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## **“Taiga” and “River” Components in the Nanai Socio-Tribal Organization at Lake Bolon, the Lower Amur**

*This study explores the socio-tribal organization of the Nanai living near Lake Bolon, with reference to environment and migration, using published and unpublished sources, S.K. Patkanov's statistical materials, and our field data. We employ D.N. Anuchin's spatial distribution and variation method for reconstructing the pattern of settlement and assessing the socio-tribal structure with regard to the contacts between sedentary and nomadic populations in the Lower Amur region. The Lake Bolon area was a transit territory traversed by reindeer herders and hunters on their way to the Pacific coast, and the place whence the Amur natives migrated in various directions. This is where the herding, hunting, and fishing traditions merged. The Nanai settlers selected places that matched their economic specializations, and these places eventually acquired symbolic functions. Small populations merged, and borrowed the names of large territorial groups. Marital contacts and kinship ties are analyzed in detail. Social relationships were regulated by the Dokha institution: clans concluded alliances based on mutual aid. Inter-marriage was allowed only after several generations. The analysis of exogamous clans such as Khodzher, Odzyal, Kile, and Beldy, which had settled near the lake, and the interviewing of the natives suggest that along with the Tungus patrilineal kinship, the matrilineal system predating the Tungus expansion was still practiced.*

*Keywords: Lake Bolon, Nanai, socio-tribal organization, Tungus, Amur component, migration, settlement.*

### **Introduction**

The development of the Middle Amur Lowland is one of the issues in studying the Tungus migration to the Pacific coast. This study aims at revealing the causes of movement of taiga hunters and reindeer herders to the area of distribution of people who were traditionally engaged in river fishing and hunting sea animals. The territory adjacent to the Amur River, with its numerous rivers associated with lakes, should have met the requirements for a taiga hunters' resource base. When considering the issue in this respect, it is important to study the natural potential of this space that is required to reproduce the established economic practices.

On the basis of ethnographic and anthropological materials, L.Y. Kastren, L.I. Shrenk, S.M. Shirokogoroff, and N.Y. Bichurin have established that groups of the Tungus moved across a vast territory, heterogeneous in terms of climatic and natural conditions. The nomadic routes of the migrants passed through the forest-steppe, mountainous areas and plains covered with mixed and coniferous forests, which determined the forms of their economic activities and social life (Bichurin, 1950; Koshkin, 1927; Titov, 1926; Shrenk, 1883; Shirokogoroff, 1926). Archaeological studies conducted by A.P. Okladnikov in the Angara-Lena region established an ancient origin of the Cis-Baikal peoples. A resemblance between the artifacts from Neolithic sites belonging to the

Glazkovo and Serovo cultures and the household items of the local Tungus was revealed (Okladnikov, 1950, 1955). Relying upon archaeological and ethnographic data, G.M. Vasilevich has proved that a birch-bark dugout canoe, smoking vessels, a portable dwelling in the form of a chum tent, and a portable oval crib with high bumpers are not only elements of the economic and cultural activities of taiga hunters, but also markers of the area of distribution of the Cis-Baikal tribes (1957). A.V. Smolyak has discovered very much in common between the language and culture of the Amur-Sakhalin peoples and those of the Evens. For example, the fishing and hunting terminology of the Amur inhabitants has preserved a trace of the pre-Tungus influence. In antiquity, settlers from Eastern Siberian taiga improved a number of fishing implements and renewed their fishing-techniques owing to interaction with the Pacific Coast population (Smolyak, 1980). M.M. Khasanova, relying on the results of her ethnolinguistic research, assumed that the period of the Eastern Siberian community's adaptation to the new conditions was short. The core groups of modern Tungus-Manchu population started coming to the lower Amur territory, which had become deserted for various reasons, in the 17th century, and this process continued till the beginning of the 20th century (Khasanova, 2007: 186–187).

At present, taking into account the study of the ethnic history of the peoples inhabiting the south of the Russian Far East, the need arises for detailed consideration of intercultural contacts in the Lower Amur region. The variability of the characteristics of a culture on a spatial scale can be traced using the research approach developed by D.N. Anuchin. He suggests tracing the geography of the distribution and spread of characteristics inherent in certain anthropological and cultural types. In his opinion, the “points of support” can be the places of settlement, archaeological and natural sites containing information of interest to ethnographers, anthropologists, historians, folklorists, and archaeologists. According to the scholar, mapping certain features (such as lexical forms, burial details, ornamental motifs, etc.) allows tracing of regularities in the distribution of people and in the mutual influence of cultures, i.e. the process of mergence, mixing, and domination (Anuchin, 1902: 11–28).

The configuration of the Middle Amur Lowland area the Tungus expanded into may be exemplified by their distribution along the coast of Lake Bolon. Early in the 20th century, there were four large clans in the Nanai community: Kile, Khodzher, Odzyal, and Beldy. The locations and characters of residential zones are the main elements in reconstruction of their living environment. Unlike those of sedentary populations, the lifestyles of hunters and fishers depend on the environmental conditions. The factual material pertaining to the period

before the 1920s is the most informative with respect to reconstruction of the remote past.

In reconstructing the Amur social environment, determination of its composition is the most difficult task. The majority of ethnographic studies devoted to the Nanai consider the clan organization of the people; therefore, we need to define the concept of “clan” as applied to the Bolon Nanai society (Sem, 1959; Smolyak, 1970, 1975; Shirokogoroff, 1926). The most challenging problem, according to Smolyak, is to distinguish a social unit of the Amur environment, and to determine its parameters in line with the classic definition of a clan (1970: 274; 1975: 76–79). According to the concept accepted by Russian and foreign researchers, a clan as a social institution had its source in early human society, and was an association of relatives descended from a common ancestor (Girenko, 2004: 82–83; Kozlov, 1970). In the Lower Amur clans, noteworthy are also other forms of family and kinship relationships and labor relations within a community or settlement. The Tungus-Manchu territorial formations at Lake Bolon could have had traits typical of the sociocultural communities of Siberia and the Far East; consequently, the development of their clan institutions was exogenous.

#### **Lake and river space as an area of economic and cultural contacts**

The division of the Lower Amur population into groups was caused by the natural features of the territory (alternation and structure of landscape zones, the type of Amur hydrosystem). The left tributaries of the Amur served as routes of communication: moving along them, Siberian Tungus-language tribes reached the main bed of the river. It is in the lower part of the Amur region that the Siberian taiga is connected with the Amur floodplain via rivers with sources at the Bureinsky (the Amgun River) and Badzhalsky (the Tunguska and Gorin rivers) ridges. The foothills on the left-bank part of the Amur region became a zone of contact between the taiga people and sedentary fishermen (Okladnikov, 2003: 393–412). The Evoron and Bolon lakes, with a network of rivers running into the large river, form a connecting link in the Amur floodplain. These are important for maintaining the ichthyofauna balance of the Amur ecosystem. Freshwater lakes with moderate currents serve as places of reproduction for many species of resident (nonmigratory) fish. In spring, the bodies of water are filled with ordinary fish, such as rudd, carp, crucians, Amur catfish, and pike, which come there to spawn and feed. Channels that are filled not only with freshwater species but also with anadroms (salmonids) during the spring-autumn season are of most importance to fishing (Goncharova, 2003; Novomodny, Zolotukhin, Sharov, 2004: 6–15, 35–39; Ozero

Bolon..., (s.a.)). Archaeological finds from the banks of the Tunguska, dating back to ca the 7th century AD, suggest that this area was penetrated by the Tungus, who preserved the taiga fishing traditions in their new environment. The presence of self-activating fishhooks for fishing-rods, boat-hooks, harpoons, and lures for winter and summer fishing among these artifacts points to the fact that small group fishing was practiced in shallow rivers. The organization of fisheries and fishing tools of the ancient inhabitants of Tunguska have much in common with those of Siberian peoples; in particular, the Evens (Zolotukhin, 2013).

Fishing in a large river differs from doing so in the lake and flow-type ones. Studies conducted among the Amur Nanai during the summer fishing season have demonstrated the importance of river islands for fishery. Chum and humpback salmon shoals migrate in a deep water zone, often in midstream. At high water levels and a wide river bed, trailing and fishing of stocks require a good physical state, patience, dexterity, and skill in handling a watercraft in strong currents (FMA, August 2011, observations in the Verkhny Nergen village, September 10–11, 2011). The Amur River bed is not uniform: being squeezed between the spurs of Sikhote Alin and Badzhal, it is divided into arms and small winding rivers, and forms island areas, marches, and floodplain lakes. The value of deep-water places for the vital activities of the Amur population was noted by K.I. Maksimovich (1861–1862) (Maksimovich Karl Ivanovich..., (s.a.): Fol. 2, 16). Areas of land covered by shrub vegetation in the middle of the river have bedrock (flood-free) coasts, sometimes concave; fish often accumulates in the river pools. These water nooks often form backwaters convenient for spawning; a large depth is also favorable for the transit of salmonids. Before the 20th century, nomad camps with boats moored to the opposite low-water (frequently flooded) coasts were often located on small islands in zones with cliffed coasts (FMA, the Naikhin village of the Khabarovsk Territory, informants R.A. and A.K. Beldy, August 2011). The inhabitants of these nomad camps had a direct access to fish resources, and had no need to travel a long way to fishing places. The life strategy of the Amur valley population was based on the experience that presumed knowledge of the river water regime, the species composition and life cycles of ichthyofauna, navigation, ability of handling a boat in various currents, and using specific fishing tools and techniques (Brazhnikov, 1900: 5–61; Lopatin, 1922: 128–129). The fishing equipment of Amur fishermen was more complicated than that of taiga hunters or reindeer herders. The latter needed time to acquire new professional skills. Channels that connect lakes with the river, and through which ordinary fish run to the river and travel along the way of salmonids, are most suitable for fishing. People living in the taiga band



Fig. 1. The territory of settlement of the Amur and Bolon Nanai.

and in the valleys of big rivers developed their fishing techniques on the channel's banks.

The means of water transport employed by the population of tributaries and main stem of the Amur River is light small craft, which can be easily carried over. While maneuverable in shallow waters, they proved to be inefficient in open waters with strong currents. These were mainly dugouts or birch-bark canoes designed for a single rower, and intended for rafting down mountain rivers, sometimes against the current (Sem, 1973: 146–147, 153–159). Similar boats were probably used by the Tungus penetrating into the Amur valley. Subsequently, development of new expanses by newcomers became possible through borrowing the Amur design for boats (Ibid.: 151).

The Gorin Nanai retain a memory about their travel route to the Orochis living on the coast of the Strait of Tartary. At first, they moved in birch-bark canoes along the Gorin, a tributary of the Amur River. Having passed through the mouth of the Gorin, the Nanai went down the river to the mouth of the Amur, and reached Langr Island, “simultaneously visiting all their relatives” who had settled along the banks of the great river (Samar, 1990). During travel, boats adapted for small river navigation were at first replaced by large Amur vessels, and then by stout sea-going vessels. The stories told by informants furnish insights into the degree of integration of the Lower Amur peoples, which was determined by their experience of living in taiga conditions. The taiga with its “small fast-flowing rivers”, being the major

spatial references, formed familiar surroundings for hunters on foot and reindeer herders. But a large river with its powerful current frightened them. Having left the taiga, its inhabitants settled near the channels and branches of the Amur River, related to a group of lakes (Evoron, Bolon) (Khasanova, 2007: 187). These territories were the resource base and launching pad for the development of the Amur valley, a place for interpenetration of traditions between the taiga hunters and the Amur fishermen.

### Settlements and clan composition of the Nanai living in the lake space on the left bank of the Amur River

The system of settlements and the family composition of the inhabitants are the evidence of their migratory activities in the area adjacent to Lake Bolon. The most informative source is the data collected by S.K. Patkanov with respect to the Khabarovsk Okrug of the Primorye, and presented in the 1897 Census.



Fig. 2. The area of the Lake Bolon valley. Black dots indicate nomad camps of the Odzyal, Kile, and Khodzher clans.

The nomad camps with the Goldi population registered by him, such as Zhape (Dzhape), Nemaso, Somoomo, Khutun, Gogda-Mungali, Pudi (Puiddi), Kherelgu, Khevechen, Seporyuna (Seporelo), were located on the left coast of Lake Bolon; the Nergul and Bolon nomad camps were on the left bank of the Khaunsi channel; the Utku nomad camp was on the left bank of the Nadki channel; and the Nadki nomad camp was on the right coast. The names of the Ordan, Tyrkel (Khulusen), Oita (Oitada), and Limpan settlements are given in the list with no indication of their location (Patkanov, 1912: 959–960). On average, five or six households with a population size of 33 persons were recorded in each settlement. Bolon, the largest settlement, comprised 26 households, with a population of 116 persons; while Oita, the smallest nomad camp, consisted of 1 household and 6 persons (Ibid.). The clan composition of the population of the said nomad camps is interesting. In the 1897 Census, in this area, the Nanai clans of Beldai (Beldy), Kilen (Kile), and Khodzhar (Khodzher) are listed, which represented the intertwining of various genetic lineages. In each of the nomad camps, there lived members of various clans. The locations of certain settlements are hard to determine, because some of them disappeared, and many others were renamed and relocated to flood-free areas later, when collective farms were created. At the time Patkanov collected his data, the biggest group was composed of temporary settlements that, judging by their population size, were founded by associations of fishermen and hunters. The results of recent interviews with old residents from among the Bolon Nanai living in the Achan and Dzhuen villages have given the overall picture of the Bolon shore development. On the left shore of the lake, each cape (Saktakhonko, Yapankakhonko, Nuchikhonko, etc.) was occupied by a separate nomad camp (FMA, the Amursky District of the Khabarovsk Territory, informants I.V. Gaer, V.M. and L.A. Kile, June 23, 24, 2016). Patkanov mentions numerous representatives from various Nanai clans, who resided in this zone of nomad camps. In Zhape (Dzhape), the fishing team included members of the Beldai/Beldy (32 persons) and Kilen/Kile (15 persons) clans, while the one in Somoomo included members of the Beldy clan (14 persons). All other sparsely populated villages on the left bank were founded by the Kile people. Apart from the Kile and Beldy clans, a Khodzher group settled along the channels that connected the lake with Amur. Notably, the members of the Kile clan (184 persons) inhabited Seporyuna/Soporelo, one of the most heavily populated settlements located on the left bank, and representatives of the Kile (12 persons) and Khodzher (104 persons) clans lived along the Khaunsi channel (Patkanov, 1912).

In the 1970s, a researcher of figurative words in the Tungus-Manchu languages, N.B. Kile, tried to determine the semantics of certain toponyms in the Lake Bolon area. His report, currently stored in the archive of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Peoples of the Far East FEB RAS, provides the already changed names from the terrain adjacent to the lake, which are more consonant with modern cartographic toponyms. The list of clans compiled by N.B. Kile is supplemented by the Odzyal clan; the list of nomad camps specifies Bolan (Bolon), Zuen (Dzhuen), Ordan, Yapan, and Nergul. The area of distribution of the Kile, Khodzher, Beldy, and Odzyal clan groups includes the Natki, Simin, and Kharpi rivers. According to N.B. Kile, the reduction in the number of settlements recorded in the last third of the 20th century should be associated with the disappearance of small settlements, the merging of temporary nomad camps, and the consolidation of inhabited localities along the Amur in the course of the collectivization and commercial development of the territory. In his report, N.B. Kile points out that in the 1930s, Nanai clans were resettled to the Bolon and Dzhuen villages (1977: Fol. 47–48). In 1977, the Bolon village was renamed as Achan. As it follows from the report by N.B. Kile, an Odzyal nomad camp was earlier located near the Serebryanaya channel, at the foot of the Gokdakta mountain (referred to as the Kadan Khonkoni by the author of the report (Ibid.: Fol. 49)). Another name of the Kadan Khonkoni oronym is Ozal Khonkoni ('Odzyal cliff'); this is encountered in the records by R.K. Maak made in 1855 (1859: 192–193). A Khodzher nomad camp was located along the Nakka River, and a Kile camp near the Nergul promontory. Before the 20th century, clans lived separately. The choice of settlement location near a channel connecting the lake with the river was dictated by the settlers' economic activities. The subsistence of local communities was based on catching both lake and migratory fish (FMA, the Achan village, the Khabarovsk Territory, informants L.A. and V.M. Kile, June 24, 2016).

The results of the detailed analysis of Nanai clan composition conducted by A.V. Smolyak and Y.A. Sem serve as a basis for reconstructing the migratory activities at Lake Bolon. Notably, large tribal coalitions (Khodzher, Beldy, Kile, and Odzyal), which in the beginning of the 20th century were attributed to the Nanai, adopted small territorial groups during their settlement in the Bolon valley. The genesis of the above conglomerates provides the chance to depict the ethnocultural appearance of the Bolon group of local population more accurately. Though separation of clans by territorial principle was not noted in Nanai society, each village was formed as a territorial neighboring community. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, special features of the distribution and migration of the Tungus group could be distinguished, which were determined by economic activities. Studying

the Beldy and Kile clans has revealed that their core was formed by descendants from various areas of Asia.

It is necessary to clarify the issues of self-designation and mutual designations of groups. Sem related the word "Kile" to the ethnonyms "Teli", "Tsilen (Kilen)" that trace their origin to the self-designation of a group inhabiting the Ussuri area in the 6th to the beginning of the 7th century AD. In the 8th to 10th century, this community expanded owing to the inflow, to the Amur and Sungari, of Tungus, who could have participated in the formation of the Korean and Northern Chinese populations. The Kile clan was also supplemented by recent resettlers from the Amgun and Bureya rivers, assimilated by the Tungus (Sem, 1959: 6). Interestingly, the researchers of the second half of the 19th to the early 20th century considered the *Kili*, as well as the *Samagir*, a separate ethnic group. They differed from their neighbors in terms of culture and language. Their area included left tributaries of the Amur, including the Kur and Urmi rivers with good hunting lands (Shrenk, 1883: 34–35). A. Lipsky considered the *Kilen (Kili)* an independent community that merged with the Goldi group. The Nanai clans of Udyinka, Donka, and Yukaminka were territorial subdivisions of the *Kili*. The researcher outlined territory of their habitat—the Tunguska River and Lake Bolon (the Duncan branch) (Lipsky, 1925). Smolyak also related the ethnonym *Kilor* to the Evens' native name for themselves (1975: 120). This clan was extremely branched and numerous. A large Kile group living in the Dondon, Torgon, and Naikhin villages and recorded in 1897 consisted of two branches. The first branch was formed by several generations of descendants from area of the Amgun River. The second branch consisted of the ancestors of the Kimonko Udege people from the Khor River. Like Sem, Smolyak traces this kindred community to the population of the Ussuri tributaries. In the past, the Ussurian group resettled to the Khor River; having become related to few local Udege, they started calling themselves "Kimonko". Having resettled to the Anyui River, the Kimonko mixed with the Amur Kile and borrowed their name from them (Ibid.: 120–121).

The Beldy conglomerate was also formed in a vast territory. Sem pointed out that initially the Beldai people constituted an independent tribal community, which was enlarged at the expense of adopted groups in the 18th to 19th centuries. Eventually, in this conglomerate, three branches were formed by various territorial subdivisions: indigenous (4 subdivisions), Tungus (30 subdivisions), and those with Ainu admixture (13 subdivisions). When considering the formation of the territorial groups, it is noteworthy that resettlers from the Ussuri merged both with the Beldy and with the Kile clans. The Ussuri migrants were included in the alliance of Solons, who called themselves the "Boral". Later, this kinship community resettled to the Amur.

The Morial group, whose members were engaged in horticulture and fishing, is also related to the Ussuri area. This group is attributed to the descendants of the ancient Mulin/Morin clan, living along both banks of the Ussuri River in the 17th to 18th centuries (Sem, 1959: 8–9). Smolyak gave a list of the territorial Beldy subdivisions, which names correspond to the names of the inhabited localities and channels whence migrants arrived. Sem, attributing the territorial names to the ethnonyms, extended the list of Nanai clans. For instance, Smolyak considered the Morial (Moril) group specified in his list to be territorial. Its name appeared recently, and was not recorded in the 1897 Census (Sem, 1959: 8–9; Smolyak, 1975: 111–112). The issue of the genesis of the Aktanka and Perminka clans remains unsolved. The residents of the Naikhin, Dzhary, and Dada villages argued that the up-river Beldy people call themselves “Aktanka”. The Nanai from the Beldy clan considered Perminka to be a subdivision of themselves, rather than an independent clan. According to Smolyak’s data, some members of the Aktanka and Perminka clans denied their kinship to the Beldy; i.e. only part of the Aktanka and Perminka joined the large clan (Ibid.: 118–121).

The Khodzher/Khedzher clan, as pointed out by Sem, combined 15 patronymies, and was more compact than the Beldy and Kile clans. Its formation proceeded in the Amur River basin and in the Sungari River valley. Sem considered that its core was formed by the ancient Khechzhery/Khechzhe Manchu clan. Also, one branch and two subdivisions of the Khodzher/Khedzher clan originate from the Dongbei farmers and Chinese of Shandong Province. Upon resettlement to the Amur, these groups became enlarged at the expense of the indigenous population and the Tungus (Sem, 1973: 7). Smolyak distinguished four main branches in the clan’s genesis. One of these was formed by newcomers from the Amgun, who divided into two groups, and headed for the Amur Liman and the upper reaches of the Amur. The second one consisted of settlers from the upper reaches of the Amur and Sungari; the third, of migrants from Yakutia. The fourth branch was formed on the basis of the local population living near Bolon Lake, and incorporated representatives of former waves of migration. The Khodzher clan, which was composed of people living in a vast territory, is less scattered than other large Nanai clans, and its members consider the surroundings of Lake Bolon their native land (Smolyak, 1975: 120).

Sem attributed the Odzyal clan, consisting of seven subdivisions, to the Sungari aboriginals that resettled to the Amur at various times. Kindred of Odzyal people can be found among the Koreans and Chinese. According to Sem, the ethnonym Udzi (Utszi) encountered in Manchu documents of the 17th century is directly related to the Odzyal clan (1959: 7). Smolyak has ascertained that migrants from Amgun who blended into the Fuzyal

group living in the Nanai region participated in formation of the Bolon and Khungari Odzyal subdivisions (1975: 127–128).

Recently collected field data show that Nanai settlers organized their living space in the Lake Bolon area in accordance with their family economic practices. Before the 20th century, the Kile selected areas suitable for reindeer breeding, while the Khodzher and Odzyal people settled near channels. The toponyms of settlements located on the left shore of the lake and near the Amur reflect special features of the territory’s development by these groups. Many oronyms and hydronyms designate details of landscape (they are interpreted as “mound”, “cliff”, “mountain protrusion”, “rock”, “promontory”, “creek”, “river”, “lake”, “lakelet”, “river mouth”), or terrain orientation relative to the cardinal directions (“mountainous”, “southern”, “northern”, “northwestern” side, “southeastern” or “northwestern” wind, location relative to the lake), or indicate a form of subsistence activity (Pun gavoi hureni – ‘a mountain at the foot of which fishing sinkers (for seine) are collected’; Teisin – ‘a fish processing place’). Analysis of figurative words in the Nanai language, conducted by N.B. Kile, has demonstrated that some toponyms relating to the Bolon Lake area are etched in the legendary history of the Lake Nanai people (1977: Fol. 52–54). The Nergul promontory and the islands of Yadasen, Giudelgien, Piselgien, and Bayan Boachakan serve as the places of shamanic strength, and are mentioned in the legends about “a bald bride and her bridegroom”, “walking stones”, and “a stone fish”. This may be evidence of the Bolon Nanai aboriginal substrate. The islands and area near the Serebryanaya channel, showing a high concentration of legendary places, pertain to the area of distribution of the Khodzher and Odzyal clans, whose ancestors could have been among the first settlers.

### **Kinship ties and regulation of kinship relationships among the Bolon Nanai**

In order to distinguish the first settlers in the Lower Amur group of peoples, it is necessary to study the kinship succession algorithms of local population. The mechanism for strengthening kinship ties and the formation of conglomerate clans was regulated by certain ethical standards and social attitudes, and also depended on natural factors. Researchers N.A. Lipskaya, Y.A. Sem, A.V. Smolyak, and V.A. Tugolukov analyzed such a social phenomenon as the *Dokha* institution, which existed among the Tungus-Manchu peoples living in the lower reaches of the Amur River. Upon penetration of the Manchu into the Amur region in the 16th to 17th centuries, the traditions of ownership of ancestral territories and tribal lands practiced by the local population started

collapsing. The fishing and hunting areas were distributed among separate families, which resulted in competition for the right to hold territories of hunting or fishing value. By the 19th century, a situation had formed in the river valley, whereby families belonging to various clans and unrelated genetically could live within the same territory. Each nomad camp was a territorial neighboring community with common economic territory. The space occupied by clan groups near the Amur coast was rather extensive. Having lost their territorial integrity and ceased to be an economic unit, the Nanai clan survived as a social and religious association. The clan had a common fire (*em tava*) and a common place of burial (*em khumun*), adhered to the rule that prohibited intermarriages (*mendola asi naiva achasi*), and helped orphaned kinsmen in giving large clannish funeral repasts in memory of the deceased\* (Sem, 1959: 14). Upon the collapse of kinship communities and with clan segmentation, the *Dokha* relationships also underwent transformation. Before that, the term *Dokha* meant certain responsibilities of the kinship community members; for example, joint participation in the wars between clans, observance of the exogamy rules, etc. After the clan's isolation had been broken, these responsibilities spread also to new clan groups and territorial associations included in the recipient clan. In the opinion of Sem, the *Dokha* relationships were concluded between kinship groups of a single clan, and also between the adopted and adopting groups (1959: 17). The researcher came to the conclusion that the *Dokha* institution was rather a remnant of the Nanai phraternal organization, and corresponded to the social religious brotherhood (*kep bi Dokha* – ‘close brotherhood’). Earlier, it regulated the relationships between the filial clans of the brotherhood; later, inside the adopted clans and territorial groups. After the breakdown of phratries, the *Dokha* functions were transferred to the alliance of territorial groups. The large clans of Kile, Beldy, Khodzher, and Samar, which separated out in the 19th century, preserved their phraternal organization (Ibid.: 18). However, Smolyak believed that *Dokha* was only typical of small clan groups, while the relationships in the large Nanai clans were regulated on another basis. Thus, she denied both the relation of this institution to a community, functioning as an alliance of clans, and the remnant type of this social phenomenon (Smolyak, 1975: 130). Tugolukov has identified common ethnic elements in the Tungus-Manchu peoples from the example of the social structure of the Orochis and Udege. These elements, being a result of convergence of various territorial groups, arose from the exogamous bans according to the *Dokha* institution. Members of a blood kinship community avoided marriage, not only with each other, but also with

members of other blood kinship communities scattered in a vast territory. In the course of a clan's fragmentation, its exogamous chain lengthened; families and some of their members, having left their initial place of living, acquired new ethnonym at a new place, but maintained ties with their kinsfolk. This suggests that the *Dokha* alliance was initially concluded between kinship communities, and formed the basis of regulation of marital relationships and of establishment and control of social and religious order (Tugolukov, 1972). The *Dokha* alliance was sealed by giving a widow to another clan, after which both clans became twinned with each other (“brotherhood clans”); they undertook a commitment to help each other in economic matters, court trials, and religious events, while observing exogamy (Smolyak, 1982: 241–242).

Within large Nanai clans, members of various branches or territorial groups could enter into marriages. For example, the Bolon Beldy effected marriages with the Amur Beldy. In the Kile clan, members of the Udege and Amgun subdivisions were initially considered to be close relatives. Therefore, in their mutual relationships they adhered to the custom of “lighting the lamp”. This custom consisted in keeping alight the common clan fire, to which the members of other clans had no access. Though exogamous relationships were preserved in such a tribal coalition, with time the ban on establishing marriage ties between subdivisions was removed. Another conglomerate (the Khodzher clan) was more compact and was a community of genetically close people. According to Smolyak, in the 1877–1880s, marriages in the area at Lake Bolon were regulated. Husbands from the Khodzher took their wives from the Kile, Odzyal, and Diger clans. The down-river Odzyal maintained exogamous relationships with the Saigor group. Interestingly, the up-river and down-river Odzyal people even never heard of each other (Smolyak, 1975: 117–121, 127–128, 188).

The family and marital traditions maintained by the Lower Amur peoples were regulated by their social and legal attitudes. The procedure of choosing marriage partners and the kinship nomenclature were formed as early as the beginning of the 20th century. Membership of clans among the Lower Amur peoples was determined, not by relation to a particular territory, with its unique environment, but by the features of social and religious ties. There were some differences between the social processes of the groups living immediately in the Amur valley and along the banks of its tributaries. The first-type groups had the developed culture of river fishermen, which included some elements of cultures belonging to the “taiga” East-Siberian population and the “agricultural” southern one. In the culture of the second groups, occupying the area at Lake Bolon with its network of rivers, marital relations were permanently revised. This area was one of the zones of Tungus penetration into this region.

\*Archive of the MAE RAS. F. 5, Inv. 2, No. 47, 48, 53.

The results of interviews conducted in 2016 in the Dzhuen and Achan villages allow the conclusion to be drawn that in the territory near Lake Bolon, remains of the pre-Tungus family and marital system were preserved. Some interviewees (76 men and 26 women were interviewed) indicated that before the introduction of a passport system, their last (family) names were inherited through female lineage. This suggests the existence of the matrilineal kinship system in the population of this region. Tugolukov, studying the *Dokha* institution and the levirate among the Orochis and the Udege, pointed to an important aspect: according to the custom, not only a kinsman of the dead husband could marry a widow. Descendants of a woman, even by different husbands, were related by blood, and intermarriages between them were banned. Consequently, the descendants of one woman were related by the same clan (“family”) name. This is inconsistent with the patrilineal kinship that became widespread among the Tungus. Exogamous bans through female lineage were observed among the Ainu and Nivkhs (Tugolukov, 1772: 111–112). As studies have shown, the territory near Bolon was a social “refugium” where remnants of the Amur kinship system survived to our days.

### Conclusion

The area located in the foothills of the Badzhalsky and Bureinsky ridges, on the periphery of the East Siberian taiga and the Amur floodplain, since olden times has been a zone of contact between the Siberian and Amur peoples. The coast of Lake Bolon, with its channels and a network of rivers, became one of the first places where the Tungus, who migrated to the Pacific Coast and had the skills of hunters and reindeer herders, integrated themselves into the community of fishermen living near large rivers. They developed the new environment by the use of fishing and hunting techniques, and transport facilities typical of small and large bodies of water. The social organization of the Bolon population also underwent changes. The closeness of the river caused an inflow of the Amur population into this environment; however, the remaining cultural and economic differences at first prevented the mixing of these groups. The separate lives of groups with close ties to Siberia or Amur were preserved till the early 20th century. In a social context, the “taiga” or “river” component was present in the genealogy of inhabitants of nomad camps; the origin of their clans was related to the area of Siberia or the Amur basin. Analysis of the system of settlements and kin relationships between their inhabitants has revealed special features in the formation of the population in the Bolon area. This territory was not included in the zone of migratory activities. Its location in the periphery of the Amur basin has determined its role

as a unique refugium, where small groups of migrants from various regions of Eastern Siberia and the Amur valley settled. Further studying the gene pool of the Bolon Nanai will help in determining the scale of Tungus expansion in the Amur valley and in refining certain nuances of the familial and marital relationships of the Lower Amur peoples.

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