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Original article

Comparative ethnolinguistic analysis of the term *Mammoth* among the Koryak and Chukchi peoples

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Abstract

The article analyses the terms that the Chukchi and Koryaks use to define the *mammoth* (*Mammuthus primigenius*), in relation to traditional conceptions linked to this figure. We also examine the relationships between these terms in the Chukchi language and the Palana, Chavchuven, Alutor and Karagin dialects, using a comparative etymological and ethnolinguistic methodological approach. To this end, we rely on both the classical ethnographic literature related to these peoples and the dictionaries associated with them. Our research has revealed a significant degree of polysemy in the context studied, centred on the figure of the mammoth, leading us to the conclusion that the Chukchi nominal form *kamak*, originally used by the Koryaks, is relatively recent in defining the mammoth and is largely linked to the trade and transaction of the animal's ivory. We also show that the notion of 'beetle', linked to that of 'mammoth' among both the Chukchi and the Koryaks, did not develop etymologically among the Koryaks towards the form it took in Chukchi (*təqinewət*), because the term *kamak* (or *kemek(e)*) associated with the notion of horn, probably already fulfilled this semiotic function. Our conclusions demonstrate the importance of considering the figure of the mammoth in a cross-disciplinary way among the peoples concerned, while emphasising the need for further investigation, particularly concerning the functions and conceptions of this figure among the Chukchi and the Koryaks.

Keywords: mammoth, Chukchi people, Koryak people, Palana, Karagin, Alutor, Chavchuven, Chukchi, ethnolinguistic analysis, comparative method, etymology, *kamak*, beetle, evil spirit

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Оригинальная научная статья

Сравнительный этнолингвистический анализ понятия «мамонт» у коряков и чукчей

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Аннотация

В статье анализируются термины, которые чукчи и коряки используют для обозначения мамонта (*Mammuthus primigenius*), в связи с традиционными представлениями, связанными с этой фигурой. Мы также исследуем взаимосвязи между этими терминами в чукотском языке и паланском, чавчувенском, алюторском и карагинском диалектах, применяя сравнительно-этимологический и этнолингвистический методологический подходы. С этой целью мы опираемся как на классическую этнографическую литературу, связанную с этими народами, так и на связанные с ними словари. Наше исследование выявило значительную степень полисемии в изучаемом контексте, сосредоточенном вокруг фигуры мамонта, что приводит нас к выводу, что чукотская именная форма камак, изначально используемая коряками, является относительно недавней для обозначения мамонта и в значительной степени связана с торговлей и сбытом слоновой кости животного. Мы также показываем, что понятие «жук», связанное с понятием «мамонт» как у чукчей, так и у коряков, не развивалось этимологически у коряков в сторону той формы, которую оно приняло в чукотском языке (*təqijewət*), поскольку термин камак (или кемек(э)), связанный с понятием рога, вероятно, уже выполнял эту семиотическую функцию. Наши выводы демонстрируют важность рассмотрения образа мамонта в междисциплинарном плане среди соответствующих народов, одновременно подчеркивая необходимость дальнейших исследований, особенно касающихся функций и представлений об этом образе у чукчей и коряков.

Ключевые слова: мамонт, чукчи, коряки, Палана, Карагин, Алютор, Чавчувен, чукчи, этнолингвистический анализ, сравнительный метод, этимология, камак, жук, злой дух

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Introduction

The aim of our article is to analyse, using an ethnolinguistic approach, the terms used by the Koryaks and Chukchi to name the mammoth (*Mammuthus primigenius* (Blumenbach, 1799)). Although there are isolated references to it in classical ethnographic literature (W. Bogoras [1] or I.S. Vdovin [2]), as well as in dictionaries of reference (A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito [3] or T.A. Moll [4]), it appears that there are no studies that have attempted to gather all this information in order to compare and analyse it. The aim of this article is to fill this gap in order to observe and analyse the guidelines that emerge from these comparisons. Beyond providing the most exhaustive panorama possible of linguistic references to the mammoth in these particular contexts, our objective is also to lay the theoretical foundations of the plural interconnections between the Koryaks and the Chukchi around the term ‘mammoth’ and its meanings for these peoples.

Materials and Methods

The materials on which our analysis is based are found in the classical ethnographic literature on the Koryaks and the Chukchi (mainly W. Bogoras [1, 5, 6] and I.S. Vdovin [2]), as well as in the dictionaries of the most studied languages and dialects spoken by these peoples (for example, A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito [3], T.A. Moll [4], A.N. Zhukova [7], W. Bogoras [8]). We also ground our analysis on comparative reference dictionaries focusing, in particular, on the reconstructions of the supposed bases in Proto-Chukotian (I.A. Muraveva [9], M. Fortescue [10] and O.A. Mudrak [11]). With regard to the Koryaks, it should be noted that when the dialect from which a particular term comes is subject to controversy, we will refer to the Koryaks in general, without mentioning a particular dialect. Methodologically, we rely on linguistic and dialectological comparatism, both on a semiotic and etymological level, enriched and substantiated by ethnological comparatism. We used modern transliterations, modifying them, if necessary, in the sources cited, in the interest of uniformity and to make reading easier (when, exceptionally, we keep the original transliteration, we state it explicitly in a footnote). Where necessary, we translated the quoted passages into English.

Results and Discussion

Critical analysis of the Chukchi word *kamak*

The Chukchi word for ‘mammoth’, *kamak*, is, in itself, subject to debate. Indeed, this word also means ‘evil spirit’ (Rus. *zloj duh*) and is, as we shall see, highly polysemous. In fact, this second meaning seems much more widespread than the first one. Actually, only Ch. Weinstein proposes the translation ‘mammoth’ for *kamak* in a univocal lexical entry [12, item 94]. O.A. Mudrak, in his comparative dictionary, gives two meanings for the

term *kamak*: ‘evil spirit’ (Rus. *zloj duh*) and ‘mammoth’ (Rus. *mamont*) [11, p. 177]. While the meaning ‘evil spirit’ originates from W. Bogoras, the origin of the meaning ‘mammoth’ that he gives is more mysterious. Indeed, this translation is not found in the sources he mentions in connection with the Chukchi language (i.e. the dictionary of W. Bogoras [8] and of T.A. Moll and P.I. Inènikèj [13]). The only possible explanation for this translation is a logical deduction: in his work published in 1907, W. Bogoras emphasises that *kamağrætən* literally means ‘kamak’s tooth’, which means ‘mammoth ivory’ or ‘mammoth’s tusk’ [6, p. 341]. The literal translation *kamak* for ‘mammoth’ is therefore not very developed in Chukchi. This is even more noticeable when we realise that several Russian-Chukchi dictionaries, such as, for example, T.A. Moll and P.I. Inènikèj [13] or P.I. Inènikèj [14], do not include the entry ‘mammoth’, nor *kamak*.

By contrast, it is more common to find the translation ‘mammoth’ for the word *kamak* in connection with its ivory. As we have just emphasised, W. Bogoras, who does not mention the translation ‘mammoth’ for *kamak*, underlines, on the other hand, that, in Chukchi, *kamağrætən* (or *kamagrætən* [8, p. 66]) means ‘kamak’s tooth’ [6, p. 341]. This noun is the product of an incorporation of the names *kamak* and *rætən*¹. Within this same semantic network, W. Bogoras specifies that *kamagrænne* means ‘made of mammoth ivory’ [8, p. 66]. As emphasised above, while in his work published in 1907, W. Bogoras indicates that *rætən* literally means ‘tooth’ (in ‘kamak’s tooth’) [6, p. 341], he specifies in his Russian-Chukchi dictionary published in 1937 that this term can, besides ‘tooth’ (Rus. *zub*), also mean ‘horn’ (Rus. *rog*) [8, p. 133]².

The most common association of the term *kamak* is, as emphasised above, not done with the mammoth itself. Indeed, W. Bogoras, in his dictionary published in 1937, does not give the meaning ‘mammoth’ for the entry *kamak*, but ‘evil spirit’ (Rus. *zloj duh*). M. Fortescue refers to W. Bogoras in his comparative dictionary and also mentions only the meaning ‘evil spirit’ [10, p. 127]. W. Bogoras notes that *kamak* also means ‘spirit of disease’ [6, p. 312], underlining that in the Russian-Chukchi jargon, as he explains, ‘a kind of broken dialect, with simplified grammar and pronunciation, adapted to the use of both parties’ [6, p. 289], particularly in commercial contexts (W. Bogoras refers to this jargon as ‘trading jargon’ [6, p. 289]), this term means ‘epidemic’ or ‘plague’ (Rus. *mor*) [8, p. 66], ‘death’, ‘dying’ [6,

¹ The apparition of the letter *ğ/g* being the consequence of a consonant alternation.

² In the context of the mammoth, the latter term seems actually more appropriate, since W. Bogoras himself specifies that the tusks of the *kamak* are considered to be ‘horns’ [6, p. 326].

p. 312], ‘to die’ or even ‘devil’ [6, p. 341]. We can therefore observe a significant polysemy in relation to this word, which is not strictly Chukchi in origin. Indeed, W. Bogoras specifies that the term *kamak* comes from the Koryaks and is rarely used in Chukchi [1, p.120; 6, p. 341] (as a matter of fact, this term is rarely present in his work on the Chukchi and, when it is, it is often in connection with the Koryaks). The fact that it comes from the Russian-Chukchi jargon coincides with this origin, since a large part of the vocabulary specific to this jargon comes from the Koryaks [6, p. 289].

Following the fact that the occurrence of *kamak* linked to the mammoth is mainly related to its ‘horns’ – its ivory, we can assume here that the term *kamak* was borrowed from the Koryaks by the Chukchi to define, among other things, a particular evil spirit in the form of the mammoth with ‘horns’, the word *kamağrätən* [6, p. 341] leading implicitly to the existence of an evil horned spirit. In this context, it is highly probable that the name *kamak* in its reference to the mammoth comes from the ivory trade and transactions with the Russians (probably from the second half of the 18th century, when more peaceful relations with the Russians developed, allowing a greater expansion of the ivory trade [15, p. 149-150]), the term *kamak* being used, as we have just mentioned, in connection with ivory and in the Russian-Chukchi jargon in particular, the origin of which is said to be found mostly among the Koryaks. This is further supported by the fact that in Chavchuen we found the term *kamağrätən* for ‘mammoth tusk’, which is exactly the same term used in Chukchi [16 in 10, p. 127]. As a sign of the intense interpenetration of the languages and dialects under consideration, in the Chavchuen word *kamağrätən*, it is quite possible that the word *rätən* was borrowed from Chukchi, where it means, as we have seen, ‘tooth’ or ‘horn’. Indeed, the term *rätən* doesn’t appear in Chavchuen. We would therefore have a mutual influence between Chukchi and Koryak (in this case Chavchuen) in the formation of this word. Beyond these linguistic hypotheses, it is clear that the semantic field associated with the *kamak*, referring to danger, death and disease, is clearly negative, linking the mammoth mainly to chthonic elements in the Chukchi context, as can be seen among other Siberian peoples, such as the Yakuts, for example [17].

The term ‘mammoth’ in the dialects of the Koryaks: *kamak* and *kemek(e)*

As emphasised above, W. Bogoras specifies that the term *kamak* originates from the Koryaks. Indeed, the meaning ‘evil spirit’ for *kamak* is found in Chavchuen in I.A. Muraveva [9 in 11, p. 177] and A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito [3, p. 132]. T.A. Moll [4, p. 50], V.V. Leontiev and K.A. Novikova [18, p. 172] give the Chavchuen meaning ‘spirit of the earth’

(Rus. *zemljanoj duh*) for *kamak*. In Palana, A.N. Zhukova [7 in 11, p. 177] records the term *kamak*, but also *kemek(e)*, both meaning ‘evil spirit’ (A.N. Zhukova also reports *kemek* in her work with T. Kurebito [3, p. 132]). In Alutor, I.A. Muraveva, A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito mention *kamak* for ‘bad spirit’ (Rus. *zloj duh*) [9 in 10, p. 127; 3, p. 132]. In Karagin, we find, again for this meaning, *kemek* in A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito [3, p. 132].

The major difference between the Chukchi and the Koryaks is that among the latter, the terms *kamak* or *kemek(e)*, depending on the dialect, clearly mean ‘mammoth’, and this is much more extensively documented than in Chukchi³. Indeed, in Palana, Alutor and Karagin, these terms meaning ‘evil spirit’ are found in the same above-mentioned sources, with the translation ‘mammoth’. The meaning ‘mammoth’ for *kamak* is also widely found in Chavchuven. This meaning is reported by I.A. Muraveva [9 in 11, p. 177], T.A. Moll [4, p. 50], V.V. Leontiev and K.A. Novikova [18, p. 172] and also by A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito [3, p. 132]. As can be seen, the isolated term ‘mammoth’ is therefore much more common among the Koryaks than among the Chukchi, which is in accordance with W. Bogoras’ remark when he emphasises that the term *kamak* comes from the Koryaks and is rarely used in Chukchi. Given the phonetic similarity of this term, which is found in the various dialects spoken by the Koryaks as well as in Chukchi, M. Fortescue proposes the stem *kamak* in Proto-Chukotian as the origin of this word [7 in 10, p. 127]. O.A. Mudrak, for his part, proposes the Proto-Chukotian stem with no Kamchatkan etymology *kamaka* [11, p. 177].

The mammoth and the beetle, a common tonality among the Chukchi

Another Chukchi word associated with the mammoth can be found in the literature: the word *təqinewət*, which is linked, at first glance surprisingly, to a beetle. As far as we know, A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito are the only authors reporting the Chukchi denomination *təqinewət* for ‘mammoth’ [3, p. 132]. It is in fact a polysemous word, which also means ‘evil spirit’ (Rus. *zloj duh*) and ‘a kind of beetle’ (Rus. *vid žuka*). Following what we have analysed above, the meaning ‘evil spirit’ is not unexpected in relation to the mammoth. However, the third meaning they report is more intriguing, as the authors do not mention the term *kamak* in Chukchi to refer to the mammoth. Ch. Weinstein, referring to A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito for the name *təqinewət*, reports in his lexicon the two designations (*kamak* and *təqinewət*) as being synonymous in Chukchi [12, items 94-95], both meaning ‘mammoth’.

³ It is worth noting that, surprisingly, W. Jochelson makes no mention of the mammoth when he discusses the concept of the *kamak* in his classic work on the Koryaks.

In reality, the meaning ‘a kind of beetle’ is also linked to the chthonic world, so it is not completely unrelated to its homonyms – homophones and homographs – ‘mammoth’ and ‘evil spirit’. Indeed, W. Bogoras, who translates this term (spelt *təqijewət* [6, p. 329]) as ‘black beetle’, specifies that literally, in Chukchi, it means ‘shining black woman’ [6, p. 329], *təqi* meaning ‘shine’ [10, p. 301] and *ɣew* – ‘female’ [10, p. 195]⁴.

According to the Chukchi, *təqijewət* is a small black beetle considered to be ‘a woman who takes human form and marries a human after having bewitched and killed his first wife. The husband eventually discovers the imposture and kills the ‘brilliant woman’. But before dying she curses her descendants and promises to send them syphilis’ [5, p. 122]. This figure develops in many ways, playing an important role in several Chukchi tales. For example, in a tale entitled ‘About Ėmèmkut’ (Russian: *Ob Ėmèmkute skazka*), the latter marries a beetle-woman and kills her by throwing her into the fire. Before dying, she puts a curse – a disease – on mankind [5, p. 304-305]. In another version, this beetle is a Chuvan woman killed by her Chukchi husband. Before he burned her on a pyre, she ‘cursed his race and promised him all kinds of diseases in the future, especially syphilis’ [5]. W. Bogoras reports another story in which the beetle-woman this time killed her husband when he left her by ‘pouring into his ear water taken from a piece of old sea-ice’ [6, p. 329]. Finally, W. Bogoras also relates a tale in which the Black-beetle-woman strips the Sun’s bride of her clothes (in another version, her skin), conceals her under the roots of the grass and usurps her place by the sun. The Sun’s bride manages to emerge from the ground and gives birth to a son, recognised by the sun when he becomes an adult. Having found his true wife, ‘He asks the Beetle-woman to let him louse her head, and, when running his fingers through her hair, he finds out that she has a beetle-neck. Then he makes a pile of wood in front of the entrance to his house, and burns her. Before dying, the Beetle-woman curses the human race with various diseases, – smallpox, syphilis, and others. She continues cursing mankind until her husband pushes her with a stick farther into the flame, and turns her over, belly upward’ [19, p. 657-658, for another version see 5, p. 176-178].

In an alternative version of this legend, after being burnt alive, the beetle-woman ‘was sent back to this world in the shape of a beetle to announce to

⁴ In his Russian-Chukchi dictionary, W. Bogoras gives the following spelling of *təqijewət*: *təqijæwt* (with the unrounded pre-open front vowel [æ]) [8, p. 104], underlining that *ɣæw* means, in compound nouns, ‘woman’, ‘female’ (Rus. *ženšina*, *samka*) and that *ɣæwt* is used in the names of mythological women [8, p. 104]. The colour black mentioned in his translation is more open to discussion, W. Bogoras pointing out that ‘black’ is *uw-* in compound names [8, p. 114], which is not found here.

mankind the coming of death. She also created and spread abroad contagious diseases' [6, pp. 329-330]. As we can see, the figure of *təqijewət* resonates in many ways with that of *kamak*. They both share the same negative elements, including a link to disease and, more generally, to death. It is perhaps through these elements, which are closely linked to the term *kamak*, that the extension of *təqijewət* to the figure of the mammoth has taken place.

The words *kamak* and *kemek(e)* related to the beetle in the dialects of the Koryaks

The same terminological association between the words 'mammoth' and 'beetle' can be found in the Koryak dialects. In Chavchoven, T.A. Moll translates *kamak* (together with the meanings 'spirit of the earth' (Rus. *zemljanoj duh*) and 'mammoth' (Rus. *mamont*)) as 'beetle' (Rus. *žuk*) [4, p. 50] and we find exactly the same translations for the same term in V.V. Leontiev and K.A. Novikova [18, p. 172]. A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito also report in Chavchoven, for this same term, 'a kind of beetle' (Rus. *vid žuka*) [3, p. 132]⁵. Finally, we find a similar meaning in A.N. Zhukova for the Chavchoven word *kamak*: 'one of the kinds of beetle' (Rus. *odin iz vidov žuka*) [7 in 10, p. 131]. In Palana, we find both in A.N. Zhukova and in A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito, the term *kemek*, translated respectively as 'one of the kinds of beetle' (Rus. *odin iz vidov žuka*) [7 in 10, p. 131] and 'a kind of beetle' (Rus. *vid žuka*) [3, p. 132]. In the Alutor dialect, we find, both in I.A. Muraveva and in A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito, the term *kamak*, translated respectively as 'beetle' (Rus. *žuk*) [9 in 10, p. 131] and 'a kind of beetle' (Rus. *vid žuka*) [3, p. 132]. Finally, in Karagin we find *kemek* in A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito for 'a kind of beetle' (Russian: *vid žuka*) [3, p. 132].

Given these phonetic similarities, M. Fortescue and O.A. Mudrak do not propose the base *kamak* or *kamaka* as the common origin of the term 'beetle' (Rus. *žuk*), but respectively *kæmæk* [10, p. 131] (common origin in Proto-Chukotko-Kamchatkan) and *kaməka* [11, p. 178]⁶ (Proto-Chukotian base without Kamchatkan etymology). It is particularly interesting here to note that neither O.A. Mudrak nor M. Fortescue give a word in Chukchi that would go back to this common etymology in connection with the beetle, M. Fortescue explicitly mentioning its absence. On the other hand, this lexical field around the beetle directly echoes the Chukchi term *təqijewət* meaning, as reported by A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito, 'mammoth' [3, p. 132], but also 'evil spirit' (Rus. *zloj duh*) and, specifically, 'a kind of beetle' (Rus.

⁵ As for the other entries from this source cited below, the translation 'a kind of beetle' is always given with the meanings 'evil spirit' (Rus. *zloj duh*) and 'mammoth' (Rus. *mamont*).

⁶ O.A. Mudrak uses the vowel 'ə' here ('a' with a subscript dot) to represent a mid vowel harmony, between the vowels 'a' and 'e' [11, p. 8].

vid žuka). In other words, three meanings very similar to those of the word *kamak* in Chavchuvén reported by T.A. Moll as well as V.V. Leontiev and K.A. Novikova. Moreover, all our sources in Chavchuvén and Alutor report the same word – *kamak* – for ‘evil spirit’ (or ‘spirit of the earth’), ‘beetle’ (or ‘one of the kinds of beetle’, ‘a kind of beetle’) and ‘mammoth’. In Palana, all our sources combined, we find the terms *kamak* and *kemek*, (or *kemek(e)*) for these three meanings. In Karagin, our source reports the same word *kamak* and *kemek*, also for the three meanings (‘mammoth’, ‘evil spirit’ and ‘beetle’ or ‘a kind of beetle’). Consequently, it can be established that the Chukchi word *təqijewət* does not harmonise etymologically with the terms *kamak-kemek(e)*, but does harmonise in terms of the meanings they share, namely ‘mammoth’, ‘beetle’ (‘one of the kinds of beetle’ or ‘a species of beetle’) as well as ‘evil spirit’ (or ‘spirit of the earth’), and this is often explicitly stated in the same dictionary, such as, for example, that of T.A. Moll, A.N. Zhukova and T. Kurebito or V.V. Leontiev and K.A. Novikova.

Concerning the Koryaks speaking Alutor, I.S. Vdovin informs us that, ‘*Kamak* is a harmful creature, in nature it is a beetle. It lives in the earth. It doesn’t harm humans directly but it can create earthquakes, spew smoke and lava from volcanoes, which is why there are *ɲekamaku* – ‘mountain *kamak*’. They walk underground in the form of a mammoth – *rənəkamak* (‘horned *kamak*’)’ [2, p. 94].

The form *rənəkamak* could therefore have been used in its diminutive form *kamak*, linking the figures of the beetle (a particular form of ‘horned’ beetle) and the mammoth. This representation coincides particularly well with the notion ‘spirit of the earth’ reported by T.A. Moll [4, p. 50] and V.V. Leontiev and K.A. Novikova [18, p. 172] linked to the traditional *geoplasical* function of the mammoth in Siberia (i.e. the modification of the natural landforms) [20], perhaps revealing the existence of this representation among the Chavchuvéns too.

Finally, it should be noted that we find in Chavchuvén the term *t(ə)qilʲǵəjet*⁷, which is phonetically close to the Chukchi term *təqijewət*, meaning ‘shine’ [10, p. 301]⁸. T.A. Moll also has the Chavchuvén verb *təqilʲǵəetək* meaning ‘glitter, shine, sparkle’ (Rus. *blesnut*’, *blestet*’, *sverkat*’) [4, p. 94]. We remember that in Chukchi, as Bogoras emphasises, *təqijewət* literally means ‘shining black woman’ [6, p. 329]. However, in Chavchuvén, the terms *t(ə)qilʲǵəjet* and *təqilʲǵəetək* only refer to the notion of brilliance, with no meaning referring to the term ‘beetle’ [10, p. 301].

⁷ The phonetic transcription [j] transcribes a secondary articulation based on palatalisation.

⁸ *Tqilʲǵərrat* in Palana, Alutor and Karagin, with the same meaning as in Chavchuvén [10, p. 301].

Conclusion

As we emphasised in our introduction, our objectives were both to analyse the terms used by the Koryaks and the Chukchi to name the mammoth, and to lay the theoretical foundations of the plural interconnections between these peoples around this figure. Taking into account the various elements brought up throughout our analyses, we can formulate the following hypothesis clarifying the different terms related to the mammoth: the form *kamak* being relatively recent among the Chukchi to define the mammoth and being largely linked to the animal's ivory, the term *təqijewət* did not, unlike the linguistic situation among the Koryaks, conflict with another term to designate this figure. This hypothesis is reinforced by M. Fortescue and O.A. Mudrak's supposition that Chukchi is not related to the proto-term *kæmək* or *kaməka*, meaning 'beetle' and by the fact that M. Fortescue does not report a common Proto-Chukchi basis for 'mammoth' (unlike O.A. Mudrak who, in the context of our hypothesis, would therefore make an erroneous extrapolation). Among the Koryaks, the term 'horned beetle' already existed to define the mammoth, based on I.S. Vdovin's material. Thus, the noun *mammoth-beetle* based on the proto-base *təqi-tqi* did not have the semantic space to be developed in this direction, remaining therefore centred only on meanings related to 'shininess'. On the contrary, among the Chukchi, the field was open for the development of the term *təqijewət*, generally linking the notions of 'mammoth' and 'beetle' in a chthonic tonality, developing – or relating to – the figure of the 'shining black woman'. The innovative elements brought up in this article deserve further examination, particularly based on field research, but they have the merit of opening the way to a critical look at the linguistic interconnections between the Chukchi and the dialects spoken by the Koryaks in relation to the mammoth, which are inseparable from its representations. Furthermore, a more extensive study focusing on the conceptions and functions of the figure of the mammoth among the Chukchi and the Koryaks, in relation to its nominations and in connection with its natural landforms modification function, would expand and deepen the overview provided by our analysis.

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Conflict of interests

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