area,' 'territory,' etc. According to (Krejnovich 1973: 38), the ancient Nivkh described the world as consisting of three planes: *tly* [tlə] 'sky' or *tlymif* [tləmif] 'sky land,' *mif* [mif] 'land' or *yxmif* [əxmif] 'ultimate land,' and *mlyx* [mləx] 'underworld.' Sakhalin Island was perceived by the Nivkh as a *mif*, and all known Nivkh names for it contain the element *mif*, i.e. ***Lyrmif*** [lərmif], ***Lermif*** [lermif], ***Yxmif*** [əxmif]. In other toponyms, *mif* refers mostly to smaller islands, all of which are located in the Amur Liman or in the south-eastern part of the Sea of Okhotsk. For instance, almost all members of the Chastye Islands [Острова Частые] in the Amur Liman have Nivkh names containing the component *mif*. Besides the names whose structure is presented below there are two island names with an obscure etymology: ***Giamif*** and ***Chirtamif***. It seems that the Nivkh usually did not give names to groups of islands, instead, each island was named separately. An exception is, however, formed by the term ***Kyvrmif***, which refers to the Shantar Islands.

As has been noted, several geographical objects located close to each other can bear the same or similar names. This is the case with the settlement *Oremif* < ***Ormimif*** [ormimif] 'Clay Land' and the island *Orimif* < ***Ormimif*** [ormimif]. In this case it was apparently the settlement that gave the name to the island, since it is known that the territory around the settlement was rich in clay.

Islands
Hagimif < ***Haghimif*** [haɣimif] < *haghi* [haɣi] 'ramson (wild garlic)' + *mif* (Chastye Islands, Amur Liman), ***Lermif*** [lermif] < *ler-* [ler] 'play'+ *mif* (*Sakhalin)*, ***Lyrmif*** [lərmif] < *lyr-* [lər] 'float' + *mif* (*Sakhalin)*, *Matemif* < ***Mat'mif*** < *mat'-* [mac] 'be small' + *mif* (Chastye Islands, Amur Liman), *Orimif* < ***Ormimif*** [ormimif] < *ormi* [ormi] 'clay' + *mif* (Amur Liman), ***Pilamif*** [pilamif] < *pila-* [pila] 'be big' + *mif* (Chastye Islands, Amur Liman), *Veljamif* < ***Velghmif*** [velɣmif] < *velgh* [velɣ] 'shell' + *mif* (Chastye Islands, Amur Liman), ***Yxmif*** [əxmif] < *yx* [əx] 'end' + *mif* (*Sakhalin*).

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Settlements
Oremif < ***Ormimif*** [ormimif] < *ormi* [ormi] 'clay' + *mif* (Amur), ***Vangrkvomif*** [vaŋrkvomif] < *vangrk* [vaŋrk] 'warrior' + *vo* [vo] 'settlement' + *mif* (Sakhalin).

3.3.8. Compounds with the head noun *hitf* 'island'
An island can be also designated by the noun *hitf* [hitf], which seems to be used only in the Amur area. This noun is probably of verbal origin, since it obviously comprises the locative nominalizer *-f*.

Island
Pilahitf [pilahitf] < *pila-* [pila] 'be big' + *hitf* (Amur).

3.3.9. Compounds with the head noun *ur / ursh* 'island'
An island with low shores is called in the Amur variety *ur* [ur] and in the West Sakhalin and East Sakhalin variety *ursh* [uř]. These nouns once again demonstrate a regular correspondence between the voiced trill [r] and the voiceless trill [ř] in these varieties.

Islands
Cheush < ***Cheursh*** [c^{h}euř] < *che-* [c^{h}e-] 'be dry' + *ursh* (Chastye islands, Amur Liman), ***Kxekrivlangursh*** [k^{h}ekrivlaŋuř] < *kxe-* [k^{h}e] 'upriver' + *-krsh* [kř] <directional suffix> + *j-iv-* [jiv] 'exist / have' + *-la-* [la] <attributive suffix> + *-ng* [ŋ] <nominalizer> + *ursh* (Sakhalin).

3.3.10. Compounds with the head noun *kxry / kxrshy* 'cape'
The noun *kxry* [k^{h}rə] in the Amur variety and the corresponding noun *kxrshy* [k^{h}řə] in the East Sakhalin variety have the meaning 'rocky cape at sea.' These nouns also display the dialectal correspondence between the voiced trill [r] and the voiceless trill [ř], this time in the word-medial position. In toponyms from the West Sakhalin variety, this sound is recorded in either way. In a specific phonetic context, *kxry* [k^{h}rə] and *kxrshy* [k^{h}řə] may also appear in the forms [xrə] and [xřə], respectively.

Capes
Ozerkry < ***Ozekxrshy*** [ozek^{h}řə] < *oze-* [oze] 'bend' + *kxrshy* (Sakhalin), ***Kxengvyrshkxrshy*** [k^{h}eŋvəřkk^{h}řə] < *kxeng* [k^{h}eŋ] 'sun' + *pyrsh*(*k*) [pərk] 'only' + *khrshy* (Sakhalin), *Pilakry* < ***Pilakxry*** [pilak^{h}rə] < *pila-* [pila] 'be big'

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+ *kxry* (*Cape Lazareva*, Amur), ***Uighkxry*** [ujɣkʰrə] < *uigh-* [ujɣ] 'be sacred / sinful' + *kxry* (Amur), ***Vaghskxry*** [vaɣskʰrə] < *vaghs* [vaɣs] 'whitefish' + *kxry* (Sakhalin).

3.3.11. Compounds with the head noun *tu* 'lake'

The noun *tu* [tu] 'lake' is used in all varieties of Nivkh, except for the area near the river *Tym.*' Here, the local Nivkh use the word *chat'f* [cʰacf] (cf. Krejnovich 1973: 51), which in other varieties means 'swamp.' Depending on the preceding sound, *tu* occurs in one of the three variants *tu* [tu], *ru* [ru], or *du* [du]. In the toponym ***Chaxxtatu***, the second component *ra* is a nominalized form of the verb 'drink,' whose initial [r] alternates with [t] after the fricative [χ].

Compounds with *tu* typically refer to the lakes. However, on Sakhalin they also occur in the names of bays, which are often almost closed from the sea and in fact are very similar to lakes, cf. the name of the bay *Kolendu* < ***Kylangdu*** [kəlaŋdu] 'Long Lake.' An interesting example is represented by the river called *Pil'da* < ***Pildu*** [pildu] 'Big Lake' which flows into the lake *Uldy* < ***Uldu*** [uldu] 'Deep Lake.' The river was apparently named after the lake, which is, indeed, rather big, but which itself bears another name.

Lakes

Adu [adu] < *a-* [a] 'downriver' + *tu* (*Orel,*' Amur), ***Chaxxtatu*** [cʰaχtatu] < *chaxx* [cʰaχ] + *ra-* [ra] 'drink' + *tu* (Amur), ***Kxedu*** [kʰedu] < *kxe-* [kʰe] 'upriver' + *tu* (*Chlja*, Amur), *Udyl'* < ***Udu*** [udu] < *u-* [u] 'burn' + *tu* (Amur), *Uldy* < ***Uldu*** [uldu] < *ul-* [ul] 'be deep' + *tu* (Amur), ***Xarngiru*** [xarŋiru] < *xarngi* [xarŋi] 'loon' + *tu* (Sakhalin).

Bay

Kolendu < ***Kylangdu*** [kəlaŋdu] < *kyla-* [kəla] 'be long' + *-ng* [ŋ] <nominalizer> + *tu* (Sakhalin).

River

Pil'da < ***Pildu*** [pildu] < *pil-* [pil] 'be big' + *tu* (Amur).

3.3.12. Compounds with the head noun *pal / palng* 'forested hill'

The nouns *pal* [pal] in the Amur and West Sakhalin varieties and *palng* [palŋ] in the East Sakhalin variety are often translated as 'forest' or 'hill.' The best translation would probably be 'forested hill,' which reflects the landscape along the Amur River and on Sakhalin. The difference between

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the phonological shapes of [pal] and [palŋ] is in line with the general phenomenon of nasal loss, which is attested in the Amur and West Sakhalin varieties in comparison with the East Sakhalin variety, where this nasal is retained. The "weak" nasals have been lost mostly in word-final position, but they still influence the quality of the sound that follows them in compounds, as in the Amur toponym ***Pxufbal*** [p^{h}ufbal]. This word comprises the noun *pxuf* [p^{h}uf] 'saw,' which in the East Sakhalin variety ends in the nasal, cf. *pxuvng* [p^{h}uvŋ]. The "weak" nasal causes the voicing of the initial consonant of the head noun *pal* > *-bal* [bal]. The same pertaines to the toponym ***Vel'vel'bal***, which comprises the nominalized form of the verb *vel'vel'-* [velvel], which historically ended in a nasal. In another phonetic context, *pal* and *palng* can also appear in the forms [val] and [valŋ] respectively.

Forested hills
Pxufbal [p^{h}ufbal] < *pxuf* [p^{h}uf] 'saw' + *pal* (Amur), ***Vel'vel'bal*** [velvelbal] < *vel'vel'-* [velvel] 'be winding' + *pal* (Sakhalin).

3.3.13. Compounds with the head noun *paxx* 'stone'

Compounds with the head noun *paxx* [paχ] 'stone' are attested mostly in the Amur Liman area in the names of settlements, though there are also several toponyms referring to other geographical objects. In all varieties, *paxx* may refer to stones and rocks of different sizes. Depending on the preceding sound, in compounds the noun occurs in the forms [paχ], [baχ], or [vaχ]. In some toponyms the initial [p] can be fully assimilated with the preceding consonant, as in *Chngyrrax* < ***Chngyrraxx***. Among the extant examples, only a part can be fully etymologized. For instance no clear etymologies can be proposed for the first elements of the toponyms *Kabbachi* < ***Kkxavat'paxx*** (settlement, Amur), ***Kraspaxx*** (settlement, Amur) and *Tnejvax* < ***Tngajvaxx*** (cape, Amur).

River
Chanvax < ***Changvaxx*** [c^{h}aŋvaχ] < *chang* [c^{h}aŋ] 'hung up for drying fish' + *paxx* (*Sabo*, northern Sakhalin).

Island
Narbax < ***Ngarbaxx*** [ŋarbaχ] < *ngar* [ŋar] 'blood' + *paxx* (Shantar Islands, Amur).

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Settlements
Charbax < ***Chxxarvaxx*** [c^{h}χarvaχ] < *chxxar* [c^{h}χ*ar*] 'forest' + *paxx* (Amur), *Chngyrrax* < ***Chngyrraxx*** [c^{h}ŋərraχ] < *chngyr* [c^{h}ŋər] 'grass' + *paxx* (Amur), *Ozerpax* < ***Ozrpaxx*** < *oz-* [oz] 'get up' + *paxx* (Amur).

3.3.14. Compounds with the head noun *tymy* 'spawning ground, spring'
The word *tymy* [təmə] sounds the same in all varieties and is often used in the names of rivers (see 3.1.1), as well as settlements located along rivers. In the Amur Nivkh examples, the initial consonant of *tymy* is voiced ([t] > [d]) after a lost "weak" nasal.

Spring
Ngylydymy [ŋələdəmə] < *ngyly-* [ŋələ] 'be dark' + *tymy* (Amur).

Settlements
Adymy [adəmə] < *a-* [a] 'downriver' + *tymy* (*Ady-Tymovo,* Sakhalin), ***Kxedymy*** [k^{h}edəmə] < *kxe-* [k^{h}e] 'upriver' + *tymy* (Sakhalin).

3.3.15. Compounds with the head noun *kxuty* [k^{h}utə] 'river channel'
The noun *kxuty* [k^{h}utə], which has also the variant [xutə], has several meanings, including 'hole,' 'gap,' and 'river channel.' In its topographical meaning, this word is used especially in the Lower Amur region, whose riverbed comprises a labyrinth of branches, channels and offshoots. The toponymic example below is, however, from Sakhalin.

River
Uglekuty < ***Ujghlakxuty*** < *ujghla-* [ujɣla] 'be sacred / sinful' + *kxuty* (Sakhalin).

3.3.16. Compounds with the head noun *vo* 'settlement'
The noun *vo* [vo] 'settlement' has the same form in all varieties and is widely used especially on Sakhalin in the names of settlements, both real and imagined. Thus, the underworld settlement in the Nivkh mythology is called *Mlyxvo* [mləxvo] 'Dead People Settlement' (Krejnovich 1973: 38). The compounds with the head noun *vo* often comprise more than two elements, cf. *Moskal'vo* < ***Mat'kngaluvo*** [mackŋaluvo] < *mat'k-* [mack] 'be small' + [*ŋalu*] 'cape' + *vo* [vo] 'settlement.' The oikonyms derived with *vo* represent the most numerous group in our data.

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Settlements

Agnevo < ***Arngivo*** < *arng* [arŋ] 'male' + *i* [i] 'river' + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Akrvo*** [akrvo] < *a-* [a] 'downriver' + *-krsh* [kř] <directional suffix> + *vo* (Sakhalin), *Arkovo* < ***Arkkevo*** [arqevo] < *arkke* [arqe] 'big smelt' + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Kinrshvo*** [kinřvo] < *kinrsh* [kinř] 'devil' + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Kkxalvo*** [q^{h}alvo] < *kkxal* [q^{h}al] 'clan' + *vo* (Amur), *Komrvo* < ***Kkomrvo*** [qomrvo] < *kkomrsh* [qomř] 'sand' + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Kxekrvo*** [k^{h}ekrvo] < *kxe-* [k^{h}e] 'upriver' + *-krsh* [kř] <directional suffix> + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Kxryvo*** [k^{h}rəvo] < *kxry* [k^{h}rə] 'cape' + *vo* (Amur), ***Langrivo*** [laŋrivo] < *langr* [laŋr] 'seal' + *i* [i] 'river' + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Larvo*** [larvo] < *larsh* [lař] 'wave' + *vo* (*Dagi*, Sakhalin), ***Lungvo*** [luŋvo] < *lung* [luŋ] 'wind' + *vo* (Sakhalin), *Mago* < ***Magghvo*** [maʁvo] < *maxx* [maχ] 'sand' + *vo* (Amur), ***Mat'vo*** [macvo] < *mat'-* [mac] 'be small' + *vo* (*Makarovka*, Amur Liman), *Moskal'vo* < ***Mat'kngaluvo*** [mackŋaluvo] < *mat'k-* [mack] 'be small' + *ngalu* [ŋalu] 'cape' + *vo* (Sakhalin), *Muz'ma* < ***Muzvo*** [muzvo] < *muz-* [muz] 'drag a boat' + *vo* (Sakhalin), *Naukxomrvo* < ***Ngaukxxomrvo*** [ŋawkχomrvo] < *ngauk* [ŋawk] 'caviar' + *kkomrsh* [qomř] 'sand' + *vo* (Sakhalin), *Ngalavo* < ***Ngaluvo*** [ŋaluvo] < *ngalu* [ŋalu] 'bay' + *vo* (Sakhalin), *Nogliki* < ***Noghlvo*** [noɣlvo] < *noghl(a)-* [noɣla] 'be smelly (of oil smell)' + *vo* (Sakhalin), *Nyjvo* < ***Ngyjvo*** [ŋəjvo] < *ngyj* [ŋəj] 'bay' + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Nyvrvo*** [nəvrvo] < *nyvr* [nəvr] 'four (for counting places)' + *vo* (Sakhalin), *Palevo* < ***Palvo*** [palvo] < *pal* [pal] 'forested hill' + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Pilavo*** [pilavo] < *pila-* [pila] 'to be big' + *vo* (Amur), ***Plyfvo*** [pləfvo] < *plyf* [pləf] 'glade' + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Potavo*** [potavo] < *pota-* [pota] 'harvest (fish)' + *vo* (Amur), ***Pilvo*** [pilvo] < *pil(a)-* [pila] 'be big' + *vo* (Amur and Sakhalin), *Slavo* < ***Tlavo*** [tlavo] < *tla* [tla] 'spawn' + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Tengivo*** [teŋivo] < *tengi* [teŋi] 'pink salmon' + *vo* (Sakhalin), *Tamlavo* < ***Txamlavo*** [t^{h}amlavo] < *txam-* [t^{h}am] 'be abundant' + *la-* [la] <attributive suffix> + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Torvo*** [torvo] < *tor* [tor] 'sand spit' + *vo* (Sakhalin), ***Txulfvo*** [t^{h}ulfvo] < *txulf* [t^{h}ulf] 'winter' + *vo* (*Innokentjevka*, Amur), *Takrvo* < ***Txakkrvo*** [t^{h}aqrvo] < *txakkr* [t^{h}aqr] 'direction towards the opposite shore' + *vo* (Sakhalin).

3.3.17. Compounds with head nouns not referring to a geographical object

A small group of toponyms derived by compounding have a head noun that does not denote a geographical object or topographical feature. In such cases the head noun quite often indicates a body part. As the Nivkh used to perceive Sakhalin as a living marine animal, *nga* [ŋa], the island was imagined as having a head, which was called ***Mift'ongrsh*** [mifcoŋř], and legs, which were called ***Mifngat'x*** [mifŋacx] (cf. section 1).

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Bay
Pil'tun < ***Piltun'm*** [piltuŋm] < *pil(a)-* [pila] 'be big' + *tun'm* [tuŋm] 'finger' (Sakhalin).

Capes
Mift'ongrsh [mifcoŋř] < *mif* [mif] 'land, island' + *t'ongrsh* [coŋř] 'head' (*Cape Maria*, Sakhalin), ***Mifngat'x*** [mifŋacx] < *mif* [mif] 'land' + *ngat'x* [ŋacx] 'leg' (*Capes Aniva and Crillon*, Sakhalin).

River
Pilavags < ***Pilavaghs*** [pilavaɣs] < *pila-* [pila] 'be big' + *vaghs* [vaɣs] 'whitefish' (Sakhalin).

3.3.18. Compounds with a head nominal derived from a verb

Finally, there are at least two compounds that have a nominalized form of a verb as the head noun. The first element, which is a noun, functions as a modifier to this form. The structure of these compounds becomes clear from the following analysis:

In the Amur variety, the full clause with the meaning 'there are many fish bones' is *mark txam-d'* [mark t^{h}amʲ] <fish.bone be.abundant-nmlz/ind>, where the noun *mark* is the subject and the verb *txamd'* [t^{h}amʲ] is the predicate. Note that in this clause the verb occurs in its free form and the initial sound of the verb does not alternate, since the consonant alternations, regularly observed in Nivkh under specific conditions, do not take place between the subject and the predicate. The compound *Markram* < ***Markrsham*** [markřam] looks very similar to this clause, but in reality it has a different syntactic structure, based on a nominal phrase, in which the noun *mark* functions as the attribute to the zero-nominalized form *txam* [t^{h}am]. This analysis is confirmed by the presence of the consonant alternation at the morpheme boundary: the initial consonant [t^{h}] of the head nominal alternates with [ř], resulting in the form [řam]. Consequently, the literal meaning of the compound is 'abundant in fish bones.' A similar path of derivation is valid for the toponym *Nabil'* < ***Ngabil***, cf. *nga pil-nd* [ŋa pilnd] <sea.animal be.big-nmlz/ind> 'the sea animal is big' and *Nga* + *pil* [ŋa + pil] > *Ngabil* [ŋabil] 'big in marine animals.'

Mountain
Markram < ***Markrsham*** [markřam] < *mark* [mark] 'fish bone' + *txam-* [t^{h}am]

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'be abundant' (Amur).

Bay
Nabil' < ***Ngabil*** [ŋabil] < *nga* [ŋa] 'marine animal' + *pil(a)-* [pila] 'be big' (Sakhalin).

4. Semantics of Nivkh toponyms

In section 2, we gave a preliminary view of the semantic types of Nivkh toponyms. In the present section, we will discuss the meanings of place names in more detail. As has been shown, at the first level of classification, Nivkh toponyms can be assigned to one of three types: descriptive toponyms (4.1), occurent toponyms (4.2), and associative toponyms (4.3). In compounds, the semantic type is typically defined by the meaning of the modifying element.

4.1 Descriptive toponyms

Descriptive toponyms can be classified into those referring to size (4.1.1), other qualities (4.1.2), spatial orientation (4.1.3), landscape features (4.1.4), natural phenomena (4.1.5), fauna species (4.1.6), flora species (4.7), and natural substances (4.8).

4.1.1. Size

From our sample, it is clear that the most common quality indicated by the toponyms is the size of a particular place. Quite often, the toponyms of a geographical area form pairs with symmetrical names, e.g. 'small' vs. 'big.' Since size is a rather general and relative characteristic, the corresponding place names are obviously grounded in the local landscape: what is big in one area can be perceived as small in another. As a result, we often find similar names in different regions. For instance, one of the settlements with the name ***Pilvo*** 'Big Settlement' was located at the "border" between the Nivkh and Ainu territories on Sakhalin. It used to be locally the biggest settlement in the area, which was reflected not only in its Nivkh name, but also in its Ainu name *Porokotan* 'Big Settlement.' However, there are also smaller settlements with a similar name in other parts of Sakhalin and in the Amur region. For instance, the Port Sovetskaya Gavan' [Советская Гавань], formerly Imperatorskaya Gavan' [Императорская гавань], is located on the

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mainland coast of the Tartar Strait at the site of the former Nivkh settlement ***Pilavo*** 'Big Settlement.'

The relative nature of naming may be illustrated by the names of the islands belonging to the archipelago of Chastye Islands in the Amur Liman. The archipelago consists of eight islands, all of which have Nivkh names. The biggest island is called ***Pilamif*** 'Big Island,' whereas the smallest one has the name ***Matimif*** 'Small Island.' Another example, already mentioned in section 1, is offered by the names of the local bodies of seawater. Thus, the Amur Liman is called in Nivkh ***Mat'kerkk*** 'Small Sea,' while the Sea Of Okhotsk bears the name ***Pilagerkk*** 'Big Sea.'

Small
Mati 'Small River,' ***Maskngalu*** 'Small Bay,' ***Matimif*** 'Small Island,' ***Mat'kerkk*** 'Small Sea,' ***Mat'vo*** 'Small Settlement,' ***Maskngaluvo*** 'Small Bay Settlement.'

Big
Pilngi 'Big River,' ***Pilagerkk*** 'Big Sea,' ***Pilahitf*** 'Big Island,' ***Pilamif*** 'Big Island,' ***Pilakhrshy*** 'Big Cape,' ***Pilangalu*** 'Big Bay,' ***Pilangyju*** 'Big Stream,' ***Pilavo*** 'Big Settlement,' ***Pildu*** 'Big Lake'(river), ***Pilvo*** 'Big Settlement.'

4.1.2. Other qualities

Toponyms referring to qualities besides size have a less general meaning and often denote rather specific characteristics of a particular place, some of which can be transparent, while others require a knowledge of the context. For instance, the toponyms ***Katangli*** 'Strong River' and ***Noghlvo*** 'Stinking Settlement' both refer to a strong smell of oil, which is characteristic of northern Sakhalin, where oil can be seen even on the land surface. The settlement ***Kkxavla*** 'Hot' is located in the Amur region in the area of hot springs. There are also hot springs on Sakhalin, where one of the rivers is called ***Kkxavli*** 'Hot River.' Both locations were treated as sacred places.

Cheursh 'Dry Island,' ***Eghli*** 'Fast' (settlement), ***Karsinivngi*** 'Having Kerosine River,' ***Katangli*** 'Strong River,' ***Kkxavla*** 'Hot' (settlement), ***Kkxavli*** 'Hot River,' ***Kylangdu*** 'Long Lake,' ***Ngylydymy*** 'Dark Spring,' ***Noghlvo*** 'Stinking Settlement,' ***Nyvrvo*** 'Four Settlements,' ***Plyj*** 'Full River,' ***Txamlavo*** 'Abundant (in fish) Settlement,' ***Tivla*** 'Cold' (settlement), ***Udu*** 'Burned Lake,' ***Uf*** 'Burned Place' (lake), ***Ul*** 'High' (settlement), ***Uldy*** 'Deep Lake.'

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4.1.3. Spatial orientation

In the Amur-Sakhalin region, Nivkh is the only language that has an elaborate system of spatial reference, anchored in the local landscape, as described in (Krejnovich 1960, 1986, Panfilov 1965, Gruzdeva 2008). The system was originally formed in the Amur basin as a riverine one, but it was later extended to a coastal system and also adopted to the insular environment of Sakhalin. With prominent local landmarks, such as rivers (or the sea), forests, and hills, functioning as points of reference, the system involves the opposition of several spatial directions which are fixed along two horizontal and one vertical axis. The horizontal axes are oriented at a river's (or the seacoast's) position as follows: (a) the axis perpendicular to the river (or the seacoast), and (b) the axis parallel to the river. This semantic template is lexicalized in six spatial roots which encode different spatial directions:

Direction	Spatial root
'water' → 'shore,' 'shore' → 'inland,' 'edge of a forest' → 'forest'	***he-*** [he]
'shore' → 'water' / 'opposite shore'	***txa-*** [t^{h}a]
'inland' → 'shore,' 'forest' → 'edge of a forest,' 'upper place' → 'lower place'	***kko-*** [qo]
'lower place' → 'upper place,' 'land' → 'air'	***kxi-*** [k^{h}i]
'source of a river' → 'mouth of a river' (downriver)	***a-*** [a]
'mouth of a river' → 'source of a river' (upriver)	***kxe-*** [k^{h}e]

In the toponymic material, the most frequent roots are those referring to the downriver and upriver directions. For instance, the coastal belt of the Nivkh territory on the mainland is limited by the lakes ***Adu*** (*Orel'*) 'Downriver Lake' and ***Kxedu*** (*Chlja*) 'Upriver Lake,' whose names are defined by the flow direction of the river *Podgornaja* (Река Подгорная), which connects them. There are also several toponyms which are not related to the system described above, but still refer to some spatial concepts.

Downriver

Adu 'Downriver Lake,' ***Adymy*** 'Downriver Spawning Ground' (settlement), ***Akrvo*** 'Downriver Settlement.'

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Upriver
Kxedu 'Upriver Lake,' ***Kxedymy*** 'Upriver Spawning Ground' (settlement), ***Kxekrivlangursh*** 'Upriver Island,' ***Kxekrvo*** 'Upriver Settlement,' ***Kxengalu*** 'Upriver Bay.'

From the shore/coast (towards the opposite shore)
Txakkrvo 'Opposite Shore Settlement,' ***Txanggi*** 'Far Away from the Coast Cape.'

Other
Erkkf 'Cape Aside,' ***Yxmif*** 'Ultimate Land' (*Sakhalin*).

4.1.4. Landscape features

Toponyms often refer to the landscape features associated with a particular place. Most of them, such as ***Pujr*** 'Hill' and ***Uxtr*** 'Cliff' have a fully transparent meaning. Among less obvious names is ***Tyvgheri*** 'Entering River,' which refers to the river flowing (= entering) into a lake.

Chxxarvaxx 'Forest Stone' (settlement), ***Eri*** 'River,' ***Kul*** 'Dune' (settlement), ***My*** 'River Source' (river and settlement), ***Kxryvo*** 'Cape Settlement,' ***Ngalavo*** 'Bay Settlement,' ***Ngyjvo*** 'Bay Settlement,' ***Ozekxrshy*** 'Bend Cape,' ***Palvo*** 'Forested Hill Settlement,' ***Pujr*** 'Hill' (settlement), ***Plyfvo*** 'Glade Settlement,' ***Tor*** 'Sand Spit' (settlement), ***Torvo*** 'Sand Spit Settlement,' ***Tui*** 'Lake River,' ***Tulks*** 'Hole' (settlement), ***Tyvgheri*** 'Entering River,' ***Ursh*** 'Island,' ***Uxtr*** 'Cliff' (settlement), ***Yrkyrsh*** 'Steep Coast' (settlement), ***Vel'vel'bal*** 'Winding Forested Hill,' ***Yrri*** 'Mouth River.'

4.1.5. Natural phenomena

A toponym can be connected with a certain natural phenomenon that is observed in a particular location. As has been already mentioned, the Nivkh name for the Amur River is ***La*** 'Wind.' This may be explained by the strong seasonal winds that are typical of the Amur basin. Another characteristic feature of the Amur, especially in its estuary, is high waves, which in Nivkh are called *lar / larsh*, a word derived from *la* 'wind.' Another catchy place name is ***Kxengvyrkxrshy*** 'Sun Only Cape,' where the name suggests that the sun appears more often than in other places.

Kxengvyrkxrshy 'Sun Only Cape,' ***La*** 'Wind' (*Amur*), ***Larvo*** 'Wave Settlement,' ***Lax*** 'Cloud' (river and settlement), ***Longri*** 'Moon River,' ***Lungvo*** 'Wind

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Settlement,' ***Lursh*** 'Ice' (settlement), ***Tlavo*** 'Spawning Settlement,' ***Tymy*** 'Spawning Ground' (river), ***Txulfvo*** 'Winter Settlement,' ***Udu*** 'Burned lake,' ***Uf*** 'Burned Place' (lake), ***Vajrsh*** 'Whirlpool' (settlement).

4.1.6. Fauna species

A great number of toponyms is based on the names of animals, fishes, birds and insects. The group of animals is dominated by marine mammals, among which the seal clearly stands out as a most popular reference for place names. This is not a surprise, since the seal was the main object of maritime hunting at the coasts and on the islands of the Sea of Okhotsk. The diversity of toponyms based on fish names reflects their distribution in various rivers during the spawning period.

Animals

Kenga 'Whale' (river), ***Langeri*** 'Seal River,' ***Langr*** 'Seal' (island, settlement, and river), ***Langri*** 'Seal River,' ***Langrivo*** 'Seal River Settlement,' ***Ngabil*** 'Big in Marine Animals' (bay, river, and settlement), ***Pomrsh*** 'Beluga Whale' (bay).

Fishes

Arkke 'Big Smelt' (river), ***Arkkevo*** 'Big Smelt Settlement,' ***Chomi*** 'Inside Fish' (river and settlement), ***Lagheri*** 'Salmon River,' ***Laghi*** 'Salmon' (settlement), ***Lokksieri*** 'Putting a Flatfish River,' ***Lokksingala*** 'Putting a Flatfish Bay,' ***Pilavaghs*** 'Big Whitefish' (river), ***Pxronggi*** 'Smelt' (settlement), ***Tengi*** 'Pink Salmon' (river), ***Tengii*** 'Pink Salmon River,' ***Tengivo*** 'Pink Salmon Settlement,' ***T'emrngi*** 'Rudd River,' ***Vaghsi*** 'Whitefish River,' ***Vaghskxry*** 'Whitefish Cape,' ***Vaso*** 'Predatory Carp' (river), ***Xoj*** 'Siberian Taimen' (river, cape, and settlement).

Birds

Chamgu 'Eagles / Shamans' (river), ***Paghi*** 'Partridge' (river), ***Xarngiru*** 'Loon Lake.'

Insects

Poxxvi 'Worm' (bay), ***Unga*** 'Glowworm' (river).

4.1.7. Flora species

Toponyms based on the plant names are not numerous, and they are not easily identified, since many plant names have not been preserved in the memory of the speakers. For instance, we have not been able to identify

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the herb *pyrki*, according to which a river and a settlement were named. The names of the settlement ***Aas*** in the Amur region and the river ***Aghs*** on Sakhalin area based on the name of the same plant *Heracleum sibiricum* (Сибирский борщевик). The difference in the pronunciation is due to the process of fricative loss and the compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel, which took place in the Amur variety.

Aas '*Heracleum sibiricum*' (settlement), ***Aghs*** '*Heracléum sibíricum*' (river), ***Chngyrraxx*** 'Grass Stone' (settlement), ***Haghimif*** 'Ramson Island,' ***Hiskii*** 'Nettle River,' ***Kujngy*** 'Willow' (bay), ***Pyrki*** 'Herb' (river and settlement).

4.1.8. Natural substances

Another small group of toponyms is based on the names of various natural substances and objects. In most cases the toponym points at the presence of such a substance or object in a certain location. For instance ***Ormimif*** 'Clay Land' was located in the area rich of clay, which was an important resource for the Nivkh, who used to add edible white clay to the food.

Kkomrvo 'Sand Settlement,' ***Magghvo*** 'Sand Settlement,' ***Ngarbaxx*** 'Bloody Stone' (island), ***Ormimif*** 'Clay Land' (settlement and island), ***Velghmif*** 'Shell Land' (settlement).

4.2. Occurent toponyms

Occurent toponyms are typically understood as place names referring to various events and activities that regularly take place at a particular location (4.2.1). We included into this group also toponyms denoting the objects and instruments of these activities (4.2.2). All place names of the latter group are related to fishing.

4.2.1. Events and activities

The hydronym ***Vangi*** 'Fighting River' and the oikonym ***Vyskvo*** 'Fighting Settlement' refer to places famous for numerous fightings in the past. The name ***Vengi*** 'Running River' was given to a river where in winter dog races were arranged. In this connection, it should be noted that the Nivkh were the southernmost people who kept dogs and used dog-sleds for transportation. The oikonym ***Ngaukxxomrvo*** 'Caviar Sand Settlement' indicates the place, where caviar was dried on the sand spit. This group also conventionally

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includes the Sakhalin names ***Lyrmif*** 'Floating Island' and ***Lermif*** 'Playing Island.'

Chaxxtatu 'Drinking Water Lake,' ***Chomokkf*** 'Cutting Fish Place,' ***Jyvf*** 'Guarding Place' (settlement), ***Kxezf*** 'Setting of Fishing Nets Place' (settlement), ***Lermif*** 'Playing Island' (*Sakhalin*), ***Lyrmif*** 'Floating Island' (*Sakhalin)*, ***Txyr*** 'Look' (cliff), ***Muzf*** 'Making Poles Place' (settlement), ***Muzvo*** 'Dragging (a boat) Settlement,' ***Ngaukxxomrvo*** 'Caviar Sand Settlement,' ***Potavo*** 'Harvesting Settlement,' ***Pxsu*** 'Washing Oneself' (river), ***Vangi*** 'Fighting River,' ***Vangrkvomif*** 'Warriors Land' (settlement), ***Vengi*** 'Running River,' ***Vyskvo*** 'Fighting Settlement.'

4.2.2. Objects and instruments of activities

Changvaxx 'Hung up (for drying fish) Stone' (river), ***Kkxveseri*** 'Rowing Pole River,' ***Ma*** 'Dried Fish' (river), ***Muzf*** 'Pole Place' (settlement).

4.3. Associative toponyms

Associative toponyms refer to some concrete entity or an abstract concept associated with a particular place. In our sample associative toponyms refer to body parts (4.3.1), household items (4.3.2), natural objects and species (4.3.3), and customs and beliefs (4.3.4).

4.3.1. Body parts

Several toponyms refer to human body parts and indicate the shape of a particular geographical object. For instance, the hydronym ***Piltun'm*** 'Thumb' reflects the form of the bay on the eastern coast of Sakhalin. The same name was later given to the river that flows into this bay and to the settlement located on its coast.

Chylm 'Palm' (settlement), ***Mifngat'x*** 'Land's Leg(s)' (cape(s)), ***Mift'ongrsh*** 'Land's Head' (cape), ***Piltun'm*** 'Thumb' (bay, river and settlement).

4.3.2. Household items

Another small group of toponyms is based on the names of household items, which also have a shape associated with a certain place. For instance the settlement ***Evaj*** 'Under a Comb' is located at the foot of a mountain that resembles a comb in shape. The name ***Pxufbal*** 'Saw Forested Hill' was given to the hill because of its shape similar to the shape of a saw.

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Evaj 'Under a Comb' (settlement), ***Pxufbal*** 'Saw Forested Hill,' ***Tyk*** 'Birch-bark Basket' (bay and cape).

4.3.3. Natural objects and species

There are only two examples in our sample that illustrate association with natural objects and species. The mountain ***Markrsham*** 'Abundant in Fish Bones' got its name because it is covered with the dried curved trunks of dwarf cedar (кедровый стланик), which from afar resemble fish bones. The mountain hollow ***Pxarkk*** 'River Beluga' has the shape of the corresponding fish.

Markrsham 'Abundant in Fish Bones' (mountain), ***Pxarkk*** [p^{h}arq] 'River Beluga' (mountain hollow).

4.3.4. Customs and Beliefs

The most heterogenous groups is represented by toponyms that originate from Nivkh customs and beliefs and are not easily etymologized. Let us consider some relatively clear cases. Historically, the Nivkh lived in small settlements which accommodated people from the same clan. This is reflected in the oikonym ***Kkxalvo*** 'Clan Settlement.' According to (Otaina 1977: 79), in Nivkh mythology rivers and seas are differentiated by gender. This is confirmed by the oikonym ***Arngivo*** 'Male River Settlement.' The etymology of the toponym ***Ozrpaxx*** is not fully clear. One of the hypotheses states that the first element of this compound name derives from the verb *oz-* 'get up' and the whole name refers to a stone (*paxx*) that was used by a local shaman for performing rituals. Several toponyms are derived from the verbal root *ujgh-* which means 'be sacred / sinful.' ***Uighkxry*** 'Sacred Cape' is located north of the settlement ***Kul*** 'Dune' (Коль) on the left coast of the Amur Liman. According to Krejnovich (1973b), the sea-hunters visited this cape on the way to hunt. They dragged their boats to land and made offerings to the Master of the Sea, which was a crucial ritual for a successful hunt.

Arngivo 'Male River Settlement,' ***Kinrshvo*** 'Devil's Settlement,' ***Kkxalvo*** 'Clan Settlement,' ***Milki*** 'Devil's River,' ***Ozrpaxx*** 'Getting up stone' (settlement), ***Ujghlakxuty*** 'Sacred River Channel,' ***Ujzu*** 'Sin' (island), ***Uighkxry*** 'Sacred Cape.'

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5. Conclusions

In this paper we have tried to approach the issue of Nivkh toponomy from various perspectives. Whenever possible, we have linked the toponyms to relevant historical and ethnographic data on the Amur-Sakhalin region and the Nivkh people. At the same time, we have examined the linguistic peculiarities and the dialectal variation observed in the toponymic material. The formal and semantic classifications proposed in this paper could be filled with more material, which, however, would not seem to radically change the general picture. Since in one paper it is impossible to deal with the topic in its entirety, in the following we would like to briefly outline potential paths for future research.

As we have seen, Nivkh toponomy encodes important information about the ways in which indigenous peoples conceptualized the world and perceived their immediate ecological environment. The Nivkh were extremely well aware of the local territory, and noticed the tiniest details of the surrounding landscape not only directly, but also through various kinds of associations. Toponomy has predominantly a local nature and can be truly functional only in a limited territory. This is also suggested by the fact that identical place names are attested in different parts of the Amur-Sakhalin region. Place names not only describe prominent topographical features, but also reflect the various experiences and conceptions of the people who use them. All this is in line with the semiotic view according to which the link between the form and the meaning of toponyms is not arbitrary, cf., e.g., (Radding & Western 2010: 395). Toponyms are also charged with mental and emotional associations connected with time and space, with history and events, with persons and social activities, as well as with oneself and the stages in one's life (Basso 1992: 224). Further research on Nivkh toponyms in the spirit of contemporary linguistic anthropology should focus on the role and effects of the place names on local people's everyday life and self-identification. In view of the endangerment of the Nivkh language, the evocative role of place names should not be underestimated, in that they preserve a memory of the traditional understanding of the surrounding environment. Unfortunately, many indigenous toponyms are already forgotten, and, unlike the situation in some other parts of the world, there are no signs of their active reinstatement in the Amur-Sakhalin region.

The toponyms reveal different historical layers: an indigenous toponym

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can be replaced by another toponym from the same language, from another indigenous language, or from a dominant (colonial) language. All these phenomena are attested in the Amur-Sakhalin region and are awaiting further investigation, in particular from the point of view of political power and control or, in terms of (Harley 2001: 181), "toponymic colonialism."

Toponyms themselves provide extremely important material for the reconstruction of the ethnic and linguistic history of our target region, as they are known to be one of the most conservative elements of local linguistic heritage that may survive even several language shifts (Burenhult & Levinson 2006: 138). Toponyms are one of the few extant sources that allow us to define the homeland of the Nivkh language, its extension in historical times, and the nature of its contacts with neighbouring languages. The next step would be to reconstruct the meanings of many yet non-etymologized items and to create a detailed database of the total indigenous (Nivkh-Ainu-Tungusic) toponymy of the Amur-Sakhalin region. A good model for such work is offered by the volume edited by (Thornton 2012), which focuses on the toponyms of Southeastern Alaska and covers material from languages as different as Haida, Tlingit, Eyak, and Tsimshian.

Another potentially interesting direction of research concerns the phonetic and semantic transfer of place names from Nivkh to other local indigenous languages, as well as to Russian. This line of research is closely connected with the analysis of the folk etymologies that often arise especially under conditions of progressing language obscolescense. As we could see during our fieldwork, in some cases our consultants presented different, more or less reliable or unreliable, views on the origin of one or another term, or they were simply not able to identify any origin. Unfortunately, nowadays internet resources are full of false popular etymologies. It may be hoped that the current paper can provide a step towards clarifying the understanding of the toponymic complex of the area under study, that is the Amur-Sakhalin region.

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