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Wanderwörter, areality and borders – the word for ‘bread’ in selected areas of Eurasia

In the following essay, the distribution of a well-known *Wanderwort*, the word *ñan* ‘bread’ will be investigated. Whereas this word is well known in the Uralic languages of European Russia and Western Siberia and should be considered a *Wanderwort*, Taimyrian Samoyedic languages and the extinct Southern Samoyedic languages belong to different cultural areas, where different lexemes are attested. From an areal perspective, this distribution shows several interesting historical borders among which the river Yenisei plays an important role.

1. Wanderwörter – words traveling across language boundaries

The etymological study of words is usually divided into the study of inherited words and loanwords. The latter, of course, are of importance for the dating of e.g. language contacts or dating of sound changes. Still, there is another set of words, often known as *Wanderwörter*, which are equally interesting though mainly for cultural-historical concerns. Evergreens are e.g. the words for ‘coffee’ and ‘tea’ and at least the latter found its place on a map of its own in WALS (Dahl 2013). Whereas the vast majority of languages in WALS show forms related to Sinitic *cha* or Min Nan Chinese *te*, there are of course also other lexemes used for designation. Whereas in the clear majority of Uralic languages *Wanderwörter*, which derive from either of the two lexemes, are in everyday use, there are indeed languages like Southern Saami, which prefer indigenous concepts e.g. *prihtjege* for coffee (derived from bitter) and *löövje* for tea (derived from leaf). Unfortunately, this language, albeit its geographical proximity to the compiler of the aforementioned WALS map, had not found its way into the database.

Potentially, *Wanderwörter* can also be of high age, and a very interesting study from a Northern Eurasian perspective was conducted by Joki, who discussed several lexemes focusing on reindeer, elk and similar animals in Uralic

and beyond (Joki 1973). To this, one may add the Proto-Uralic mouse **šijere*, which is considered a Wanderwort with related forms in several Tungusic languages (e.g. Sinor 1975, 248–249).¹

In the following, I intend to shed some more light on the geographical spreading of the word for ‘bread’ in languages of Western Russia, Western and Central Siberia, where several meaningful cultural-geographical boundaries can be observed. As languages may have more than one word for the translation equivalent of bread (e.g. Estonian *leib* and *sai*),² the following discussion is centred on the distribution and transition from the well-known Middle Iranian loanword *naan* to the Russian word *хлеб*.

2. The word for ‘bread’ in European Russia, Western and Central Siberia

In a variety of Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic languages of Western Russia and Western Siberia, one finds the aforementioned prominent Middle Iranian loanword, which is known as *ńań* in a number of languages:^{3 4} Udmurt: *ńań* (Korhonen 1987, 175a); Komi: *ńań* (Uotila 1942, 173b); Mansi: *нянь* (Rombandeeva 1954, 338); Northern Khanty: *ńań* (Toivonen 1948, 623a, 624b); Eastern Khanty (Vasyugan): *нянь* (Mogutaev 1996, 177); Tundra Nenets: *ńań* (Lehtisalo 1956, 308a,b); Forest Nenets: *нянь* (Barmič & Vella 2002, 279). To this list, also Selkup needs to be added as *ńań* is attested in all varieties (Alatalo 2007, entry 1658). In another recent Selkup dialect dictionary, which also includes many forms from the southern dialects, also *ней* as well as *няй* are attested (Bykonja et al 2005, 145; 160).⁵ Without a doubt, these forms belong to *ńań*. Finally, also in Yeniseian, the same lexeme is attested in Ket. In Donner’s materials one finds *ńēń* (Joki 1955a, 75), which is confirmed in Werner’s materials *²naʔnʹ* ~ *²nāʔnʹ*. For other Yeniseian languages, such as Kott in the south, one finds *harai* ~ *herai* or *ipak* ~ *iptak* (all Werner 2002, III: 184). The latter *ipak* ~ *iptak* is clearly of Turkic origin already attested in Old Turkic as *ötmäk* (Nadeljaev 1969: 393a) as well as in contemporary languages, e.g. Hakas *inek* (Surbakova et al 2006, 145). The same Turkic borrowing is also attested in

1. A terminological disclaimer is in order here. Although I will speak of Wanderwörter connected to the word for ‘bread’ throughout this contribution, their spreading and dating is hardly problematic, especially when comparing them to ancient Wanderwörter like **šijere*. The ultimate reason why I call them Wanderwörter is the fact that they have spread and crossed several language borders in a similar way that more ancient Wanderwörter have done.

2. A similar word of caution is necessary for Siberia. What is nowadays referred to as *хлеб* is also every once in a while talked about as *лепёшка*. For Yukaghir, Kurilov (2003, 239) classifies *лэпэскэ* (< Ru: *лепёшка*) as an earlier borrowing and *кильэп* (< Ru: *хлеб*) as a more recent. As already mentioned, the following study is focusing on the word for ‘bread’ and not on the product.

3. Both Mari and Mordvin show an etymologically unrelated lexeme not relevant for the discussion here.

4. In the following, all forms are given in a simplified transliteration. Apart from its meaning ‘bread’, several dictionaries also give a further translation as ‘grain, crop’. In the following, only the meaning ‘bread’ is considered. Although the meaning ‘crop, corn’ is equally important in areas where corn may be grown, this secondary meaning is mostly absent in those areas of Siberian, where ‘corn’ can no longer be cultivated.

5. Similar forms are also given by Castrén (1855, 210).

Donner's materials on Kamas as *īpp^ak* (Joki 1944, 194) as well as in Castrén's Kamas materials as *ippäk* (Castrén 1855, 210). Finally, also in the scarce materials on Mator *ипекъ* is found (Helimski 1997, 251).⁶

The fact that the word *ńań* is attested in a variety of Uralic languages and additionally in Ket, which is known for its long lasting contacts with Selkup, hardly comes as a surprise. Further, as *ńań* is considered an old Middle Iranian borrowing into Proto-Permic (Csúcs 2005, 311, 314), the Wanderweg of this particular word from Permic to the East is hardly problematic. A decisive role should be assigned to Ižma Komis, who are known for their emigration and to a certain degree also trading connections with the East (Povod 2006, 31ff). They may have introduced the word to speakers of various eastern Uralic languages, probably first to Ob-Ugric from which this lexeme was mediated further to the Samoyedic languages Tundra and Forest Enets and finally to Selkup, from where it reached the Kets via the well-known Selkup contacts.⁷ When turning to Central and Southern Siberia we see no traces of this word any longer. In the extinct Southern Samoyedic languages Kamas and Mator, as well as the extinct Yeniseian language Kott, we find a lexeme of Turkic origin. However, when turning to the Yeniseian North, a markedly different picture evolves.

3. The word for 'bread' in the Yeniseian North

In the Yeniseian North, one finds two different lexemes whose distribution coincides with the river Yenisei. Taimyrian Nenets uses *ńań*⁸ but it is known that the Tundra Nenetses are recent newcomers on the Taimyr Peninsula.⁹ In contrast to Tundra Nenets, the other Taimyrian Samoyedic languages (Tundra Enets, Forest Enets and Nganasan) have a nativized version of the Russian lexeme *хлеб* 'bread' e.g. Forest Enets *kirba*, Tundra Enets *kilroba* (Castrén 1855, 210), Nganasan *kiriba* (Castrén 1855, 210) and Dolgan *kileep*.¹⁰ The fact that all languages show a nativized form demonstrates that this Russian borrowing belongs to an older sphere of loan words.¹¹ However, a note of caution is in order here: it is possible that Dolgan *kileep* as well as Yakut *клиэн* are individual borrowings from Russian and not mediated by Taimyrian Samoyedic. After all, all Taimyrian Samoyedic languages have undergone an *l > r* shift, which is absent in Dolgan (and Yakut). The fact that all four languages have added an emphatic vowel to split the Russian onset cluster *xl-* is typologically similar,

6. A similar lexeme is also attested in Tatar *икмәк* (Ganiev et al 2002, 108), but apparently not in Chuvash which has *çăкăр* (Skvorcov & Skvorcova 2006, 115).

7. For a recent overview on Samoyedic-Ket contacts see Siegl (2012).

8. For Potapovo I have documented that apart from *ńań*, also *leşka* was frequently used (< Ru: *песка*). The change in the onset *r > l* is regular.

9. Further background can be found in Siegl (2013, 40–47).

10. Forest Enets and Dolgan forms derive from my field materials. For Taimyrian Evenki, no representative data is available.

11. Nativized forms are already attested in Castrén (1855, 210). Concerning Nganasan it is likely that the Nganasan word may have been mediated by Enets.

yet language specific.¹² Second, as Dolgans have entered the Taimyr Peninsula from the East, both along the Xeta River and from the South East from the Jesej Area in contemporary Evenkija, it is likely that Dolgan had contacts with Russian before arriving on the Taimyr Peninsula.¹³ Switching perspective, one could also speculate whether a potential reverse borrowing from Dolgan into Taimyrian Samoyedic could be thought of. At least from a cultural-historical perspective, this seems possible. First, both Dolgan and Yakut show a definitive layer of older Russian borrowings in both lexicon and syntax; the slightly more intensive Russian layer in Dolgan in comparison to Yakut has been connected to the assimilation of local Old Believers and by early orthodox missionary impact (Popov 1934; Dolgix 1963; Ubrjatova 1985, 67–74).¹⁴ Second, among the Taimyrian indigenous population, only Tundra Nenetses and Dolgans were subject to Orthodox mission and thereby at least mild to moderate influence of Russian culture;¹⁵ in contrast, Enetses and especially Nganasans were hardly reached by the Orthodox mission. Third, Dolgans were instrumental as assistants in Russian trade relations between Dudinka and Xatanga (Middendorf 1956, 136–137; Voronkin 1984, 37). Nevertheless, this cultural component does not find support in the linguistic data. Whereas the Enets-Nganasan $l > r$ sound change is neutral in this respect, the nativized form in both languages ends in a vowel *-a* which suggest that the borrowed form might be a reflex of the Russian genitive/partitive form *хлебá*. Dolgan/Yakut forms end in a consonant and in declension, a high vowel following the rules of vowel harmony appears *kileebi* [bread.ACC].¹⁶ Finally, also both quality and quantity of the long vowel in the second syllable imposes problems. This, then, points to a straight older borrowing from Russian, most probably from local Old Believers and not from standard Russian.

Summing up, concerning the word ‘bread’, the Taimyrian Samoyedic languages are located in a transitional area, which by itself must be considered a third area in the territory under investigation; neither *ńań* nor a Turkic lexeme is attested and the Taimyr Peninsula (with the exception of Tundra Nenets on its western border) belongs to a third type in which nativized forms ultimately deriving from Russian *хлеб* are found.

12. Stachowski (1999) has studied the nativization of Russian borrowings has been studied in detail for the case of Dolgan by Stachowski (1999), similar. Similar detailed studies for Taimyrian Samoyedic are missing yet.

13. Yakut dialectology, which is in general rather critical concerning the status of Dolgan as an independent language, admits that the closest related Yakut dialect is indeed the Jesej dialect (Voronkin 1984).

14. As Stachowski (1999, 9ff, 21–23) has mentioned it is often quite impossible to date a lexical Russian borrowing in Dolgan, and this question has to be approached carefully.

15. For Tundra Nenetses, the Russian settlement Tolstoj Nos (Predtečenskaja 2005) and probably Dudinka seemed to have played a major role; for Dolgan the role of Xatanga is quite obvious but hardly mentioned. Some indirect remarks are also found in Dolgix (1963).

16. Morphological voicing in intervocalic position triggered by suffixation is a regular process in Dolgan.

4. Stray notes on the territory east of the Taimyr Peninsula

As the discussion so far has shown, the Taimyr Peninsula as the eastern border of the Uralic language family does no longer fall into the two groups mentioned in the beginning of this paper. For the sake of completeness, a short account on the word for 'bread' in geographically closer indigenous languages, such as Evenki, Even and (Tundra) Yukaghir, will be attempted here as the resulting picture shows that the Yenisei should be considered the western border of an area, in which nativized versions of Russian *хлеб* start to dominate.

As already mentioned above, there are no descriptions of local Taimyrian Evenki published. This is unfortunate for two reasons; first, the dialectal diversity of Evenki is well known but for the moment, it is problematic to single out an appropriate Evenki dialect for future studies of Evenki substrate in Taimyrian languages.¹⁷ Second, if such data were available, Evenki could hold a key to the answer, which of the two sketched Taimyrian scenarios might appear more likely.¹⁸ Turning to standard dictionaries of Evenki, a variety of words for bread can be found such as *бурдук*, *талгәнэ*, *колобо* (Vasilevič 2005, II: 224) or *колобо*, *бурдука*, *бурдук* (Boldyrev 1994, 474). The dictionaries at my disposal show also some disagreement concerning the secondary meaning 'grain' (Ru: зерно). Whereas Vasilevič (2005 I, 160) has *чэмэ* or *сэмэ*, Boldyrev (1994, 474) has (*в сернах*) *бурдук*. This lexeme *бурдук* ~ *бардук* is also attested in Siberian Russian dialects (see Anikin 2000, 144) and may be of Mongolic origin and mediated by Tungusic languages.¹⁹

In Even, a slightly different picture evolves. Here, for bread one finds *kilep* and for flour *burduk* (Doerfer et al 1980, 602, 116). Although more research is necessary, available data suggests that the word for bread *kilep* may not have been borrowed from Russian directly, but may have been borrowed from Yakut. Due to the long lasting influence of Yakut, Yakut mediation is equally likely.²⁰ This brings us to the last language, Tundra Yukaghir for which the standard dictionary (Kurilov 2001, 151) gives *кильиен*.²¹ This form is in principal almost identical with Yakut *килиэн* as it shows a split onset and a long diphthong in the second syllable. It is therefore most likely that also in Tundra Yukaghir, the lexeme was borrowed from Yakut and not directly from Russian, although Kurilov (see footnote 2) assumes a direct borrowing from Rus-

17. After all, beside Dolgan also for Nganasan an Evenki substrate has been postulated.

18. Kai Donner's materials on a reasonably close Evenki dialect has unfortunately only 'flour' *talkān* (Joki 1955b, 27).

19. This lexeme is also attested in Dolgan and Yakut. In my Dolgan materials, *burduk* is registered as meaning 'flour', for standard Yakut it is listed as 'grain, crop' (Ru: хлеб, зерно). Doerfer (2004, 161) however rejects the Mongolian origin and tentatively offer "tü. bürdük > russ. burduk > jak. burduk > lam. burduk. [...] Davon zu trennen ist ma. bordo- mästen < mo. bordo-."

20. Also, in this area early contacts between Russian speaking Old Believers and local indigenous people have played an important role since the 17th century and direct borrowing is equally possible (Plužnikov 2010, 642). Linguistically, the split onset cluster and the long vowel in Yakut and Tundra Yukaghir show clear signs of nativization.

21. In my Tundra Yukaghir data, I have registered the lexeme as *kilep* without palatalization and a long vowel.

sian. Whether *kilep/kileep* and related is indeed a borrowing or an instance of a Wanderwort remains however unclear at the current moment. Still, one clearly observes that in the areas east of the Yenisei, variants of Russian *хлеб* start to appear regularly.

5. Conclusions

Summing up the discussion, a rather clearcut distribution can be observed. In the western area, which comprises the Uralic languages Udmurt, Komi, Mansi, Khanty, Nenets, Selkup and the Yeniseian language Ket, the general designation of bread is *háń*. Whereas in the initial phase, *háń* was apparently a borrowing from Komi into more eastern Uralic languages, probably Mansi, this word seems to have become a Wanderwort as it is quite unlikely that we deal with a direct borrowing from Komi into either Selkup or Ket. When turning south to the extinct Southern Samoyedic languages Kamas and Mator, we find another borrowing from Turkic, but apparently here we deal with a regular borrowing and not with a Wanderwort, at least not in Southern Samoyedic. The languages of the Yeniseian North form a third area, in which nativized lexemes deriving from Russian *хлеб* appear on the map. As the word has undergone phonological nativization, the borrowing itself cannot be of recent origin as already Castrén's "Wörterverzeichnis" mentions this lexeme. This shows that at least here, the Taimyrian Samoyedic languages belong to a different cultural area, clearly separate from Western Siberia. A short and inevitably incomplete look into the area east of the Taimyr Peninsula shows, that Yakut has most probably played a similar role as Komi did in Western Siberia. Whether *kile(e)p*, which is attested in Even and Tundra Yukahgir, is a direct loanword from Yakut or an instance of a Wanderwort is currently however not clear, but this imposes no immediate problem for the discussion of the Taimyrian languages. From a Uralic perspective, we observe that the Taimyrian Samoyedic languages are located in the transition area from *háń* to *хлеб* and thereby occupy the western border of the third area; its border coincides with the river Yenisei. This does not mean that by this one has arrived at a stable number of cultural-historical geographical areas in the east.²² In Chukchi, one finds besides a potential Russian borrowing *члеван* also *чрэвытрын* and *кавказ* (Inenlikej 2006, 247). Further, Russian *хлеб* appears again in Aleut (Bergsland 2001, XXXV; 164) and further in Alaska as reminiscence of the Russian Reign until 1867. Whereas in the Aleut context *xliimaχ* is most clearly a direct borrowing, the situation in Alaska might be different but remains out of the scope of this paper. This essay attempted to concentrate on the word for 'bread' as a Wanderwort in two selected areas of Eurasia for which the assumption of a Wanderwort seems quite likely. In the *háń* area in European Russia and Western Siberia, the word has traveled with the introduction of a

22. Note that also Mari and, Mordvin and, ultimately also Finnic, and Saami in the west of the area of this contribution belong to yet other areas not covered in this essay.

new product, thereby crossing several language boundaries. Also for eastern Siberia, it is quite likely that *kile(e)p* became a Wanderwort again. The Taimyrian languages with the apparent exception of Taimyrian Evenki belong to the *kile(e)p* area, in which a nativized borrowing from Russian starts to appear but show some noteworthy details. First, the distribution of *ńań* vs. nativized forms of *хлеб* coincides with the Yenisei, which marks a cultural-historical border as already mentioned earlier. Second, a nativized version of *хлеб* arrived twice in on the Taimyr, once with speakers of Taimyrian Samoyedic and once with the speakers of Dolgan. This pattern is typical for the Yeniseian North, which has received cultural-historical impacts not exclusively from Western Siberia (Khlobystin (2004). Also, the word for 'bread' is another example demonstrating the peculiar position of the Taimyr Peninsula in Northern Siberia.

Finally, a short historical note is in order. Although this contribution has focused on loanwords, borrowing and Wanderwörter and disregarded historical, ecological and economical considerations, some superficial parallels need to be mentioned. With the exception of speakers of Udmurt and Komi, the speakers of the remaining Uralic languages have not been engaged in agriculture but in hunting, fishing and different varieties of animal husbandry. However, in the *ńań* and apparently also in the *инэк* area, the concept of bread existed already prior to the Russian expansion. Starting with the areas east of the Yenisei, it appears that the introduction of bread must have coincided with the Russian expansion to the East starting in the early 17th century. Whether other forms of bread were known prior to the Russian colonization cannot be answered from a linguistic perspective, as there is no linguistic evidence at hands. For a definite answer, an interdisciplinary historical approach would be necessary; this is however beyond the competence of historical linguistics.

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