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## The Negidals: Language and Folklore

**I. General Information.** The Negidals is one of the smallest groups (along with the Oroks and the Orochis) among the small-numbered peoples of the Manchu-Tungus language family. Their self-designation (native name) is *elkan beyenin*, *nā beyenin* ~ *nā bēn*, or *emjun beyenin*, which means ‘man from the River Amgun’. Russian old-timers still call all the peoples of the Lower Amur “the Gilyaks” (Rus. гиляки). The majority of the Negidals live on the banks of the Amur, close to the mouth of the river Amgun', and on the river Amgun', the left confluent of the Amur. Before the 1940s, the Negidals used to inhabit the Lower Amgun' and its middle reaches. According to the official data of the year 1989, there were 622 Negidals, including 502 those who live in the Khabarovsk Territory [Национальный состав населения 1991, pp.22, 52].

According to B.O. Dolgikh, there were no more than 390 Negidals in the 17th century [Долгих 1960, p.603]; in the middle of the 19th century N.K. Boshnyak used the figure of 351 [Бошняк 1859, p.331]; according to S.K. Patkanov, there were about 400 Negidals at the beginning of the 20th century [Патканов 1912, pp.933-934]; K.M. Mylnikova and V.I. Tsintsius estimated the population as 371 people in the years 1926-1927 [Мыльникова, Цинциус 1931, p.108]; in 1925, A.N. Lipskiy wrote that there were no more than 400 Negidals at the time [Липский 1925, p.XIX]. Thus, since the 17th century the Negidals have shown continual stability of population size.

By now the Negidal population size has not changed much. According to the data we gathered in the 1990s in their current habitat, there were a little more than 350 Negidals. The population of the so-called Upper Amgun' group was about 150 people, while the population of the Lower Amgun' group was about 200 people. According to the data provided by the authorities of the Khabarovsk Territory, the Negidal ethnos has the population of a little more than 400 people. It is clear that despite the hardships that the Negidals have had to endure since the 1930s, along with the other Northern minorities of Russia (collectivization, numerous forced resettlements), their population size has not reduced and remained stable for at least two hundred years.

Nevertheless, according to the current data provided by Khabarovsk authorities, the Negidals is the only ethnos in the Khabarovsk Territory that has shown negative population growth in the recent years. It might seem that the current surplus of deaths over births among the Negidals is not too high – 4 people – but this is the first alarming sign that starts worrying both specialists and the authorities.

The main occupation of the Negidals has traditionally been hunting and fishing. As regards their ethnic and linguistic characteristics, the Negidals are subdivided into the so-called “Lower” group, inhabiting the Lower Amgun' and the Amur, and the “Upper” group, inhabiting the middle reaches of the Amgun'. The Upper Amgun' group is rather close to the Evenks, while the Lower Amgun' group is closer to the indigenous peoples of the Amur region, such as the Ul'chi or the Nanays.

The first information concerning the river Amgun' and its inhabitants began to reach Russia in the 17th century. Though it is widely believed that the ethnonym the Negidals was first introduced in A. Middendorf's works, I.S. Vdovin has proved that the term appeared in Russian official documents much earlier than that [Вдовин 1953].

In 1844-45 academician A. Middendorf undertook a journey, unprecedented in its range, along the Siberia and the Far East. Unlike the Tungus, the Negidals were not the focus of Middendorf's attention. Nevertheless, it was he who distinguished a separate ethnic group inhabiting the river Amgun' and its confluent the Nimelen and called it the "Negidal tribe". Before Middendorf's journey, the basin of the river Amgun' was considered to be populated only by the Tungus (the Evenks) [Миддендорф 1878].

A more profound research in the basin of the Amgun' was made by the expedition, headed by Admiral G.I. Nevel'skoy at the beginning of the 1850s. The data gathered by this expedition were published and they provide valuable and manifold scientific material. These were the first accounts made by the Russians, of settlements and the way of life of such small-numbered peoples as the Manguns (the Ul'chi), the Negidals, the Oroks, the Ainu. Though the expedition's objectives were primarily of political nature, the anthropological data and the statistics obtained are still of great importance even for the modern researcher [Невельской 1947].

In the middle of the 1850s, the Amur and Sakhalin were visited by L. Schrenk. He mostly studied the life of the Nivkhs, the Ul'chi and the Nanays but he also gathered a great deal of information about another peoples. In particular, he determined the exact boundaries of the Negidal ethnic territory. The appearance (in Russian sources) of the native name, the Negidals, L. Schrenk, following the report of lieutenant Kozmin, dates as 1830 and adds that before this year all the inhabitants of the Amgun' had been called "the Amgun' Tungus" [Шренк 1899, p.157]. Schrenk thought that *negda* was the self-designation of the Negidals and that the name *ylkan* that Middendorf had used as their native name was, in fact, given to the Negidals by the Tugur Tungus or those of the Stanovoy Range [Ibid., p.158]. Schrenk linked the appearance of the Negidals on the river Amgun' with the appearance of the *Samagirs* and the *Kili* in the area of their current habitation [Ibid., p.157]. Schrenk thought that the Negidals and the Samagirs were closely related peoples and that their languages were most similar to the Ul'chi language [Ibid., p.291]. Schrenk also maintained that physically the Negidals are closer to the Nivkhs, and the Samagirs – to the Nanays [Ibid., p.304].

In 1910 the Negidal area was visited by L.Ya. Sternberg. The data he gathered were published, along with his other material, only after his death in 1933 [Штернберг 1933]. The chapter called "The Negidals" deals mostly with the issues of spiritual life and culture: religious beliefs, the "bear festival", tribal traditions and legends. It also contains supplementary Negidal-Russian dictionary and some grammar notes. It is clear that Sternberg's information about the Negidal culture was fragmentary and unsystematic, even after substantial editing.

In 1925, I.Gapanovich published an article in a Vladivostok journal, about his trip

to Chukchagir Lake [Гапанович 1925]. In the article he described traditional occupations of the Negidals, wrote about the population size and named the biggest camping-grounds of the Upper Amgun' group.

In 1926-27, Sternberg's disciples K.M. Mylnikova and V.I. Tsintsius, then students of Leningrad State University, went on a one-year expedition to the Negidals. K.M. Mylnikova specialized in linguistics, while V.I. Tsintsius specialized in anthropology. In 1931 the researchers published an article containing part of their field research data [МЫЛЬНИКОВА, ЦИНЦИУС 1931]. This comparatively small article consists of two parts: anthropological-sociological and linguistic, while the appendix contains five Negidal texts with interlinear translation.

K.M. Mylnikova and V.I. Tsintsius were the first to perform a thorough research of Negidal settlements, which helped to obtain accurate data of their population size, distribution and clan structure. Anthropologically and linguistically, they distinguished two groups of the Negidals: the Lower Amgun' group that forms approximately two thirds of the total Negidal population and inhabits the Lower Amgun', and the Upper Amgun' group that inhabits its middle reaches [МЫЛЬНИКОВА, ЦИНЦИУС 1931, pp.107-108]. The researchers also distinguished 13 Negidal clans, with two of them already extinct, namely: *N'asixagil*, *Ayumkan*, *Chukchagil*, *Chomoxogil*, *Tapkal*, *Udan*, *Toyomkon*, *Amunkan*, *Muktegil*, *Bosakogil*, *Olchakogil*, *Xatagil* (extinct), *Sigdan* (extinct) [Ibid., p.110].

At that time A.N. Lipskiy worked as the Representative for the Indigenous Peoples Affairs in the Nikolayevsk Area. In 1925 he published, as introduction to the materials of the 1st Congress of Indigenous Peoples of the Far East Region, a substantial anthropological survey that contained a section about the Negidals [Липский 1925].

On the whole, the Amgun' Area in the 1920s and 1930s was quite often visited by researchers. In 1935, for instance, K.M. Mylnikova visited this area again and gathered a lot of substantial archaeological and anthropological data [Форштейн-МЫЛЬНИКОВА 1936].

The study of the Negidal language and culture intensified in the 1950s and 60s. In 1956 there appeared a basic work called "Peoples of Siberia" that contained an article about the Negidals, written by S.V. Ivanov, M.G. Levin, and A.V. Smolyak [Народы Сибири 1956, pp.776-782]. At the end of the 1940s, among those who concerned themselves with the anthropology of the peoples of the Lower Amur and Sakhalin was A.V. Smolyak (then Strenina) who later published her numerous works, including an article on ethnogenesis of the Negidals [СМОЛЯК 1977].

In the summer of 1961, Leningrad linguists V.D. Kolesnikova and O.A. Konstantinova worked among the Lower Amgun' Negidals. Their collected lexical data were incorporated into the "Comparative Dictionary of the Manchu-Tungus Languages" [ССТМЯ], and the final result of their expedition was an article called "The Negidal Language" [Языки народов СССР 1968].

In the recent years anthropologists and linguists gave proper attention to the area where the Negidals live. For instance, it was visited by L.I. Sem, Yu.A. Sem, V.V.

Podmaskin, A.M. Pevnov, M.M. Khasanova, N.Ya. Bulatova, G.I. Varlamova, T.Yu. Sem, S.V. Bereznitskiy, D.V. Yanchev, T. Tsumagari (Japan), Sh. Kazama (Japan) and others.

Due to the long-term research in Negidal culture, we came to the conclusion that the Negidals did not regard themselves as a single separate ethnic group. They knew only that they are part of a separate clan, and their clan membership has always been of primary importance. We can still hear, for instance, a member of the *N'asikhagil* clan say about the *Chukchagil* clan that they are not the Negidals but another people. All elderly people know what clan they belong to. The clan identity is determined on the father's side. Starting from the beginning of the 1980s and up to the end of the 20th century, we tried to record all clan names of the Negidals. During the mentioned period, the Negidals named the following clans: the Lower Amgun' group clans were the *N'asikhagil*, the *Ayimkan*, the *Chomokhogil*, the *Tapkal*, the *Udan*, while the Upper Amgun' group clans were the *Chukchagil*, the *Toyomkon*, the *Ayumkan*, the *Muktegil*; the largest among these clans are the *N'asikhagil* and the *Chukchagil*. However, we could not find some clan names that had been mentioned by other researchers, even as extinct: for example, the *Bosakogil* and the *Olchakogil*.

At the same time, our field data show that the Negidals were aware of and acknowledged the language and cultural similarity of several clans that inhabited the same territory. One of the self-designations of the Negidals (*nā beyeseltin* ~ *nā bēseltin* 'the local people') was modelled by the Lower Amgun' group after the Ul'chi or Nanay patterns, by this word they may identify their ethnic group. In this case they add to this word-combination the pronoun *bitta* of the 1st person plural (inclusive): *bitta nā bēseltin*, which means 'our local people (our Negidal group)'. Without the pronoun *bitta*, the word-combination *nā beyenin* ~ *nā bēnin*, in the singular, and *nā beyeseltin* ~ *nā bēseltin*, in the plural, can refer not only to the Negidals but also to the Nivkhs, the Ul'chi, the Nanays, i.e., to all the indigenous peoples of the Lower Amur. According to the elder representatives of the Negidals, this word-combination could not be used to refer to the Koreans, the Chinese, the Japanese and the Russians, who temporarily or constantly live or lived in this region.

**II. Language of the Negidals.** We have every reason to regard the language of the Negidals as endangered. It is fluently spoken only by the old people, and there are not many of them still living. The middle-aged Negidals can only understand the spoken language but cannot speak themselves. Negidal children know only separate words or phrases at best. Now there is practically no one left who still can give a folklore performance.

It is quite right to say that the Negidal language has no written form, though it was worked out and suggested by one of the authors of this work (M.M. Khasanova) and even officially approved by the authorities of the Khabarovsk Territory in May 1993. However, in practice this system of writing has never been used, which is quite understandable, though: there is no one left to write in the Negidal language since all the children by this time have already become monolingual (they are now Russian-

speakers). In other words, the Negidal alphabet can be regarded as nothing more than a “linguistic exercise”.

As we have stated earlier, in 1931 K.M. Mylnikova and V.I. Tsintsius published a description of the Negidal grammar, which was substantial for the time, together with a phonetic introduction [МЫЛЬНИКОВА, ЦИНЦИУС 1931, p.129-194]. This description contains a number of valuable observations that can be still useful for modern researchers. In 1968 V.D. Kolesnikova and O.A. Konstantinova published a concise description of Negidal phonetics, morphology, syntax and lexis in the “Languages of the Peoples of the Soviet Union” series [КОЛЕСНИКОВА, КОНСТАНТИНОВА 1968, pp.109-128]. In 1982, V.I. Tsintsius in her book “The Negidal Language” gave a brief account of Negidal phonetics and grammar [ЦИНЦИУС 1982, pp.12-41]. Another description of the Negidal language (also concise) was published in “Languages of the World” series, after V.I. Tsintsius’ death [ЦИНЦИУС 1997, pp.188-201]. Presently, there is no solid or thorough description of Negidal grammar or phonetics, despite the fact that there are several interesting accounts of them.

Nor would you find such thorough description in this book, since its authors have a less ambitious objective, namely, to describe some distinctive features of the Negidal morphology. We will try to do that by showing the differences that exist between the Negidal and the Evenki languages. It should be noted that the Negidal language is contrasted against the background of the Evenki language, because, on the one hand, the latter is relatively better described, and on the other, the Evenki and the Negidal are the closest languages in genetical respect.

We chose morphology for contrastive (and in many cases for contrastive-comparative) description intentionally. The reason is that system changes in morphology (and in grammar as a whole) play the main role in language divergence (and in convergence, as well). Phonetic and lexical differences between dialects can be substantial but substantial differences in morphology (and in grammar in general) can exist only between languages, not dialects. Generally speaking, morphology (grammar) determines the language identity more than any other language level. That is why we prefer morphology for contrastive (contrastive-comparative) description.

The earliest outline of Negidal dialects can be found in P.P. Schmidt’s book, based on the data gathered by K.D. Loginovskiy. P.P. Schmidt distinguished four dialects: the Upper Amgun', the Middle Amgun', the Lower Amgun', and the dialect of the village of Tyr [Schmidt 1923, p.8]. This classification, especially the possible existence of the dialect of the village of Tyr, was criticized by K.M. Mylnikova and V.I. Tsintsius who suggested a binary classification, comprising the Lower Amgun' (Rus. *низовской*) and the Upper Amgun' (Rus. *верховской*) dialects [МЫЛЬНИКОВА, ЦИНЦИУС 1931, pp.134, 132]. They also came to the conclusion, which the authors of this book find quite plausible: “On the whole, variations in pronunciation can be found in the speech of different persons and even in the speech of one and the same person.” [МЫЛЬНИКОВА, ЦИНЦИУС 1931, p.133]. By the way, according to our data, such variations are characteristic not only of the phonetics but also the morphology of the Negidal language, i.e. the speech of one and the same person can contain both

phonetic and morphological doublets.

According to one of the works by P.P. Schmidt, dealing with the language of the Samagirs [Schmidt 1928], the Negidal language was once spoken around the river Gorin, left tributary of the Amur. Schmidt gives two vocabulary lists: one contains the Samar Nanay words, collected by Schmidt himself, and another – the Samagir words collected by K.D. Loginovskiy. There is no doubt that Loginovskiy's list contains words which are identical or similar to the corresponding Negidal words. This might mean a language shift, which was mentioned by P.P. Schmidt in his book [Schmidt 1928, p.3]. Careful study of Loginovskiy's word list reveals some phonetic features of the Upper Amgun' dialect of the Negidal language. We cannot yet talk about some unknown local variation of the Negidal language, but there undoubtedly exist some singular features.

Present variations of the Negidal language are not the same as those in the 1920s, but the dialects of the so-called Upper Amgun' and Lower Amgun' Negidals are still retained. Some of these differences were mentioned in V.I. Tsintsius' book [Цинциус 1982, p.17]. We would like to draw your attention to the fact that many characteristic features of the Upper Amgun' dialect result from intensive contacts with the Evenki language, though along with these innovations this dialect still retains some archaic features that no longer exist (or probably have never existed) in the Lower Amgun' dialect. Among these morphologically archaic forms, typical of the Upper Amgun' dialect, for example, we could mention a specific plural form of converb in *-ми* (plural *-май* < \**-мару*).

In 1991 during the expedition to the Lower Amur, we came to the conclusion that there exists a separate local sub-dialect of the Negidal language. We named this variant the Ust'-Amgun' sub-dialect of the Lower Amgun' dialect. It was only nine years later that M.M. Khasanova discovered among the materials of N.A. Lipskaya and A.N. Lipskiy kept in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, St.Petersburg, a brief note about Negidal dialects, made by N.A. Lipskaya, who mentioned a dialect spoken in Ust'-Amgun'. Unfortunately N.A. Lipskaya did not include any specific linguistic information about this dialect in her note. Lipskaya was doing her research of the Negidal language in the summer of 1929. She distinguished five Negidal dialects: dialect of the Duki village, dialect of the Kerbi village area (now P. Osipenko village), dialect of the Im village, dialect of the Dal'zha village, and, finally, dialect of the village of Ust'-Amgun' [Липская д.38, л.843]. К.М. Mylnikova and V.I. Tsintsius also mentioned the so-called "Khodz'on" dialect of the Negidals, and this is exactly the Ust'-Amgun' sub-dialect [МЫЛЬНИКОВА, Цинциус 1931, p.150].

Thus, only the existence of the Ust'-Amgun' local variant was stated in the works of researchers, but nobody provided any examples that might prove the reality of this variant. Now we know only two elderly women who still speak this variant of the Negidal language.

The peculiarities of the Ust'-Amgun' sub-dialect are especially noticeable in some sound changes. Thus, the sounds *й*, *в*, *г*, and *ж* may be dropped in the intervocalic

position, but we could not find any regular pattern here, and we are not sure that any such regularity exists.

Another significant phonetic phenomenon typical of Ust'-Amgun' sub-dialect is regressive incontiguous vowel assimilation, for example, *анҢини* 'year' (< *анҢани*), *гилби* 'name' (< *гэлби*), *толгихи* 'sledge' (< *толгохи*), *уду* 'here' (< *эду*) and others. In these words broad root vowels (*а, э, о*) were assimilated with the narrow vowels (*и, у*).

In the section "Morphological Features of the Negidal Language" we describe some differences that exist between Negidal and Evenki morphology. Below we will give a concise description of the differences that we regard as the most important.

Unlike the Evenki language, the unmarked noun form in the Negidal language can express both the singular and the plural meaning. (In this respect the Evenki language is apparently the only exception among the Manchu-Tungus languages.)

The Negidal language differs from the Evenki language in its comitative markers (*-чил, -лҮэлиҫи*) present in the same or slightly different form only in the Even language.

Non-possession in the Negidal, the Evenki and the Even languages is expressed analytically: in the Upper Amgun' dialect of the Negidal language the privative construction is modeled on the Evenki pattern (Negidal, Evenki *хутэ-йэ аҫин бэйэ* 'a childless man') while in the Lower Amgun' dialect it is modeled on the Even pattern (Negidal *аҫин хутэ-лэ бэйэ* 'a childless man', Even *ач хут-лэ бэй* with the same meaning). It is possible that the Even language was trying to imitate a language like the Chukchi that uses the confix *а-...-ка* (*э-...-кэ*) to express the meaning of non-possession. The word-initial element of this confix was apparently reflected in the Even language as a negative prepositive particle *ач*, while instead of the postfixal element, the Even language has an affix *-ла*, i.e. *ач ...-ла*. And this construction, quite uncharacteristic of Manchu-Tungus languages as a whole, was probably borrowed from the Even language into the Negidal.

Despite the formal similarity of case markers in the Negidal and the Evenki languages, the meanings of some of the cases are substantially different. In this respect the Evenki language is again quite separate from the rest of Manchu-Tungus languages, including Negidal, which, as we have already mentioned, is the closest cognate of Evenki.

Analytical word-formation of the type *аси хутэ* (literally 'a woman-child') is typical of the Negidal language. This model of word-formation was borrowed by many languages of the Amur area: Nanay, Oroch, Nivkh etc., and this model had been undoubtedly spreading from the South (compare Manchu *сарган ҫуи* and Chinese *nühaiž* with the same meaning and structure).

The Negidal language has an emphatic form (*-нма/-мма*) that is characteristic of all Manchu-Tungus languages of the Amur region (and also the Orok language) but not present in the Evenki language. The corresponding Evenki affix *-ммар* is used in the formation of the comparative degree of adjectives.

Negidal adjectives, or rather words that correspond in translation with Russian

adjectives, can sometimes break the categorical rule of the Altaic languages that all attributes are prepositive (inversion is not taken into account here). The Negidal postpositive attribute is in such cases very specifically connected with the determined word, for example, *дэҕи эгди-нин* ‘many birds’ (literally ‘bird(s) its large amount’), *хэҕи маҕа-нин* ‘a strong storm’ (literally ‘a storm its strength’). The Oroch language is the only exception among the other Manchu-Tungus languages that can have such a postpositive attribute.

Negidal personal pronouns can have up to three stems for oblique cases, for example, *сун-*, *сунэ<sup>а</sup>-*, *суну-*, and every stem serves to form one or several definite cases.

A distinctive feature of Negidal 1st and 2nd person pronouns (except for the inclusive) and the reflexive pronoun is the existence of their possessive forms that usually coincide with the stem of oblique cases of corresponding pronouns, for example, *мин* (sometimes *мини*) ‘my’, *син* (sometimes *сини*) ‘your’ etc. These forms are not present in the Evenki language and the Negidal language has such forms only in its Lower Amgun’ variant. These forms are used only as the first (attributive) component of the isafet construction, for example, *мин хутэ-в* ‘my child’ (literally ‘my child-my’). Not only the Negidal but also the Even, the Oroch, and the Ul’chi languages have similar possessive pronoun forms. We are certain that originally these were the forms of the genitive case that was present in the Manchu-Tungus parent language and is now retained only in the Manchu language (the genitive case with the same marker *-и* (*-ни*) was also characteristic of the Jurchen language which belonged to the Manchu-Jurchen group of the Manchu-Tungus language family and became extinct approximately four centuries ago).

The Negidal language has the following voices: active, passive I, passive II, causative and reciprocal.

In construction formed with the passive marker *-в-* (Passive I) logical object appearing in the subject position is adversely affected by some definite or indefinite agent.

Passive I in the Negidal language differs from Passive II (affix *-н-* but sometimes *-в-*) in that the former expresses actions while the latter refers to present or ensuing states that are the result of the action named by the verb. For example, the sentence *Тай бэйэл амбанду җэну-в-чэ-тин* ‘Those people were eaten (i.e. killed) by the devil’ expresses an action that presupposes both agent and patient, while the sentence *Уйкэ н’и-н-нэ-н* ‘The door opened (and is open as a result)’ expresses a state that is the result of a spontaneous (or illusively spontaneous) action that presupposes only the patient. This explanation of the difference between the two passives in the Negidal language is based on V.A. Avrorin’s description of the Nanay passive voice (according to our terminology, the Nanay language has only Passive II [Аврорин 1961, p.40]).

The Negidal language very rarely uses the form that exists in Evenki and that is usually referred to as “the aspect of the imperfective action” (with the marker *-җа-*). According to L.M. Gorelova, this aspect in the Evenki language should be called

“durative” rather than “imperfective” [Горелова 1979, p.41]. This seems to apply to the Negidal language as well but, unlike the Evenki, the Negidal language never uses the aspectual form in *-ж̄а-* as a co-marker of the present tense (comp. Negidal *в̄а-й̄а-н* ‘killed, kills’ and Evenki *в̄а-ра-н* ‘killed’, *в̄а-ж̄а-ра-н* ‘kills’).

Another important feature of the Negidal language is aspect that presupposes a previous action (of the same performer or performers) that is either identical or quite opposite in meaning (the marker *-й̄гу-* in the Lower Amgun' dialect and *-д̄гу-* in the Upper Amgun' dialect). This aspect is not present in the Evenki language; in Negidal it is used very often and in some cases it even seems pleonastic. For example: *ж̄ава-й̄гу-ч̄а* ‘(he) took (it) again; (he) took (it) after having taken (it)’; *б̄у-й̄гу-хэл!* (= *б̄ӯй̄гэл!*) ‘give (it) back!’.

The Negidal language possesses an aspectual form in *-нак-*, which in some respects is close to the category of voice. The Negidal form in *-нак-* can be determined as distributive (corresponding Evenki aspect has a different marker *-т̄и-*). The intransitive verb in this form means that all the subjects of an action participate in it, while this form of a transitive verb indicates that all the direct objects of an action are affected. E.g.: *б̄у-нэк-ч̄э-л* ‘they (all) died’; *га-нак-ч̄а-л* ‘they bought (everything)’.

We have already mentioned that the Negidal converb in *-му* is able to have a special plural form *-маи* which is not characteristic of Evenki, Solon, and Even (except its Arman' dialect or maybe language) but is present in corresponding forms in Oroch, Udihe, Ul'chi, Nanay and Orok. In Negidal we found this original plural form only in the texts dictated by A.P. Kazarov whose idiolect belongs to the Upper Amgun' dialect. We have very few examples illustrating this form, nevertheless the fact of its existence is absolutely reliable. Surprisingly the Negidal texts written down by K.M. Mylnikova and V.I. Tsintsius in 1926-1927, as well as those written down by V.D. Kolesnikova and O.A. Konstantinova lack this ancient form. It obviously points to the importance of idiolect data in studying and documenting the endangered languages because the languages which are on the verge of extinction (the moribund languages) can retain some interesting peculiarities of extinct dialects in individual speech of the last few native speakers.

Negidal participles are substantially different from the Evenki ones because in the Negidal language there exists the dichotomy between personal and impersonal participles. It was V.A. Avrorin who realized the nature of Nanay impersonal participles; the term was also suggested by him [Аврорин 1961, p.67]. Other researchers prefer the term “passive participles”, which is unacceptable since actually such participles are able to govern the direct object, and this is absolutely incompatible with the passive meaning.

The grammatical peculiarity of impersonal participles in the Negidal and some other Manchu-Tungus languages can be briefly determined by the formula: subjectlessness of the verbs that are able to have subject in principle (the false subjectlessness). E.g.: *Э-вви в̄а-в-ва* ‘It is forbidden to kill’; *Агдиду ж̄эну-вви ож̄окит бичэн* ‘During the thunderstorm it was forbidden to eat’; *Тай бэйэдуккэй с̄а-*

*пила бунинкэнду бэйэ бисивэн* ‘From that man’s words it is known that there are people in the land of the dead’. In the languages that have infinitives, Russian, for example, this process goes even further and affects not just the subject meaning but also the temporal meaning, while the latter is fully retained in Negidal impersonal participles.

The genesis of impersonal participial forms was undoubtedly influenced by the passive marker *-e-* (*-n(u)-*). We must say that the passive meaning is incompatible with representation of an agent with the help of the corresponding affix in the verbal form, since as a result of change of diathesis, personal markers no longer represent the agent but start representing its patient. Thus the passive can be regarded as means of removing the meaning of the agent from the verbal word-form, and this is exactly what is needed to form impersonal participles.

There is a unique grammatical category in the Negidal language, namely, the interrogative future tense. It was first mentioned by K.M. Mylnikova and V.I. Tsintsius who called it the “interrogative-exclamatory form of the future” [МЫЛЬНИКОВА, ЦИНЦИУС 1931, p.162]. We never came across its exclamatory meaning but only the interrogative. The marker of the interrogative future (*-ǰa-*) differs from the marker of the simple future only in the absence of vowel length. Besides, the simple future tense, unlike the interrogative future, can join only possessive personal affixes, e.g.: *Ёва учэ-ǰ-м?* ‘What will I see?’, *Оǰава учэ-ǰ-ε* ‘The tracks I’ll see’. It’s worth mentioning that the Nenets language also unites interrogative and temporal meaning in one and the same grammatical form but, unlike the Negidal, the Nenets language possesses the interrogative past tense, not the interrogative future. (We are grateful to Prof. J. Janhunen and to Dr. A.L. Malchukov for this typological comparison.)

An interesting feature of the Negidal language is a unique tense that our predecessors used to call the present-past [Колесникова, Константинова 1968, p.118] and also the present tense [Цинциус 1982, p.24]. According to our data, this tense sometimes has also the meaning of the future, which makes it absurd to call this tense by indicating its possible grammatical meanings (the “past-present-future tense”).

The specificity of this tense is not only the impossibility of reducing its possible meanings to a single common one but also its not following the rules of agglutination (namely, the tense marker is absent in the 1st and 2nd persons singular and in the 2nd person plural, while it is present in other persons). If we ignore the quite rare cases of when these forms are used in the meaning of the future, we could accept the term “present-past”. However, it would probably be better if we use the term “common tense”, which we suggest on the analogy of common case, gender or number and which seems to express properly the specific meaning of this unusual grammatical category.

The concrete meaning that the common tense has in the sentence, is normally determined by the lexical meaning of the verb and by affixes that are capable of changing this meaning, namely, markers of aspect.

While the past or present realization of the meaning of the common tense mostly depends on the semantics of the verbal stem, the infrequent future tense meaning of the common tense cannot be determined by this criterion and we have to consider its wider context.

The verbal negation in the Negidal language is always expressed analytically. The Negidal connegative ends in *-йа* (compare *-ра* in the Evenki language) but surprisingly this affix can be followed by number, case and personal markers which is absolutely impossible in the Evenki language, for example: *Н'аҢакк̄ан нуҢатил э-ти-л с̄а-йа-җи-тин Ңэнэчэн* '(He) left carefully, so that they didn't notice him'.

The Negidal negative auxiliary verb has some previously unknown forms, for example: *ата-м Ңэнэ-йэ* 'I won't go' (not *этэ-м*), *у-хул Ңэнэ-э* 'don't go' (singular; this form and the next one are used only in the Ust'-Amgun' sub-dialect), *у-хусун Ңэнэ-э* 'don't go' (plural). These forms should be regarded as a result of regressive incontinuous vowel assimilation. Along with such deviated forms the Negidal language uses the "normal" negative auxiliary verb derived from the stem *э-* that is typical of the Evenki language as well.

Some preliminary conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the undertaken contrastive-comparative analysis of the Negidal morphology:

1. Considerable morphological differences of Negidal from Evenki indicate that the former is not a dialect of the latter but a separate language. It has to be said that such morphological differences are not limited to external, formal character, but concern the content layer of the grammatical categories and sometimes even their presence or absence. The situation like this is not characteristic of mutual relationship among numerous Evenki dialects and at least for that reason Negidal cannot be regarded even as a special dialect of the Evenki language.

Speaking about genetic relations, one should mention that Negidal is the closest to Evenki, but it is hardly possible to insist that the first one originated from the second. They both are likely to have originated from already non-existing language, and its dialect that later developed into Negidal took part in the formation of some south-west Evenki dialects (Podkamennaya Tunguska dialect, for example). We think that interesting isoglotic lines that we find mainly on the lexical level can be traced from Negidal to them.

2. The presence of morphological differences between the Negidal and Evenki languages is in many cases connected with the presence of relevant correspondences between the Negidal and Even languages. Taking into consideration not only close mutual relationship of these three languages but also their belonging to one and the same taxonomic unit (northern branch of the Manchu-Tungus languages) such a distribution of differences and similarities should point either at some innovations in Evenki morphology or at morphological borrowings in the Negidal and Even languages. The second case makes possible the following patterns: a) Even borrowed from Negidal; b) they both borrowed from each other; c) they both borrowed from some other language; d) Negidal borrowed from Even.

Of course there are innovations in Evenki morphology but we don't think they were the main reason for the differences between the Negidal and Evenki languages. Speaking about the borrowings, some facts, and not only from morphology, indicate that out of the four patterns the latter one is the most rational choice. One can't exclude the other three patterns but we see the main factor in borrowing from the Even language to Negidal.

It can be supposed that the ethnic territory of the Evens several centuries ago spread far southerner than the present, i.e. covered Ayano-Mayskiy and Tuguro-Chumikanskiy regions of Khabarovsk territory, and apparently a part of the region named after Polina Osipenko. The supposition is to some extent based on evident traces of the Even language in Evenki Totta dialect (Ayano-Mayskiy region). But the main evidence is that there are significant morphological correspondences of contact origin between the Negidal and Even languages. Of course, one can suppose that the Negidals migrated from the North where they could have been in contact with the Evens. Theoretically such an explanation can be considered but it has very few chances to be proved.

3. The presence of morphological differences between the Negidal language and both Evenki and Even ones is for the most part connected with the presence of relevant correspondences between Negidal and predominantly Oroch or Udihe (or some other Manchu-Tungus languages of the Amur area and Sakhalin). In this respect it should be noted that V.I. Tsintsius wrote about two substantial phonetic isoglotic lines that unite the Negidal, Oroch, and Udihe languages [Цинциус 1982, p.19]). Maybe such a distribution of differences and similarities is also of contact reason and it is likely that a language resembling Oroch served as a substratum for Negidal (so far we have found no substantial evidence of Ul'chi and Nanay influence on the Negidal morphology; for that reason the contacts of Negidal with Ul'chi and Nanay could have happened recently and rather superficially). Apparently, the territory adjacent to the Lower Amur (we mean its left tributaries) was in former times common for some ethnic groups speaking at least three genetically related languages, such as Oroch, Even, and Negidal. All in all the ancestors of these languages were probably spoken not so far from the northern part of the Manchu-Tungus original homeland.

However, such preliminary conclusions concerning the history of the Negidal language need to be proved on phonetic and lexical material which we plan to do in the future.

**III. Negidal Folklore.** By now the Negidal folklore has been studied insufficiently, though we do have some published material in the language of the original and in Russian translations.

The first records of Negidal narratives in Russian were made by L.Ya. Sternberg in 1910. He also recorded six Negidal songs on the wax cylinders of the phonograph [Фонограммархив N 1001-1006].

Several examples of Negidal folklore texts were published in the original in 1931

by K.M. Mylnikova and V.I. Tsintsius [МЫЛЬНИКОВА, ЦИНЦИУС 1931]. V.I. Tsintsius later wrote that they had brought back 320 written records of Negidal oral texts from their expedition of 1926-27, including 150 tales and legends, 70 songs, 60 riddles, and 20 taboo-bans [ЦИНЦИУС 1982, p.4]. Unfortunately, K.M. Mylnikova could not get her records published, the only exception being three texts that appeared in the “Tungusskiy Sbornik” [МЫЛЬНИКОВА, ЦИНЦИУС 1931].

Fifty-five years after the expedition, V.I. Tsintsius published her book “The Negidal Language” that included 40 samples of Negidal oral texts [ЦИНЦИУС 1982]. These are stories, myths, legends, tales, taboo-texts, proverbs and three songs. All these texts, except for the songs, represent the original texts, with all dialectal features present. The book also includes a grammar survey and a dictionary of 7,000 words.

In June and July of 1961, Leningrad researchers O.A. Konstantinova and V.D. Kolesnikova undertook a linguistic and folklore expedition to the Lower Amgun' Negidals. They collected a good deal of vocabulary, grammar and folklore material. O.A. Konstantinova recorded sixteen texts, V.D. Kolesnikova – nineteen. Among these texts, along with Negidal texts proper, there are also Ul'chi, Evenki samples and even one Chinese tale (all the texts are recorded in Negidal). Only one of these texts gathered by O.A. Konstantinova and V.D. Kolesnikova during the expedition was published [Языки народов СССР 1968, pp.127-128].

In the winter of 1973 I.A. Bogdanov, anthropologist-musicologist, tape recorded the material from the Upper Amgun' Negidals. Among his records there are some interesting songs and tales but it is highly improbable that one would ever be able to transcribe them.

As we have mentioned above, we started collecting Negidal oral texts in 1981. Folklore by that time had stopped being a natural part of everyday life of the Negidals, and the performers had been losing their skill and had forgotten quite a lot. Still we managed to record some material.

It is clear that Negidal folklore no longer exists in its “living”, natural form. There are not many even among the representatives of the middle-aged group who still can understand well the difficult language of Negidal folklore, and the younger generation does not know it at all. We know all too well the mechanics of breaking the cultural tradition: children were separated from their parents through the system of boarding school education. Nevertheless, some traditional themes still live on and are recited, though now it is done in Russian. This mostly concerns the texts used in fishing or hunting rites.

The old people recall that there used to be a lot of good folklore performers in the old days. Practically every village had its own narrator of folk tales. If people wanted to hear some exceptionally interesting tales, they used to invite a famous performer to their village. It was compulsory to perform specific narratives in two cases, namely, during the hunt and while mourning for the dead. In everyday life tales and legends were performed at somebody's request.

Two major genres of Negidal folklore that are constantly opposed to each other by the Negidals themselves are *tāluŋ* and *ulgú(y)*. *Tāluŋ* is a tale about imaginary

situations and events while *ulgu(y)* are thought to be real happenings from the past. The nature of the text and its relation with reality is of utmost importance for the Negidals, as well as for the other Northern minorities of Russia. People believe *ulgu* to be true stories, which means that they should be reproduced word for word, without any omissions or additions from the performer. *Ulgu* are not fiction stories and always have austere and sometimes almost lapidary canonical text. Among the texts of this genre there are myths, clan legends, shaman legends, *bylički* (German *Dämonische Sagen*), hunting and everyday life stories. There are *ulgu* that are told only by men, for example, the myth about the sky-hunter *Mañí*.

*Tāluŋ*, on the contrary, are regarded as fictitious, invented and fabulous. Their fabric was adorned with numerous artistic devices, the performances were dramatised and even a little improvisation was allowed. Among the texts of this genre are tales about animals, both about everyday life and of heroic character (sometimes even intoned), also tales of cumulative character. Good performers of *tāluŋ* always impersonate their characters using their voice and facial expression, especially when performing tales about animals, make their personal remarks as if feeling surprise or indignation together with their listeners.

The Nivkh also have two major folklore genres (*tylgu* ‘a legend, a story’ and *ŋyzit* ‘a tale’), as well as the Enets (*d'orechu* and *s'udobychu*), the Yenisey Nenets (*lakhanaku* and *s'udbabts*), the Nganasans (*d'urume* and *sitabi*), the Khanty (*potyr*, *yasyng* and *man't'*, *mos'*, *mon's'*), the Mansi (*potyr* and *moyt*). The difference between these categories of texts is the same as in Manchu-Tungus folklore, namely, reality or irreality of the events described.

*Tāluŋ* of the Upper Amgun' Negidals are subdivided into two categories: *зүмэ тәлуҢ* (literally, wordy, said with words *tāluŋ*) and *икэвкэчи тәлуҢ* (literally, *tāluŋ* with singing). The Lower Amgun' Negidals do not have such subdivision of genres.

The problem of spreading of *икэвкэчи тәлуҢ* among the Negidals is quite controversial. According to our observations and existing surveys, the Negidal tradition was in the making at the time. The Upper Amgun' Negidals say that “*икэвкэчи тәлуҢил – это эвэди нимҢакалтин*” (‘singing tales are Evenki tales’). However, the Lower Amgun' Negidals claim that they have their own tales “with songs”: unfortunately, we did not have occasion to hear any of them. The legends that we have heard and recorded were undoubtedly of the Evenki origin. The “prose” text of such legends is performed in the Negidal language, but the words of the heroes (recitatives) are intoned in the Evenki. We would have certainly avoided making such broad generalisations unless we could easily distinguish between the Evenki and the Negidal speech.

Most Negidal *tāluŋ*, as well as the *ulgu*, have no titles.

Paroemic genres in Negidal folklore are represented by taboo-bans, invocations of nature spirits and spirits of the dead, ritual formulas recited at the “bear festival”, riddles, proverbs, children’s rhymes. All paroemias we subdivide into ritual (invocations of spirits, bear festival ritual formulas, taboos) and non-ritual. Ritual paroemias were of great importance for the Negidal spiritual culture.

Among ritual paroemias, taboo-bans (*ožōwi* ~ *o<sup>a</sup>žāwi*) were the most important and numerous. The system of bans existed in all Manchu-Tungus cultures and these bans regulated literally all sides of human life. Even the name of the taboo-ban in the Northern group of Manchu-Tungus languages is connected with the root \**ožō-* ‘to guard, to keep’.

Second in importance were, perhaps, invocations of (appeals to) spirits. Usually people asked for prosperity, health, hunting luck from master-spirits of nature, water and fire. These recitals were short and performed in the course of “feeding the spirits”, i.e. when offerings of tobacco, vodka or food were made.

Among non-ritual paroemias, riddles were the most popular and numerous, though today they have practically been lost for us. We might presume that in the past people knew a lot of nature-signs but now the only ones retained are those that are connected with weather phenomena. The proverbs are not numerous either, though this is not surprising since other peoples related to the Negidals, for example, the Evenki, also have very few proverbs.

Negidal non-ritual songs (*ikhēn*), like similar songs of other Manchu-Tungus peoples, and even more so – of all Northern minorities of Russia, are radically different from songs of European peoples. First of all, the Negidals do not have songs that can be sung by anyone, the only exception being the dance-song *khēžē*. Negidal songs were of personal character. They were composed by a single person “on occasion” and could vanish together with this occasion, but they could also, for some reason or other, remain in memory of the members of the family. Negidal songs are inherently of improvised character: their texts are never the same and change from one performance to another, they are always reshaped, transformed, even in case of lullabies. The tunes, on the contrary, are characterised by permanence, since for all improvisations the performer normally uses one and the same standard tune. Negidal songs can be formally subdivided into personal (i.e. personal proper, or biographic, lyrical, comic songs and laments), lullabies, pure improvisations and dance-songs. The Negidals sing without accompaniment, the single exception being shaman ritual songs performed to the sounds of a hand-drum [see Хасанова 1996].

The Negidals had only one dance, namely the round dance *khēžē* (movements of a shaman in trance cannot be regarded as dancing). Since *khēžē* was accompanied with certain words, it seems right to characterise it as dance-song. The Negidals themselves consider *khēžē* to belong to the *ewin* category (‘game, entertainment, contest’). The words of the *khēžē* were known to everyone present but the right to lead the singing and create the rhythm of the dance was given to specific persons according to the rules [see Хасанова 1996].

Though we distinguish among myths, tales, legends, everyday life stories, songs and paroemias in Negidal folklore, this does not mean that all these genres have been fully formed. One can find a number of transitional forms or forms that have no distinct genre characteristics. Thus, we find in tales some features that make them resemble myths. Myth themes can be found in legends and even in everyday life stories. A certain genre vagueness and strong mythological features are characteristic

not only of the Negidal oral literature but the whole of Manchu-Tungus folklore.

In our collection we present not all the texts that we have collected but only myths, legends, and tales about animals. This is due to the fact that Negidal tales are highly diverse and require a thorough folkloristic and anthropological commentary. As for the collection of Negidal paroemias, all of its sections require a special commentary and detailed explanations as well, with the exception of the riddles.

As we have already said, the Negidals place myths into the *ulgu(y)* category. All myths are considered to be true stories about real events that happened a long, or not so long, time ago. Inside the *ulgu(y)* category we can notice several time periods [see Хасанова 1999, p.46-48]. A number of myths the Negidals regard as having happened a very long time ago and characterise them as *zoïonmu* ‘ancient’ or refer to them using the Russian word “старинай” (‘olden days’). These themes are already losing their essential mythological features and start resembling tales. Among such themes are, for example, myths about the sky-hunter *Maŋi* (N 8), about the three suns (NN 2-4), about the Great Spirit *Boŋá* (N 1) and some others.

To present day the Negidals who were masters of oral literature, thought it necessary to use special techniques of “intensifying the reality of the event” (see, for example, NN 16, 17, 22, 26, 45, 46 etc.). Thus, the reality of the legend about a girl who married a bear, despite the tale’s apparent ancient origin, is supported with a more or less exact date (N 12). The legend about a tiger-relative is linked to a concrete Negidal clan (N 17). In mythological stories the name of the settlement where the event took place is **always present**, and more or less exact date is also provided (10 or 15 years ago). Often personal names are mentioned, but always names of people who no longer live. It is especially characteristic of narratives about local master-spirits or evil *ambán*-spirits, and also about spirits of shamans who haunt shaman burial places (see Notes to the texts).

In other words, an ancient myth or legend that is still important for this or that people (here we first of all refer to the peoples of the Manchu-Tungus language family) is constantly modified and modernised with the help of dates, names and place-names. Tales that seem less important to the local people gradually lose their aim of sounding true; they use fewer “concretising” techniques and are increasingly seen as fantastic stories, that is, as pure fiction.

During our many years of fieldwork, we managed to record just a few myths, though some of them have variations. Much more often we came across mythological stories and mythological “horror” stories. The myths proper are usually very short and schematic (compare B.O. Dolgikh’s opinion about Nganasan etiological myths [Долгих 1976, pp.23-24]). You should draw on your knowledge of the ethnic culture they belong to, if you want to understand their meaning.

Negidal legends about a human living with a bear can be subdivided into three groups. The first group, that we think to be the oldest, includes tales about a woman who leaves her home and warns her brother not to kill a she-bear with two cubs when he goes hunting (N10). But her brother still kills the she-bear by mistake. These legends never give the reason why the woman is leaving and where she is going. All

the listeners and the narrator **know** that she became a bear's wife. Such texts were most likely not recited for the entertainment but were part of bear rituals that were performed at bear ceremonies and are lost now. This myth, totemic in its origin, is the most popular among the bear myths. Legends about a girl who leaves her family to live with the bear, either of her own free will or because she was abducted, exist in many cultures, namely, among the Evenks, Evens, Oroch, Nanays, Ul'chi. Thus we can regard these texts as a common Manchu-Tungus myth theme. G.M. Vasilevich thought that the Evenki variation of this theme is the oldest and belongs to the "Pra-Tungus" who moved east and retained the original archaic variant [Василевич 1971, p.157].

The second group of bear myths seems to be common Siberian (N 11, N 12). The general outline of this myth theme is this: women go berry-picking and one of them gets lost, after many years she returns to her home village, either alone or with two bear-cubs. Themes of such kind are popular on a large scale. E.A. Alexeenko proved that this underlying myth theme could be found in the whole of Eurasian-American material [Алексеевко 1985].

To our mind, the third group belongs to the category of "autochthonous" themes (N 14). This is the legend about a hunter who spends the winter in a bear's den. This theme is typical of the Nivkh culture [Штернберг 1908, NN 29, 30; Крейнвич 1973, pp.197-199, 426-427]. One significant point is that the Negidals themselves regard this theme as foreign (*ulchu ulgu* 'Ul'chi *ulgu*'). It should be noted, though, that N.A. Lipskaya's archive contains a record of this legend that is regarded as a Negidal variant (*see* Notes to N 14 where the text is given in full). Two variants of this legend were also published by V.I. Tsintsius [Цинциус 1971, pp.192-193].

We would like to point out two features of Negidal bear myths. Firstly, the plots of the three groups do not interpenetrate. Secondly, they never tell us how to treat the body of the bear (the bear carcass). It is not easy to find the reasons behind that, but we think that G.M. Vasilevich is right in saying that one of the marginal Tungus groups that formed the basis of the future Negidal ethnic group, managed to preserve some old myth themes.

Though the Lower Amgun' Negidals took over from the Nivkh (or the Ul'chi) the practice of rearing a bear in a cage and the corresponding "festival" *ɳaska* (Negidal *ɳaska* < Ul'chi *ɳarka* < Nivkh *ɳarκ*), they still have not lost their older hunting traditions [about the Negidal bear festival *see* Хасанова 2000, pp.203-210]. A pattern similar to the bear myths is characteristic of the theme about a woman living together with a tiger, which the Lower Amgun' Negidals most likely took over from the Ul'chi (N 15, N 16).

Among the cosmogonical myths there is an Amur myth about three (two) suns (NN 2, 3, 4) that has a lot of variants. This theme exists in all cultures of the Amur area, the Nanay, the Oroch, the Ul'chi, the Udihe, the Nivkh (*see* Notes). This theme most probably came to the Amur area from the South.

Our collection includes several variations of the myth about a girl on the Moon, starting from a sketchy plot to the detailed life-story of the orphan girl (NN 5, 6, 7).

All variants have the same ending: at full moon we can see the figure of a girl with birch bark pails on the Moon. This myth theme is known to the Nanay, the Evenks, and even the Yakut (*see* Notes to N 7).

The myth about a human being (beings) on the Moon, holding pails of water is widespread in Asia, Canada and Europe. The reasons for getting to the Moon can be different – abduction, punishment or, on the contrary, rescue from miserable life conditions. A survey of these variations of the theme can be found in an article by the Japanese anthropologist E.Ishida [Исида 1998, pp.10-34].

One of the most interesting Negidal (and even Manchu-Tungus) myths tells about the sky-hunter *Maŋi* (N 8). This myth explains the appearance of the Milky Way (*Maŋi ганичāнин* ‘the track of *Maŋi*’s skis’ in the Lower Amgun’ culture and *Maŋi оžанин* or *Maŋi ганичāнин* in the Upper Amgun’ culture), and the elks. Besides, the narrative explains the origin of whales that dwell in sea and tells us why elks have small “hollows” on their hind legs. A similar theme exists among the Evenks and the Oroch and possibly the Nanay; it can be also found in Siberian cultures, for example, the Kets [Мифы, предания, сказки кетов, № 8].

The anthropogenetic myth about *Boŋa* (№ 1) can be found only in the Lower Amgun’ culture. It tells about the creation of man and animals by the demiurge *Boŋa*. Variations of this myth or its parts are found in oral literature of the Nanay, Oroch, Udihe and Evenks.

The peculiar feature of cosmogonic and totemic myths of the Manchu-Tungus Amur area peoples is their deliberately laconic, sometimes even fragmentary character. The plot is usually given in just several sentences and the listener is supposed to know the meaning behind them and make the necessary conclusions. The native person had no need to be told who *Maŋi* is and why he is capable of throwing the elk calf on the ground, saying: “From now on you will live on the land!” (N 8). Many *telungu* (the corresponding Negidal «genre» would be the *ulgu*) along with taboo-bans (*ožōwi*, *sondo*) used to regulate life of the clan society.

Etiologic myths are not numerous. Our collection includes several variants of the myth explaining the origin of bloodsucking insects (N 32, N 33). There are also two myths explaining the mortality of the man (NN 29, 30). These myths seem to have lost their sacral character and are now treated as tales. The same myth about bloodsucking insects, for example, serves as the etiologic finale of the tale “Selawun” that we have recorded ourselves [*see* also Цинциус 1982, N 28].

There are not many clan myths in our collection. The most interesting is the myth of the *Tápkal* clan about the water monster *khímŋu* (it can be also regarded as a totemic myth, N 23). This theme is known to the Nanay and possibly the Ul’chi. According to the Negidals themselves, the *Tapkal* clan is of mixed Nivkh-Negidal origin, thus this myth could be a mixture of beliefs of several ethnic groups inhabiting the Amur area. The myth about the *Udán* clan tells about a she-dog that was torn asunder by people dancing the *khēžē*: they lacked one man to form the circle and took a dog by her front paws (N 37). The *ulgu* about the “nine fingers” belongs to a part of the *N’asikhágil* clan, bearing the family name of the Sarins ~ Sharins (№ 39), and the

*ulgu* about the tiger-relative belongs to another part of the same clan, the Solovyovs (№ 17).

The Negidals have a lot of myths and mythological stories about various spirits. These are stories about spirits of the abandoned dwellings (N 48); myths about the evil spirits (*ambans*) who like to frighten people (NN 39, 40 and others); myths about the lake monster *khimju* (NN 23, 24, 25, 26), myths about the *kálžam* (№ 43); myths about the master-spirit of Lake Chukchagír (NN 35, 52) and some others. There are also mythological stories that are hard to be regarded as belonging to a particular “genre” or group, and we present them separately, at the end of our myth collection. Nevertheless, all the narratives mentioned are regarded by the Negidals as *ulgu(y)* and, thus, they make an extensive use of stylistic techniques that “prove the reality” of the story.

Negidal tales (*tāluy*) can be subdivided in two major groups: tales about animals and heroic legends. In between these two categories we find a few everyday life stories and jokes.

Negidals have numerous tales about animals. They are well known to both the older and the younger generation but we cannot say that they still are told as tales for young children. Main themes and schematic plotlines of the Evenki tales about animals were first described by E.P. Lebedeva [Лебедева 1966, pp.184-202; 1974, pp.130-150; 1979, pp.76-99]. They are applicable to the corresponding Negidal tales, the single exception being the themes and plots that we regard as myths rather than tales.

Most tales about animals are very old. We might say that they used to form the basis of Manchu-Tungus folklore in general. They undoubtedly originated from the myths and they still have not lost connection with them. This can be proved by etiologic themes in many tales about animals. Besides, the tales see a human being as an integral part of nature: the man has the same position in nature as the animals, as he can be fooled (by a fox), or he himself can cheat (for example, the hares), or he can become an innocent victim. However, the man can also get help from animals (*see* NN 62, 63 about the old woman, the fox and the little bird). Animals also help each other (*see* NN 60, 61 where Grandfather Eagle-Owl teaches the flying squirrel not to give her children to the fox).

In Negidal folklore tales about the sly fox are probably the most popular. Second place is taken by the stories about the frog and the mouse (the rat), and the third – by the tales about the bear. It is worth mentioning that all plots have their counterparts in oral literature of other Manchu-Tungus peoples: some themes can be found both in the North and in the South groups, others either in the North or in the South group (*see* Notes).

Tales about animals do not have titles, as a rule (just like the myths). The same is true about the titles of the Evenki oral literature [Василевич 1936, p.6].

The fox in Negidal tales is a great trickster and a fibster. He always cheats somebody out of their food, though the motives behind the tricks he plays on the bear are far from clear (*see* N 66 about sticking up the bear’s eyes with fish-glue and N 67

about sledging down the hill). Tales N 66 and N 67, which have etiologic endings, are probably not real folk tales but rather myths or even mythological tales. The fox in the Manchu-Tungus oral literature very much resembles the Trickster.

Tales about animals are often performed with great dramatic force. It is thought of particular importance that the performer should imitate the voices of the frog (croaking) and the fox (thin and officious). A whole range of onomatopoeic words is used to describe the actions of the protagonists, with the performer intoning these words. While describing, for instance, the frog and the mouse when they are travelling down the river on a piece of larch bark, the narrator says: *СиҺэйэ ӣги җий иҢчайан, эйэху бэгди җий гевулан: тэмбуку боӯйо с̄-ай лаҢ-лаҢ-лаҢ* ‘The mouse is steering with its tail, (and) the frog is paddling with its legs: (the wave) splash-splash (against the bark raft), (the frog with its hind legs) flop-flop-flop’. Such passages are usually rhythmic.

Tales about the fox often contain words that absolutely defy translation (*see* NN 60, 61). Besides, in V.I. Tsintsius’ record [Цинциус 1982, p.62] and in our Upper Amgun’ variant the fox talks to the flying squirrel in Nanay: *никтэйи б̄уру!* ‘give me your child!’. The plot of this tale could not have been taken over from the Nanay as it is present in the Even, Evenki, Oroch and Nanay folklore (*see* Notes), i.e. it is widespread among the peoples belonging to the Manchu-Tungus language family. It is possibly a special artistic technique used to show that the fox speaks some foreign dialect and that he belongs to “another clan”. In a Lower Amgun’ Negidal tale that we have recorded ourselves (N 68), the fox’s speech contains apocopic words with the suffix *-p*, characteristic of onomatopoeic words (for example, in Nanay); it is worth mentioning that a similar form is also sometimes used in songs. This probably was supposed to emphasise the “alien”, taiga origin of the fox, who eventually cheats the old people.

Neither Negidal tales about animals nor their heroic legends have standard beginnings or endings. Neither have they standard epithets or similes. Some similes are present, though not frequent.

There are tales in our collection that can formally be regarded as myths. However, the Negidals designate them as *tāluy* ‘tales’. All such narratives we put at the very end of our collection of folk tales (NN 75, 76, 77, 78). The best term to designate this type of Negidal oral literature, in our opinion, would be “mythological tale”. It is currently used by specialists in Nenets folklore and it fully expresses the specific nature of the “genre”: a “genre” that comprises the features of both myths and tales (*see* also Notes).

Negidal folklore does not use tropes, which are typical, for instance, of the Yakut or Buryat oral literature. However, the Negidals have their own stylistic means. We have already mentioned one of them while talking about onomatopoeic words and whole series of such words. They give a complete and consistent description of the characters’ actions as well as vividly depict their appearance (*see* NN 15, 16, 23).

There is no doubt that Negidal heroic legends are the most impressive from the artistic point of view. They contain brief but nevertheless substantial descriptions of

nature and heroes. Myths and folk tales about animals, being older and of ritual character originally, use fewer stylistic and purely artistic means than other genres of oral literature. Yet these narratives, more than any other genre of Negidal folklore, possess the “canonical” form that has stayed unchanged through the ages.

Speaking about not just the Negidal but the whole of Manchu-Tungus folklore, we would characterise it as having the minimum of stylistic means and artistic techniques. Prose texts have practically no use of improvisation, which is absolutely forbidden in mythological texts. Improvisation is only possible in songs when every new performance has some differences or variations as compared to the previous one.