

Study on the Change of Oroqen People's Identity Consciousness based on the Perspective of Geographical Names

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Abstract. Geographical names are the components of ethnic culture, while ethnic culture is the symbol of ethnic identity. This study comparatively analyzes the characteristics of Oroqen geographical names more systematically from two dimensions: horizontal (spacial) and vertical (temporal). The methods of the study include linguistic analysis method, historical comparison method, geographical names group method, statistical method, and inductive method. The objective of the study is to analyze the characteristics of Oroqen geographical names, explore the characteristics of their community consciousness, and find the path of cultural preservation. The results of the study revealed that the ethnic (Oroqen) identity of Oroqen people is still concrete and the national (Chinese nation) identity has been visualized, and the visualization of both is not contradictory. In the current situation that Oroqen language is endangered, preserving the toponymic culture is a basic path to respond the current situation of culture.

Keywords: Oroqen; Geographical Names; Ethnic Identity; National Identity; Cultural Preservation; Diversity in Unity of the Chinese Nation.

1. Introduction

Geographical name, as part of language and writing, is an important carrier of culture, and it can reflect the characteristics of a region and its inhabitants. From the perspective of theoretical research, there are many scholars studying the relationship between geographical names and culture, history, however, there are not enough studies on the relationship between geographical names and identity consciousness. One of the important studies is Bai Weidong and Yuan Aizhong's "An Analysis of the Role of Geographical Names in Ethnic Identity in Ethnic Minority Regions", which argues that geographical name is an essential element of ethnic identity.[1] Therefore, the study of the identity consciousness of Oroqen by analyzing their geographical names can enrich the research in this field.

From the reality, scholars do not pay enough attention to the Oroqen geographical names, which is not conducive to the inheritance and development of Oroqen culture. Oroqen is a nomadic ethnic group with small population in northern China, and its cultural development has encountered difficulties in the process of modernization, while they don't have their own writing. According to the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, geographical name has been recognized as intangible cultural heritage.[2] We should preserve geographical names as a way of cultural preservation and development. However, at present, there are only a few monographs and online materials briefly introducing Oroqen geographical names. "A Brief History of the Oroqen People"[3], "Overview of Oroqen Autonomous Banner"[4] and "Environment and the Survival of Small Ethnic Group: The Transformation of Oroqen Culture"[5] by He Qun have mentioned the geographical names of Oroqen settlements. In addition, in-depth investigation and systematic summarization of Oroqen geographical names haven't existed yet at home and abroad for the time being. There are only several papers about research on Oroqen geographical names: "Oroqen and geographical names in Oroqen language" by Tang Weixi in 1996, whose research object does not involve names of autonomous banner and ethnic townships.[6] Zhu Tong's "Characteristics of Northeast China's Exotic Word Geographical Names Research" collated and analyzed the characteristics of Northeast China's geographical names of ethnic minority groups including Oroqen[7]. Therefore, it is necessary to attach great significance to geographical names of Oroqen settlement.

In terms of practical significance, studying the ethnic and national consciousness of China's ethnic minority groups is essential for the formation of a Chinese national community. In the context of the new era, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed to cast a firm sense of Chinese national community on the basis of "the Diversity in Unity of the Chinese nation", which is of profound significance to construct a common spiritual home for all ethnic groups, build the overall identity of the Chinese nation, and achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Scholars study identity consciousness from different aspects, for example, Zhang Jinrong's "Study on Contemporary Transformation of Oroqen People's Community Consciousness"[8]. He concludes that Oroqen people's ethnic identity is abstracted and national identity is embodied, by comparing the traditional and contemporary Oroqen people's knowledge and emotional attitude towards ethnic history, language customs and beliefs. However, due to the limited space, the number of indicators examined by the authors is limited, and the analysis of each indicator is rather brief. In this study, I added Oroqen geographical names as an indicator to reveal the change of their community consciousness, which can complement research in this field.

2. Theoretical Interpretation and Research Methods

2.1 Theoretical Interpretation

2.1.1. Geographical Name

"Geographical name is a linguistic symbol that people use to distinguish individual features. It is composed of three elements: sound, form and meaning. Toponymy is a science that studies the origin, composition, meaning, evolution, distribution pattern, standardization of reading and writing, and the interrelationship between toponymy and natural and social environment." [9] Traditional research methods are mostly descriptive or narrative-based, with interpretation through qualitative analysis. Since the 1990s, the quantification of toponymic research has become a trend, scholars have used GIS technology to analyze toponymic landscapes. This study uses the traditional paradigm of toponymic research to collect, summarize, and analyze the characteristics of the spatial and temporal patterns of geographical name, using it as a clue to investigate the changes of the identity consciousness. The structure of geographical names in Oroqen residential areas is "specific term + generic term", and the generic term is the name of administrative division in Chinese (e.g. autonomous banner, ethnic township, ethnic village, town, village, community), so the object of this study is the specific term of geographical names in Oroqen ethnic areas.

2.1.2. Community Consciousness

Community consciousness (族群意识) is the content of ethnographic research. In 1988, Mr. Fei Xiaotong proposed in his theory of "the Diversity in Unity of the Chinese nation" that "The Chinese nation is an ethnic entity that includes 56 ethnic groups in China.56 ethnic groups are the grassroots level, and the Chinese nation is the top level"[10]. Based on this, my study divides community consciousness into two levels: micro-community consciousness — "ethnic identity" and macro-community consciousness — "national identity" (It should be noted that there are conceptual differences between ethnic group and nation, but the focus of this paper is on the essence of consciousness, i.e., identity itself, and focuses on the cognitive phenomenon of consciousness rather than on the object of identity, without involving the interpretation of ethnic group and nation in terms of national political rights.). "Community consciousness" in a narrow sense refers to the identity of traditional "ethnic group". In one ethnic group people live in a specific area and have the same cultural tradition. For example, Oroqen, Ewenki, Daur are ethnic groups. In a broader sense, "community consciousness" is "national identity". While nation is a macro-community formed gradually in the course of the development of modern nation-state, which is scoped by national boundaries, with national values as the core culture, such as the Chinese nation.

As for the concept of ethnic consciousness, Chinese scholars have given the following definition: Xu Lili indicates that "ethnic identity is the identification of self-identity that distinguishes one ethnic

group from other ethnic groups formed under the influence of common territory, life, language, customs, religion and other factors, which is specifically expressed as the sense of belonging, emotional dependence, responsibility and pride for the ethnic group to which they belong.”[11] Zuliyati-Simayi and Jiang Wenjing propose “ethnic consciousness is an individual’s cognitive and emotional belonging to his or her own ethnic group based on group memory, culture, language, and other factors, which is developed during interaction with other ethnic groups or in the process of group socialization, and is mainly reflected in loyalty to the ethnic group and behavior for the development of the ethnic group.”[12]

Macroscopic community consciousness can also be understood as national identity or Chinese national consciousness. The Chinese nation “as a self-contained national entity was formed over thousands of years of history”[13] As a “self-conscious” entity, it was “gradually formed after the Opium War in 1840, especially after the Sino-Japanese War, with the deepening crisis of the Chinese nation”[14]. As for the concept of national consciousness, Chinese scholars have given the following definition: According to He Jinrui and Yan Jirong, “national identity refers to the identification of a country’s citizens with the historical and cultural traditions, moral values, ideals and beliefs, and national sovereignty of their homeland, i.e., national recognition”.[15] According to Ma Rong, Chinese national identity includes the existence of a high degree of political identity for the nation, and also includes the pursuit of a common ideology and a social value system shared by all the people, including all ethnic groups, i.e., a shared national “political culture” identity.[16]

2.1.3. Geographical Names and Community Consciousness

Geographical name “belongs to important national cultural heritage in a broad sense and have strong historical significance and cultural meaning”[17], and is part of ethnic culture, while “ethnic culture is the root of ethnic existence and the symbol of ethnic identity”[18]. First, geographical name is a reflection of ethnic culture. “As a symbol and signal, the linguistic information unit has a referential function to the initial text, situation, knowledge, information, event, fact that generated it, and the vertical context behind it (вертикальный контекст) always evokes some background knowledge, some text, some information in people’s memory.”[19] Thus, geographical name can reflect and symbolize the ethnic identity, ideology, social life, production methods, religious beliefs of the people in this area, including their community consciousness, which is explored in this study. Secondly, geographical name is the carrier of ethnic culture. Geographical name has the storage function of language, i.e., “the ability to reflect, record, and store information”[20] Therefore, they are the “living fossil” of ethnic culture, as they can fix the culture in infinite time dimension in the limited space dimension. As a manifestation of ethnic culture, it in turn plays a protective role for ethnic culture and keeps people’s knowledge of national history and culture alive. Finally, geographical name is the cohesive force of ethnic culture. The storage function of geographical name makes it “a link in time, linking people from different periods and generations”[21] --with the geographical and cultural information it contains, it inspires ethnic groups to identify with themselves and unite their consciousness.

On one hand, ethnic identity is mainly expressed in the subjects’ identification with the ethnic group to which they belong and with the unique production methods and lifestyle, historical and cultural traditions, and values of the ethnic group. With the help of reflection of geographical names we can get the information related to these elements of ethnic identity. And based on this, we can judge the identity consciousness of individuals in an ethnic group. On the other hand, the core of Chinese national consciousness is the Chinese national identity, which mainly includes the cultural identity of each nationality to the Chinese nation and the political identity to the nation-state. As far as the political identity of the Chinese nation is concerned, it is mainly expressed in the subjects’ identification with the Party, the state and the Chinese socialist development path. By studying the information reflected by geographical names in relation to these indicators, we are able to judge the sense of national identity of subjects.

Oroqen, dubbed “China’s last hunting ethnic minority”, is one of the smallest ethnic groups in China, which used to live by hunting and has its own language but no writing. With the establishment

of People's Republic of China and reform and opening up, Oroqen people "abandoned hunting and returned to agriculture", gradually formed a settled life from 1951 to 1958, gradually adopt Chinese as an everyday language.[22] According to the existing research, in general, the ethnic identity of Oroqen has been abstracted and the national identity has been embodied[23]. This is reflected in the fact that Oroqen people are gradually unfamiliar with the history, language and art of their own ethnic group, while they know more about the history, official language and mainstream customs of Chinese nation. This is a process that every ethnic group commonly experiences in the process of developing from a primitive social state to modernity. The study of Oroqen people's community consciousness is supplemented by the analysis of geographical names, which can provide countermeasures for the preservation of minority cultures.

2.2 Research Methods

The first step of the study is using literature reading analysis method to gather and analyze information about Oroqen geographical names in ancient and modern documents. Then, I formulated 3 hypotheses. Firstly, the ethnic identity of Oroqen has been abstracted. Secondly, the national identity has been embodied. Thirdly, specific ethnic identity and national identity cannot exist simultaneously. The next step is to test these three hypotheses with an integrated approach. Using the linguistic analysis method, the paper studied the language and semantics of toponyms; referring to the classification system of specific terms of geographical names proposed by Chu Yaping et al.[24], this study constructed a classification system of geographical names in three categories: related to natural environment, related to history and traditions, related to good wishes; using the historical comparison method, the study compared the characteristics of geographical names formed in different historical periods; using the statistical method, the article studied the relationship between the linguistic characteristics of typical geographical names and their quantity. Finally, the study drew conclusions about Oroqen people's community consciousness based on the analysis of geographical names.

3. Oroqen Geographical Names and Identity Consciousness

3.1 Overview of Oroqen Geographical Names

The distribution of Oroqen people is characterized by "small settlement and big dispersion(小聚居, 大分散)". Since the 1950s, autonomous banners, ethnic townships and villages were established in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Heilongjiang Province to meet the demand of ethnic autonomy of Oroqen people. At present, there are 1 autonomous banner of Oroqen people: Oroqen Autonomous Banner of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (内蒙古自治区鄂伦春自治旗) (See Figure 1); 10 ethnic townships (towns): Guli Township (古里乡), Tuozhamin Township (托扎敏乡), Wulubutie Township (乌鲁布铁镇) and Nomin Township (诺敏镇) in Oroqen Autonomous Banner of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Nanmu Oroqen Township (南木鄂伦春族乡) in Zhalantun City, Xin'e Oroqen Township (新鄂鄂伦春族乡) and Xinxing Oroqen Township (新兴鄂伦春族乡) in Xunke County of Heilongjiang Province, Xincheng Oroqen Township (新生鄂伦春族乡) in Aihui District, Shibazhan Oroqen township (十八站鄂伦春族乡) in Tahe County in Greater Kingan Mountains Region, Huma County's Baiyinna Oroqen township (白银纳鄂伦春族乡); 14 ethnic villages: Guli (古里), Chaoyang (朝阳), Wulubutie (乌鲁布铁), Nomin (诺敏), Ne'erkeqi (讷尔克气), Gankui (甘奎), Xiriteqi (希日特奇), Nanmu (南木) in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region; Heilongjiang Province's Xincheng (新生), Xin'e (新鄂), Xinxing (新兴), Shibazhan (十八站), Baiyinna (白银纳); and Shengli Oroqen village (胜利鄂伦春族村) in Jiayin County, Yichun City, Heilongjiang Province. [25] (See Figure 2) The above names of autonomous places are the most typical samples of geographical names in the areas Oroqen inhabit, and the overall characteristics of

Oroqen geographical names can be roughly derived by classifying and counting these geographical names according to their linguistic and semantic characteristics. (See Table 1)

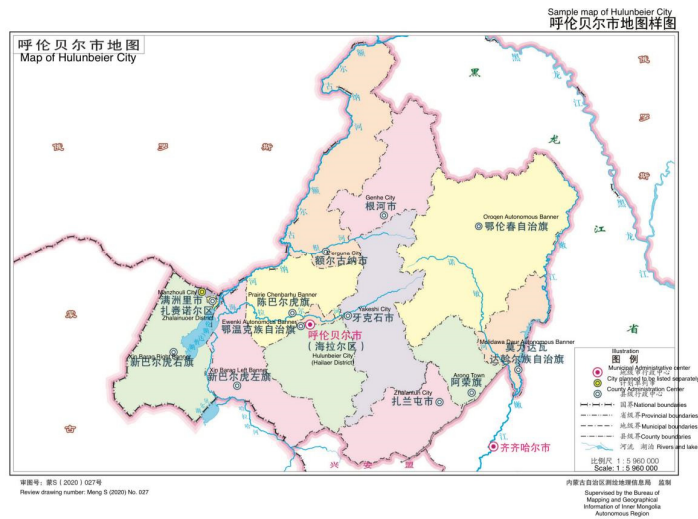


Figure 1. Map of Hulunbeier City

Source: zrzy.nmg.gov.cn/bsfw/bzdt/nmgzzqgmsbzdt/202105/t20210506_1431607.html

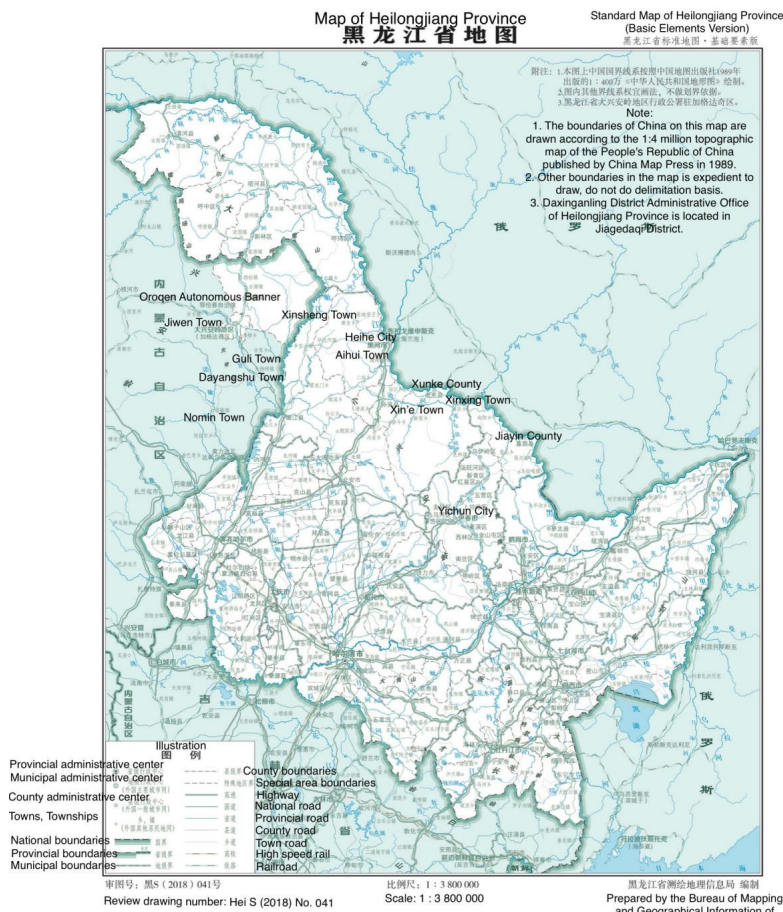


Figure 2. Map of Heilongjiang Province

Source: hism.mnr.gov.cn/ggfw/xzfw/2c907f087167b849017167c321fa060f.html

Table 1. Linguistic and semantic comparison of geographical names of Oroqen autonomous region

	Language			Semantics		
	Oroqen	Chinese	Other languages (Mongolian)	Related to natural environment	Related to history and traditions	Related to good wishes
Autonomous Banner	100%	-	-	-	100%	-
Ethnic townships	50%	40%	10%	30%	30%	40%
Ethnic villages	57.14%	35.71%	7.14%	50%	14.29%	35.71%
total	56%	36%	8%	40%	24%	36%

Note: The statistical samples are the names of 1 autonomous banner of Oroqen, 10 ethnic townships and 14 ethnic villages.

We can visually see from Table 1 that, from linguistic aspect, the languages of geographical names include Oroqen, Chinese and other languages (Mongolian). Among them the number of geographical names in the Oroqen language is the highest, which consists 56%; followed by the number of geographical names in the Chinese language, which consists 36%. And the number of geographical names in these two languages is higher than that in other languages. That is to say both Oroqen and Chinese have stronger vitality in Oroqen people's daily life, and Oroqen people's ethnic identity of Oroqen and Chinese national identity are relatively specific. From semantic analysis, these names can be divided into the following three categories: firstly, they are related to natural environment (40%), such as Wulubutie (乌鲁布铁) and Nomin (诺敏); secondly, they are related to history and traditions (24%), such as Guli (古里) and Tuozhamin (托扎敏); thirdly, they are related to good wishes (36%), such as Baiyinna (白银纳) and Xinsheng (新生).

3.2 Horizontal Comparison of Oroqen Geographical Names

Horizontal comparison of geographical names, i.e., comparison of geographical names located in different spaces in the same period. Still using language and semantics as classification criteria, a larger sample of geographical names is used in classification and comparison in order to draw more detailed conclusions about their characteristics.

3.2.1. Geographical Names Related to Natural Environment

Oroqen people have been living in the Greater and Lesser Khingan Mountains Region for many generations, living a life of hunting, fishing and gathering, and in the long history of national development, the natural environment has made an indelible mark on their language and culture. The above geographical names are determined by early Oroqen people according to their perception of natural environment, and have been used until now. Nowadays, these geographical names can still reflect the characteristics of Oroqen people's settlement in many aspects, including geographic location, mountains, rivers, natural scenery and production conditions. We can see from the Table 2 that, firstly, Oroqen people live in the location near the mountains and water, which provides the material basis for their production method of fishing, hunting and gathering; secondly, the above geographical names are mostly related to the favorable natural conditions of the place, which shows that Oroqen people are good at discovering and using the gifts of nature, and also revering and loving nature; finally, through the loan words of other languages, we can see that Oroqen people in the Greater and Lesser Khingan Mountains Region live together with Mongolian and Han Chinese people, the environment of whose production and life has the same characteristics.

Table 2. Geographical names related to natural environment

Category	Geographical name (Chinese phonetic translation)	Semantics	Language
Related to rivers	Keyi 克一	The river flowing close to the mountain bay	Oroqen
	Ganhe 甘河	Big River	
	Honghua'erji 红花尔基	The river with rapids and waves	
	Ku'erbin 库尔滨	Rapid River	
	Niu'er (from "Niule") 牛耳 (由“牛勒”转音得来)	A river with high water flow	
	Gankui 甘奎	Named after the two rivers Ganhe and Quile that flow through the territory	
	Xiao'ergou 小二沟	Small rivers	Mongolian
Related to terrain such as mountains	Nuomin 诺敏	Turquoise (River Nomin)	Oroqen
	Ne'erkeqi 纳尔克气	Mountain	
	Wulubutie 乌鲁布铁	Solitary Hill	
	Wenkutu 温库吐	Triangle Mountain confluence	
	Qiqiling 齐奇岭	Standing Mountains	
	Nanmu 南木	People living in the mountain ranges	
Related to plants	Simuke 斯木科	Marsh	Oroqen
	Jiagedaqi 加格达奇	The place where camphor pine grows	
	Hai'erdi 海尔堤	Elm tree	
	E'erken 额尔肯	Fallen tree roots	
	Jifeng 吉峰	Dense Forest	
	Busuli 布苏里	Grassy places	
	Tiebogereqi 铁博格热奇	Black birch tree	
	Xiqi 西奇	Many trees	
	Xiriteqi 希日特奇	Red Willow	
	Langgeguda 浪格古达	High mountains and many willows	
Related to animals	Hayaside 哈牙斯德	Elm Ridge	Oroqen
	Wuerqi 乌尔其	Many fish	
	Suotuhan 索图罕	Many otters	
	Tele 特勒	A place with many birds	
	Handaqi 罕达气	Running Horses	
Related to natural resources	Yili 宜里	Where there are deer singing	Oroqen
	Ali 阿里	Phosphorus fire	
	Kule 库勒	Underground Fire	
	Chaoyang (from "Chayang") 朝阳 (由“查阳”转音得来)	White stones	

Note: sources of information [26] [27] [28][29][30].

3.2.2. Geographical Names Related to History and Traditions

As a kind of language and writing, geographical name “is a product of history, which accompanies the emergence and development of the ethnic group and records its rise and fall” [34]. Table 3 presents that in the process of geographical name formation, policy planning, historical events, production methods and living habits would have an impact on it. First of all, the above geographical names show that the traditional production methods of Oroqen people are hunting, fishing and gathering. They dry the extra meat into strips for storage, and they are good at using birchbark to make various living utensils, such as skis, birchbark boats, etc. Oroqen Autonomous Banner, named after “Oroqen”, not only reflects that the main ethnic group in the region is Oroqen, but also shows the distinctive characteristics of this hunting ethnic group — “Oroqen” is the self-name of the nation, meaning “people who use reindeers” [35]. And the root of the word “Oroon” originally means “place, local”,

thus “Oroqen” means “people who belong to the local area” [36], which shows the importance of the concept “region” in the formation of Oroqen people. Secondly, in addition to reflecting the production methods and lifestyle, the geographical name also plays a great role in the evidence of history, the geographical name Guli (古里) reflects the activities of Oroqen people in the form of tribe in ancient times, and Dayangshu (大杨树) reflects the frequent commercial trade between tribes in the past. Shibazhan (十八站) and Tuozhamin (托扎敏) reflect that these areas have already been under the administration of the Qing Dynasty rulers. Finally, the name of historical figures reflects that Oroqen people advocate bravery, dedication and collective consciousness, and they love elders and heroes.

Table 3. Geographical names related to history and traditions

Category	Geographical name (Chinese phonetic translation)	Semantics	Language
Related to production and life	Oroqen 鄂伦春	People who use reindeer	Oroqen
	Jiwen 吉文	The name of wild artemisia by the river (used by Oroqen people to dry fungus, dried meat, wild vegetables, etc.).	
	Tieguya 铁古牙	A place to make birchbark utensils	
Related to historical events	Guli 古里	Oroqen ancient tribal names	Oroqen
	Tuozhamin托扎敏	Tohe Road (Qing government divided Oroqen people into five Road [路] and eight Zuo [佐] to rule according to the river they live in, and set up Tohe Road in Tohe basin.)	
	Dayangshu大杨树	In the early years, large poplar trees grew in the area. Merchants used it as a marker for trading locations, and people used it as a place to stop the rafts, thus giving the town its name.	Chinese
	Shibazhan 十八站	Named after the 18th of the 30 post stations built from Morgen (墨尔根) to Mohe (漠河) in the Qing dynasty during the Guangxu period.	
Related to historical figures	Chelu Village 车陆村	Named in honor of an Oroqen chief named Chelu in the late Qing Dynasty.	Unknown
	Yuanbao County 元宝乡	Named after the Oroqen martyr Yuan Bao.	Chinese

Note: sources of information [31][32][33]

3.2.3. Geographical Names Related to Good Wishes

Table 4. Geographical names related to good wishes

Category	Geographical name (Chinese phonetic translation)	Semantics	Language
Related to good wishes	Baiyinna白银纳	affluent	Oroqen
	Xinsheng新生	A new life of peace and quiet	Chinese
	Xin'e新鄂	The newborn Oroqen people	
	Xinxing新兴	Oroqen people have a new and prosperous life	
	Shengli胜利	Named to celebrate the victory of national liberation	

Note: sources of information [37][38][39][40]

Table 4 shows that, when naming regions, ethnic groups often use words with good meanings to express the good wishes of people. In 1953, new Oroqen settlements were established in Heihe and

Xunke counties, respectively named as Xinsheng (新生), Xin'e (新鄂) and Xinxing (新兴). These geographical names in Chinese have the meaning of new life and symbolize happiness and good fortune. Due to the decrease of hunting in the Greater and Lesser Khingan Mountains Region, Oroqen people can hardly rely on hunting to maintain their livelihood, and the policy of settlement helps Oroqen people to get a new life. Shengli (胜利) village was also established in 1953 as a settlement, and its name commemorates the victory of national liberation.

3.3 Vertical Comparison of Geographical Names

Xinsheng (新生), Xin'e (新鄂) and Xinxing (新兴) have similarities in morphology, semantics, geographical distribution and formation time. Taking their formation time, i.e., 1950s of the 20th century as the new classification standard, we can divide the pre-settlement and post-settlement periods. Taking the names formed after the settlement as a group of geographical names to explore the characteristics of the two periods, and we can get the characteristics of the change of Oroqen people's community consciousness.

3.3.1. Geographical Names Formed before Settlement

Most of the geographical names in Oroqen language used till now were formed in the pre-settlement period. The pre-settlement geographical names present the following two characteristics: firstly, from the linguistic point of view, the geographical names mostly use Oroqen language phonetics and express with the help of Chinese characters; secondly, from the semantic point of view, the geographical names are mostly related to natural environment, history and traditions. As the outward manifestation of ethnic culture, the early formation of the geographical names reflects the characteristics of Oroqen people who live near the mountains and water and live by fishing and hunting; love and worship nature as well as heroes. As the carrier of national culture, the geographical names related to historical events provide evidence for the study of Oroqen history, enhance Oroqen people's understanding of their language and culture, and keep the endangered language alive in daily use. As a cohesive force of ethnic culture, pre-settlement geographical names can unite people with the same cultural memory in the same area. In particular, geographical names in Oroqen language can better stimulate their identity of their own Oroqen ethnic group.

Taking the pre-settlement geographical names as an indicator of community consciousness, the ethnic identity of Oroqen people is not only not abstracted, but also becomes more concrete compared with the period in the past, when written records was absent. Thanks to the transliteration of Chinese characters, many geographical names in Oroqen language are preserved and used to this day, so that Oroqen people's ethnic identity has still been kept concrete. "Among all the factors of ethnic identity, geographical names should be the most primary and obvious." "In the context of building a Diversity in Unity of the Chinese nation, geographical names provide a minimum sense of security for ethnic members in ethnic identity in minority areas." [41] Therefore, despite the overall trend of abstraction of Oroqen people's knowledge of their own language and writing and historical traditions, only from the analysis of pre-settlement geographical names, the ethnic identity of Oroqen people is still specific. The preservation and use of traditional geographical names are the most basic and effective means to counteract the language fading and the abstraction of ethnic identity.

3.3.2. Geographical Names Formed after Settlement

In the 1950s, Oroqen people gradually finished settling, and the new settlements were either using or borrowing the old names or named with new words. We can find in the table 5 that most of them were named in Chinese, and the most typical ones were the new ethnic townships and village: Xinsheng (新生), Xin'e (新鄂), Xinxing (新兴) and Shengli (胜利). At the same time, there are also many "new" names at the village and community levels, as shown in the table above.

Intuitively, the characteristics of geographical names in this period include: on the one hand, some of the historically formed geographical names are still used, such as Hai'erti village (海尔堤村), Wulubutie hunting village (乌鲁布铁猎民村), and Ne'erkeqi hunting village (讷尔克气猎民村).

Table 5. Geographical names formed after settlement

Ethnic township	Village, Community
Dyangshu 大杨树镇	Communities: Gankuilu (“located at Gankui North Road” in Oroqen)(甘奎路社区), Shunhelu (“residents live in harmony along the river”)(顺和路社区), Ping’anli (“peace for all families and social stability”)(平安里社区), Baofengman (“a good agricultural harvest and a happy life”)(保丰满社区), Dahuajie (“greater China”)(大华街社区), Nanhumei (“beautiful South Lake”)(南湖美社区), Nongkenmei (“Beautiful farming”)(农垦美社区), Qingfengman (“celebrate a good harvest of grain and to fill the granary”)(庆丰满社区), Youyilu (“friendship”)(友谊路社区), Xinhuajie (“emerging China”)(新华街社区), Wenhuajie (“culture”)(文化街社区); Villages: Jiexi (“located on the west side of the town hall seat of Dayangshu, means the wider road, the side where the sun sets”)(街西村), Beijiao (“located in the northern section of Dayangshu Town”)(北郊村), Jiazishan (“there is a mountain in the area that looks like a shelf that people put up”)(架子山村), Qiaonan (“located on the south side of the bridge”)(桥南村), Xinhua (“emerging China”)(新华村), Baoyuan (“to commemorate the assistance of Baotou City in flood relief in 1999”)(包源村), Sipingshan (“flat peaks at the top”)(四平山村), Furao (“build a beautiful and rich village through the hard work of villagers”)(富饶村), Fumin (“enriching people”)(富民村), Qianjin (“moving forward to progress”)(前进村), Zhenxing (“uplifting and prosperous”)(振兴村), Hongxing (“towards a happy tomorrow under the guidance of the five-star red flag”)(红星村), Dongsheng (“located along the eastern edge of the Zhalan River, “Sheng” means that the grain is full”)(东胜村); Duobukuer hunting village (“bend of the Loop” in Oroqen)(多布库尔猎民村).
Nomin 诺敏镇	Qiyuan Community (旗原社区); Villages: Liemin (“hunter”)(猎民村), Tuanjie (“the inhabitants consist of Han Chinese, Ewenk and Daur, the name means national unity.”)(团结村), Hulin (“forest protection and fire prevention”)(护林村), Makela (“flinging Bay” in Oroqen)(马克拉村), E’erken (“fallen tree roots” in Oroqen)(额尔肯村), Shengli (“named to celebrate the victory of national liberation”)(胜利村), Jigetengdi (“a place where wild fruits grow” in Daur)(吉格腾迪村), Lanbaku (兰巴库村), Woluodi (“a ravine with a large slope” in Oroqen)(卧罗迪村), Yancongshi (“a large rock shaped like a chimney”)(烟囱石村), Hai’erdi (“elm tree” in Oroqen)(海尔堤村), Jiangbei (“located in the north direction of the Da’ergou Ditch in Nomin town”)(江北村), Shenghong (“to commemorate the victory over the 1998 flood disaster”)(胜洪村), Hongsheng (“a village rebuilt after overcoming floods”)(洪生村), Zhongxing (“China’s boom and prosperity”)(中兴村), Dongxinfu (“located in the eastern part of the township of Nomin and is a newly developed village”)(东新发村).
Wulubutie 乌鲁布铁镇	3 hunting villages: Chaoyang (“white stones” in Oroqen)(朝阳), Wulubutie (“solitary hill” in Oroqen)(乌鲁布铁), Ne’erkeqi (“mountain” in Oroqen)(纳尔克气).
Xinxing 新兴鄂伦春民族乡	Villages: Xinxing (“Oroqen people have a new and prosperous life”)(新兴村), Xincheng (“new residence.”)(新城村), Xinjian (“new construction”)(新建村), Xinhe (“new rivers, great changes, towards a new life”)(新河村).
Xin’e 新鄂鄂伦春民族乡	Villages: Xin’e (“the newborn Oroqen people”)(新鄂村), Xinchun (“new spring, life is thriving”)(新春村), Puluokouzi (“situated near the mouth of the Pulo River”)(浦洛口子村), Xinhua (“emerging China”)(新华村), Xinmin (“new people, people in charge, towards a new life”)(新民村).
Xinsheng 新生鄂伦春民族乡	Villages: Xinsheng (“a new life of peace and quiet”)(新生村), Xinqing (“There are more than 200 intellectual youths in the period of going to the countryside, led by 9 Oroqen to work, the name means new youth.”)(新青村), Xinfu (“new developments”)(新发村).
Shibazhan 十八站鄂伦春民族乡	Villages: Hanzu (“the villagers are predominantly Han Chinese”)(汉族村), Ezuxin (“the newborn Oroqen people”)(鄂族新村), Fendou (“struggle for a better life”)(奋斗村), Chuangye (“entrepreneurship”)(创业村), Xingjian (“construction”)(兴建村), Yongfeng (“a good life by planting a good harvest every year”)(永丰村).

Note: sources of information [42] [43] [44]

On the other hand, new settlements are named in Chinese, among which there are names related to the natural environment, history and traditions, while most of the geographical names have good meanings and distinctive characteristics of the times. Some of the above-mentioned village names also have nationwide universality and reflect the characteristics of the times — seeking economic development and national rejuvenation during the period of socialist construction, such as “Xinhua Village (新华村)” (which means “emerging China”) at the same time this name exists in Yunnan Province, Shaanxi Province and Zhejiang Province, “Fendou Village (奋斗村)” (which means “struggle for a better life”) — in Sichuan Province and Yunnan Province, and “Zhongxing Village (中兴村)” (which means “China’s boom and prosperity”) — in Yunnan Province, Guangdong Province and Shanxi Province.

The use of historical old names shows that Oroqen people identify with their own culture and have a specific ethnic identity. The new names created during the settlement period reflect that Oroqen people have already been used to using Chinese as the official language of the country, like all the other ethnic groups in the country, agreeing with the authority of the central government and the values at the national level, and striving to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and socialist modernization, with these carriers their national identity becomes more specific. However, the concretization of ethnic identity and national identity is not contradictory, as explained by the theory of “multi-level of community consciousness”[45], Oroqen people are both members of Oroqen and Chinese nation. Experience also proves that these two identities can coexist, for example, the geographical names used nowadays are both in Oroqen and Chinese, there are both historically formed and newly created geographical names, there are both good expectations for Oroqen (Xin’er [新鄂]) and good visions for Chinese nation (Xinhua [新华]). Fei Xiaotong pointed out that “the higher level of identity does not necessarily replace or exclude the lower level of identity; different levels can go hand in hand, and even develop their original characteristics on the basis of different levels of identity, forming a multilingual and multicultural whole.”[46] The Oroqen, as a micro-community, is one in the “Diversity”, and the Chinese nation, as a macro-community, is the “Unity”. The development of these two concepts at different levels can be mutually reinforcing.

3.4 The Change of Oroqen People’s Identity Consciousness

Based on the horizontal and vertical comparisons of geographical names in Oroqen settlement we can draw a conclusion on the change of Oroqen people’s ethnic and national identity.

From the vertical comparison we can tell that, the geographical names formed before the settlement are mostly in Oroqen language, which are related to natural environment, history and traditions; the geographical names formed after the settlement are mostly in Chinese language, which are related to good wishes, at the same time, some of the geographical names follow the traditional geographical names. The geographical names before settlement reflect the ethnic characteristics of Oroqen people, reflecting that Oroqen people love the natural environment they live in, the production method of hunting and fishing, and are familiar with the historical events and figures of people in their ethnic group; the geographical names after settlement mainly reflect their identification with national policies, socialist development path and socialist core values, at the same time the use of traditional geographical names reflects Oroqen people’s love for traditional culture. Thus, it can be concluded that: the geographical names before settlement show that in the past Oroqen people’s national identity was concrete and national identity was abstract; the geographical names after settlement show that contemporary Oroqen people’s national identity is specific and national identity still remains specific. Therefore, only from the characteristics of geographical names, the ethnic identity of Oroqen people still maintains its figurative characteristics; while in the process of modernization, their national identity is constantly materialized, which finds its specific carrier in official language, history of Chinese nation, common Chinese Dream. This embodied national identity promotes the integration of Oroqen people into the Chinese nation family. That is to say, our proposed hypothesis 1 “the ethnic identity of Oroqen has been abstracted” is wrong, while hypothesis 2 “the national identity has been embodied” is correct.

In the horizontal spatial dimension, the geographical names of the areas Oroqen inhabit mainly use Oroqen language and Chinese language, and the semantic meaning mainly involves three categories, related to natural environment, history and traditions, good wishes. Today, traditional geographical names coexist with contemporary geographical names, geographical names in Oroqen language coexist with those in Chinese. And this experience shows that ethnic identity and national identity can develop together and go hand in hand. That is to say, hypothesis 3 “specific ethnic identity and national identity cannot exist simultaneously” is wrong.

3.5 Cultural Protection Measures

In general, however, the ethnic identity of Oroqen people is abstracting — Oroqen people’s knowledge of their myths and legends, language and script, traditional customs are gradually abstracted. On the one hand, this is conducive to reducing the sense of “exclusion” and “recognition of differences”[47], breaking the traditional inter-ethnic boundaries, strengthening national unity, and helping ethnic minorities move from the periphery to the center of national affairs. On the other hand, this also raises the practical question: “In the process of cultural transformation of ethnic minority groups inevitably caused by modernization, how to deal with the realistic tension between economic development and traditional cultural preservation of ethnic minorities, so as to promote the effective reconciliation of the meaning of material survival and the meaning of cultural identity of ethnic minorities”[48]. Not only are ethnic minority groups facing the “Fei Xiaotong dilemma”[49], but many unwritten dialect cultures of Han Chinese are also on the verge of extinction. This is a common problem faced by micro-communities in the process of ethnic modernization.

Cultural preservation requires, first of all, a sense of cultural consciousness, that is, “different peoples demand their own space in the world cultural order”[50], and the prerequisite for cultural consciousness is the formation of ethnic identity based on geographic space. Geographical names can unite ethnic groups of the same culture in a specific region and keep their ethnic identity consciousness concrete and alive. Therefore, the protection of geographical names is the most basic requirement. Secondly, the protection of geographical names and the protection of ethnic language and traditional culture should be carried out simultaneously. On the one hand, for the phenomenon that Oroqen language “has more vocabulary about hunting, fishing, gathering, production and nature, but less vocabulary reflecting modern production life and social activities”[51], it is necessary not only to promote the teaching of ethnic languages, develop teaching materials, but also to strengthen the innovation of language vocabulary and restore the basic function and vitality of languages. On the other hand, it is significant to systematically and meticulously organize geographical names, update and improve local chronicles. The Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names “urged countries to take action to systematically collect geographical names and to increase public awareness of their significance”; and the Ninth Conference listed geographical names as intangible cultural heritage.[52] The study of geographical names provides a basic path for cultural preservation.

4. Conclusion

This study researched the change of Oroqen people’s identity consciousness on the base of analysis of their geographical names. By spacial and temporal comparisons of geographical names we can draw conclusions on the characteristics of Oroqen people’s ethnic and national identity at different times. The conclusion is divided into three parts: a summary of the characteristics of the geographical names, a summary of the changes of identity consciousness based on the geographical names, and a proposal of measures for cultural preservation.

4.1 Revealed Characteristics

(1) Characteristics of geographical names. The geographical names of the areas Oroqen inhabit mainly use Oroqen language and Chinese language, and the semantic meaning mainly involves three

categories, related to natural environment, history and traditions, good wishes. The geographical names in Oroqen language, which are related to natural environment, history and traditions, reflect that Oroqen people live by fishing and hunting, love and worship nature. The geographical names in Chinese language, which are related to good wishes, reflect that Oroqen people are actively involved in construction and strive for development.

(2) Characteristics of community consciousness. In the past Oroqen people's national identity was concrete and national identity was abstract; in modern times Oroqen people's national identity is specific and national identity still remains specific. Therefore, we can conclude that the ethnic identity of Oroqen people is still concrete and the national identity has been visualized, and the visualization of both is not contradictory.

(3) Cultural protection measures. In general the ethnic identity of Oroqen people is abstracting, so that it is necessary to propose cultural preservation measures. First and foremost, the protection of geographical names is the most basic requirement. Also important, the protection of geographical names and the protection of ethnic language and traditional culture should be carried out simultaneously. We are supposed to promote consolidation and innovation of national language, at the same time systematically and meticulously organize geographical names. The study of geographical names provides a basic path for cultural preservation.

4.2 Shortcomings and Future Prospects

This study only analyzes the characteristics of geographical names based on the existing literature, and there are still some unknown semantics of geographical names, which need to be further investigated by native speakers of Oroqen and researchers of Oroqen language. The geographical name is only one angle to explore the community consciousness, and other indicators need to be added to reach in order to draw a more comprehensive conclusion on the community consciousness from multiple angles.

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