

SUMMARY

The present volume is devoted to the non fairy tale prose folklore of the Yakuts people: historical legends and stories, myths and legends.

The historical legends and stories about the tribal migration of Sakha (Yakuts) from the South to the river Lena are common to the whole nation and exist everywhere the Sakha people live. The legends are cyclic around the names of the legendary proto-forefathers — Omogoy Baai and Elley Bootur ancestors. The vast majority of them are similar in plot and heroic character. Academician A.P. Okladnikov names these legends a historical folklore, the oral chronicle, and points out that they are almost the only authentic source of the ancient history of the Yakut people¹. The legends about the forefathers and their descendants — the ancestors of the later kins and ulusses have been most completely collected for the first time by G.V. Ksenofontov, who compiled the collection under the title "Elleyada". The scholar considers these legends to be the materials on the mythology of the legendary history of the Yakut people. Into the foreground he placed the oral stories about Elley Bootur, whose image he compared with the mythical images of the forefathers and cultural heroes of other nations².

The main content of the cycle of legends about the protoforefathers of the Yakuts is as follows. In the South, in the land of the Buryats (or Tartars) there lived Omogoy (Onogoy, Omogon) Baai. Having quarrelled with relatives or neighbours (possible variant: having lost in war, escaping from enemies or many years of great drought) on the advice of the clairvoyant shaman he migrated to the Lena river together with his own people and cattle. Their

¹Okladnikov A.P. Yakutiya before the consolidation with the Russian State. The History of the Yakut autonomous Republic. — M.; L., 1955. — Vol. I. — P. 338.

²Ksenofontov G.V. Elleyada. Materials on the mythology and the legendary history of the Yakuts. — M., 1977.

arrival was welcomed by the spirits — the masters of the country who greeted them and gave their blessing to the new settlers³. According to some variations the settlers were provided with cattle by the goddesses Ieyekhsit who protected people, horses and cattle⁴. After Omogoy Baai had settled in a new place, Elley Bootur (Er Sogotokh Elley) — a lonely outcast, rejected by his own kinsmen came to the Lena river: according to some variants — a younger brother offended by the older brothers, according to other variants — an outcast who escaped from the anger of a ferocious khan. Elley became Omogoy Baai's worker and earned his gratitude. The master suggested Elley should marry his favourite daughter, however for some specific features the later picked an unbeloved plain daughter and then married her. Angry Omogoy Baai threw his son in law and his wife out, giving them only a bad cow and a mangy mare as a dowry. Elley Bootur having settled down near his father in law built a house with windows and a small stove, there were not windows or stove in his father in law's house. He built enclosures and pens, in summer he used to organise smoke against horse flies and other blood sucking insects. All the herds of cattle and horses became Elley's. He taught his wife how to make different pots and pans out of birch bark, he himself cut out of strong sorts of wood bowls-chorons and other things. Having prepared a full set of utensils for Kumys (a traditional natural milk drink) Elley for the first time among the Yakuts organised a holiday "ysyakh" at the beginning of summer in the honour of the divine beings with circular dance (osuokhay) to celebrate the new year. He was the first to make a sacrifice to the divine beings of Kumys with butter.

The folklore images of Omogoy Baai and Elley Bootur are close to the mythological images of the persecuted heroes who later on became the forefathers of the tribes. Newcomer Elley is a cultural hero who created a new material and spiritual culture, in particular, the religion of worshipping the pure souls of deities-aiyy. Omogoy Baai is a patriarchal forefather with the household at the lower stage of development.

In subsequent cycles of legends the story tells about Omogoy's and Elley's descendants who settled on the right side of the river Lena, on the river valleys of Taatty and Amgi, Vilyu and Olenka, Yana and Kolyma. The Yakut settlement on the outskirts of the present territory increased in the period of Tygyn (Dygyn) Toyon and with the arrival of the Russians to the Lena.

Tygyn Toyon is a real person, the descendant of Elley Bootur, the forefather of the largest and strongest kin — Khangalas, who lived in the second half of the XVI and at the beginning of the XVII centuries. His name and the name of his son are mentioned in the written documents of the Russian Cossacks. The folklore image of Tygyn Toyon is created in the spirit of the mythologicalisation and hyperbolisation. He is born with three golden

³Ergis G.U. Historical legends and stories of the Yakyts. — M.; L., 1960. — Part 1. — P. 57—59.

⁴Ibid; Ksenofontov G.V. Elleyada. — P. 18—56, 127, 128, 162—172, 209—211.

hairs on the top of his head. When at the age of six he addressed the formidable Uluu Toyon with lifted spear, at the edge of the spear there appeared a slot of blood. The Tygyn's period remained in the people's memory as the period of civil wars (the century of discord) and the struggle for leadership among kins. On one hand Tygyn in legends acts as a strong and resolute chief of the tribe trying to consolidate scattered and divided tribes Sakha just before the Russians arrived. On the other hand he is a despotic ancestor who led continuous wars against his neighbouring kins and tribes because of his ambitions. He is vengeful and cunning, power hungry and cruel. Tygyn Toyon even in his own kin doesn't like people who are stronger or cleverer than him and he destroys them. The Khangalass kin occupied the territory of the valley Tujmaad (where now stands the city of Yakutsk) and Erkeeni, located more southerly than the first. These two territories were fully joined as a whole Yakutia with the territory of the Russian state in the 30s of the XVII century.

Besides the common and ethnic legends about Omogoy and Elley, Tygyn and his period there exist local historical legends about forefathers and their descendants among every Yakut kin and tribe, as well as among every ulus and region inhabited by the yakuts. Thus the yakuts of Suntar and Nyurbini ulusses consider themselves to be the descendants of old Nyurbakaan, one of the wives of Tygyn's father, who fled with her son from Tygyn's oppression on the river Viluy; ancestors of the yakuts from Yansk, Indigirka and Kolyma according to the legends come from the central Yakutiya who fled during the period of wars and the unification of the Lensk region with Russia.

The historical legends of yakuts of the XVIII-XIX centuries depict the social differentiation, the appearance in the place of forefathers the rich — owners of herds of cattle and horses. In people's memory there remained traces of mythological images of their rich forefathers who had tried to make the hard life of their kinsmen easier in the harsh and cold climate against the death of people both due to famine and pestilence (Kudangsa the Great, Dyalagay Kiileeni). However, the majority of legends show the real nature of mean and greedy rich men — cruel exploiters and tyrants (Dodor, Chokhoroon, Choocho and others). To counter balance them, the most popular stories were about the spontaneous rebellions against oppression, for example, the noble robber Vasily Manchaary, who in the 30—40s raided the estates of the rich, and repeatedly escaped from prison and exile. Widely were spread the legends of the nation's athletes, fast runners, brave hunters and lucky fisherman, singers and storytellers. The genre of legends is rich and diverse in content and artistic form.

Also included into this present volume are myths and legends. On the whole they themselves represent the legends about the ministers of religion — the shamans. In its historical development the ancient mythology of the yakut people became the foundation for religion, religious cults, heroic olonkho epos and other folklore genre. Due to Christianity, myths about the

yakut deities had survived more or less intact in the olonkho, in rituals and songs of the kumys holiday ysyakh.

According to the yakut mythology the Universe consists of the three worlds: the upper, the middle and the lower. The upper world is the home of the good deities ayii who protect people. The supreme deity is Urun Ayii (the divine white knight). Besides him, other principal deities are: Jesegey Ayii — a creator and grantor of horses; Jylga (or Chynys, Tankha) Khan — the deity of destiny and fate; Ayiikhyt is a deity of fertility and motherhood, grantor of children's souls; leyiekhsit, a guardian of people and cattle. Also in the upper world is Uluu Toyon, a menacing deity with prosecuting power. In olonkhos and legends he is shown as a ruler of the abaasy — the later ones being the dark evil forces, the antipodes of the deities ayii. The middle world is designed for the people from the tribe ayii, to which the yakut people belong (in the ancient epic having the name of sakha uraanghai). Also living in the middle world are the spirit masters of fire (ichchi), the homeland, forest, mountains, rivers, lakes and so on. In the middle world everything — geographical names, distinguishing subjects, plants and so on — have their own ichchi who protect or punish people. The lower world belongs to abaakhy — cruel creatures who are the cause of all misfortune and calamities for the inhabitants of the middle world. The deities from the upper world also often cause harm to people.

The male religious servants are called oyuun, and the female — udagan. Shaman is not a yakut word, it came from the Tungus people, from which it has been developed into the name for the religion of the Siberian peoples.