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Cultural Analyses of the Olonkho Epic Text by P. A. Oyunsky “Nyurgun Bootur the Swift”

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Abstract

This olonkho, made by the founder of the Yakut literature, the first Sakha linguist, Platon Oyunsky, is first time undergoing through a vast specific cultural analyses due to the 125th anniversary of its author. As known, this work is said to be a literature olonkho, but it can claim the role of a canonic text of an olonkho. Unlike the classical olonkho, the author enriched this epic text by one significant character, named Taas kiele ogo, who, in our understanding, reveals the core thought of the Sakha people about the taboo to violate the cosmic balance among the three worlds, the Upper, Middle and Lower. Hereof we come to the highlighted normative function of the text and that is the rational outcome of our research. In general, the semantic range contains value and cognitive aspects. The other methods of interpretation also reveal the newly found aspects in the text of this olonkho, which is like representative one for the Sakha culture. This is the result of hermeneutic analysis. Other methods of reading used in the study are narrative, semiotic, symbolic, and information analysis. They consistently complement each other and bring the researcher to the understanding of the hidden meaning in the text. Methods of ethnomethodology, ethological research, the study of communicative intention, functional and structural analysis reveal ethno-cultural social features. They also show the degree of stability of the system under study. All the methods used reveal previously identified aspects in the text. The olonkho is a hallmark of the Sakha culture. The perspectives of the detailed work in future make us feel sure of the theoretical and practical significance of the gained results, which are based on cultural scientific methodology. Non-classical approach of scientific methodology is used by the author. According to this approach, the parts are integrated and the text of the culture is an indivisible whole. The text contains a linguistic entity and the coded address information.

Keywords: Text as a whole, Text of the olonkho epos, Methods of cultural analyses, Techniques of reading the text, Meanings of the olonkho texts, the cosmic balance of the three worlds in the Yakut epic worldview.

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1. Introduction

A few variants of cultural analyses of the Yakut epic, *olonkho*, by P.A. Oyunsky “Nyurgun Bootur the Swift” are suggested with the aim to have a deeper understanding of this cultural phenomenon, which can help modern readers to perceive the meaning of this famous text (Analyses ..., 2014; Popova, 2016, pp. 63-69). Without getting to know this *olonkho*, one can't be considered to know anything about the Sakha people and their culture. The relevance of this text has increased due to the subsequent jubilee of the author, so that all those who are anyhow close to this sphere, would turn to the text once again. And those, who reveal this unknown world for the first time, can open “the previously hidden meaning” (acc. to G. Gadamer). We will work with the text in its original language, the Russian translation by V.V. Derjavin and the English translation by Alina Nahodkina (Oyuunskay, 2003; Nyurgun Bootur the Swift, 1982; *Olonkho: Nyurgun Bootur the Swift*, 2014).

2. Methodology

The research is based on the neoclassical approach of the scientific methodology, considering that parts make the whole and that text of a culture is undividable whole, consisting of language entities and coded information with hidden meaning. Some specific international techniques to analyse the text are used: narrative, semiotic, symbolic, informative, hermeneutics analyses, which are subsequently used to recode the hidden meaning. We also used the ethno-methodology, ethological research, the study of communicative intention, functional-structural analyses. These all reveal ethnocultural social peculiarities and show the amount of sustainability of the studied system. The work is presented in possible shortened version, meeting the affordable volume of the article.

3. Discussion

The main thesis of the research is: the *olonkho* epic represents the text as a whole. It contains all its parts (Text: theoretical backgrounds and principles of analyses, 2011; Popova, 2016, pp. 56-63). What needed is *olonkho* has to be three-generations and depict heroic battle of three generations' athletes of one kin. As a whole, the *olonkho* text undergoes interpretation by hermeneutics method to understand the hidden coded meaning (Gadamer, 1988; Mikhailov, 2009; Chebanyuk, 2010, pp. 248-264; Popova, 2010, pp. 4-16; Popova, 2016, pp. 134-139). The information with the coded meaning is dedicated to the Sakha people in particular, the senders are the *Aiyy khaan aimakhtara, Kiun erken uustara* / the Ancestors, and the author Oyunsky is a Medium-assistant (Popova, 2010, pp. 84-86). One version of this information can be formulated as following: the information has to be passed in the Sakha language by the narrators-*olonkhosut*, and new generations of the Sakha people can obtain it with their heart and will transfer to the generations to come. The information is secret and can be decoded only by those who can speak the *olonkho* language – according to the theory of linguistic relativity by Sepir-Worf, no matter how you try, the meanings of one culture can't be fully translated into languages of other cultures. And the meaning, coded in this text, undoubtedly, is triple: valuable, normative and cognitive. The value bearing aspect of this text is shown in its life-bound power and in the ideal of the *aiyy bootur* (a mighty character, a hero). The main normative meaning of *olonkho* – is about appointing to the Law of the three worlds balance, and cognitive meaning is related to the same law: in case the balance is violated due to the Great Fire Battle, *Uluu Uot kyrgysyy*, there comes the punishing power of the World' Conscious – and it is symbolized by the Unsplit Rock creature, *Taas kilie ogo* (Oyuunskai, 2003, the first song).

The narrative analyses is aimed to outline the fundamental system of values, built-in in the text (Tyupa, 2001). The context of plot in *olonkho* represents the chain of actions, that results into a new monogamous family as an institutional role of the ethnos. The Hero, born with exact aim, saves the only remaining bride

from the evil athlete of the lower world and helps the middle word bootur to marry her; he also gets himself a wife, thus, fulfills his mission, Anal. In the analyzed olongho there are five families, the five couples intended for each other: Urung Uolan bootur and Tuiaaryma Kuo the beauty, Kiun Jiribine bootur and Kiun Syralyma Kuo the beauty, Khaan Dargystai and Aitalyyn Kuo the beauty, Ogo Tulaaiaakh Er Sogotokh Eriedel Bergen bootur and Khappakhchylaakh Khaachytaan Kuo the beauty and, finally, Nyurgun Bootur bootur himself and maiden-bootur Kyys Nyurgun. According to the sacred meaning of numbers, Five means bearing outcome of the number Two with the union of two Ones, given by the god of childbirth Aiyysyt – this is manifested in the form of algys blessing: fulfill your destiny and multiply yourself in fives! (Popova, 2010, pp. 57-62, 67-70).

The semiotics and symbolism of olonkho have been studied by us for many times earlier, here we will indicate only that the text of this olonkho has all universal symbols, seen in other texts and carrying the main message of the text (Popova, 2010, pp. 26-36; Popova, 2016, pp. 70-76, 97-110). And the olonkho text itself consists of signs, meaning all three worlds. Not only narrative part, but also the context of this olonkho contains signs in each line. For example, a fragment of six she-shamans, Aiyyn namysyn, performance has no analogue in other cultures and represents wonderful phenomenon of signs-symbols contactless influence on human (English translation of Alina Nahodkina):

Where nine shamans
Had incanted,
At the foot
Of eight mountains,
And burned
Nine huge bonfires –
The daughter of the Yellow Star
Sang her blessing song,
The daughter of the Pleiades –
Urgel Toyon
Began dancing,
The daughter of the Star –
Sulus Toyon
Washed and combed her hair,
The daughter of the Moon –
Yi Khotun
Put out her hand,
The daughter of Venus –
Cholbon Toyon
Whistled,
The daughter of the Sun –
Kun Toyon,

Kegeljin udagan,
Took out
Her round-lake-sized
Huge tambourine
And a loud stone drum-stick
And started beating it
Dibdir-dabdir,
Singing loudly,
She bowed nine times
To the nine bonfires,
Kneeled down –
And standing on the nine capes
Began her toyuk-song,
Standing under the eight mountains
Began her blessing song... (Olonkho: Nyurgun Bootur the Swift, 2014, p. 426).

As a result of such influence, the maiden-bootur loses some part of her obsessive power and obtains gentle character, like the heavenly Aiyg fair maidens have, and she is ready to take her destiny, Anal, which is the meaning of life in the Middle world.

We will refrain from giving the exact and final definition on the main symbol of this olonkho, but as a hypothesis we may assume, that this is an ideal image of Hero, who is able to go through roads/aartyk of the three worlds, and those roads are in cosmos. The main sign of an olonkho athlete is his black horse, Duraa Kharaat. The description of the horse has binary oppositions of white-magan and black-khara, that shows unity and struggle of Good and Evil as a source of life. And reciprocal, complementary precipitancy and purposefulness of the hero and his horse are highlighted by corresponding epithets: *duluruiair* и *duluskhan subuia suuruk*.

Intentional-communicative analyses, carried to identify how thoughts influence the object (Intent-analyses; Shelestyuk, 2009, pp. 64-68) shows, that olonkho consists of sequence of dialogues between Good and Evil, where the last word is after the Evil, that threatens to return and revenge to the growing children. That's why the seemingly happy final of the olonkho is deceptive –one shouldn't lose vigilance not even for a blink of an eye. This intention of Evil holds any human kin on a sight, so each one has to always continue it and, what is most important, to bring up carefully. Hereof we have the instinct of reproduction. In all olonkho, a Hero first of all shoots at the genitals of the evil bootur who steals his bride and escapes. This is done to protect a girl's purity from the evil creature, and while it is busy with repairing "his instrument", the Hero is right there and ready for the battle. Knowing this, the alien tribes would never try upon a bride's purity, they knew there were men to protect her. A bride never loses her confidence in salvation and cheats the evil bootur with the power of her intention to fulfill her various tasks and requests. The power of word and wisdom, i.e. communicative intention, helps the aiyg aimaga kin to win over the evil.

Ethnomethodology serves as analyses of characteristic behavior of certain social entity (Garfinkel, 2007). Each olonkho is a separate image and each Hero represents his kin. He solves problems in away his kin does that. Thus, Niurgun Bootur is from the Aiyg kin, but he is raised in three worlds, that's why he does acts that

are peculiar to all three worlds, and this is the root of his invincible personality. Urung Uolan is raised in the Upper world and does acts that are applicable to that world; and by his nature he can't really oppose the Lower world booturs, the abaasy, that's why he soon goes crazy and dies. This weakness is predicted in his ritual action before setting out for Tuiaaryma Kuo the Beauty salvation – at the root of the Word Tree, Aar Kuduk mas, he swallows the life-bearing milky moisture three times (instead of one or two), which is a sign of lack of his might. Urung Uolan also gets deceived by three evil abaasy daughters in the beginning of his journey. But he has ability to three times die and revive, he is saved by the elder sister Aiyy Umsuurthe Shaman and is guided by the Upper gods Aiyy. Kun Diribine bootur is born in the Middle world in the sakhauraankhai kin and he acts accordingly – he challenges the evil booturs without a proper preparations for the battle and dies, and moreover, loses his sister to the evil ones. Why does he act like that? The Sakha uraankhai kin is predestined by their Upper Ancestors, the Aiyy, to be saved in any situation, that's why he acts without looking back and hopes on the latter. As for Tuiaaryma Kuo the Beauty, we ask the readers to read an article about her destiny (Popova, 2007). Here we will point out that she acts as a representative of the aiyy girls' type and follows her social status - gives suitable and wise advise to her groom, Urung Uolan, protects herself with the power of word and mind. Kyys Nyurgun is a typical girl-bootur and she keeps opposing her promised man as long as she can, so that the heavenly shamans ladies, the Aiyy namysyn, have to make her fall asleep and lessen her powers. The main shaman lady of the Upper world, the Aiyy Umsuur udagan, represents an ideal female kind of such persons and her behavior corresponds to that – in any difficult situation she finds solution and brings magical thing, that can even bring a dead person back to life. The abaasy kin also has their own habits – they are somehow trustful and stupid. The abaasy girl carelessly lets have her beak and claws be cut off, so that she could make love to Urung Uolan, but at the same time the abaasy are vindictive and threaten to revenge.

The ethological analyses reveals instinctive actions of a subject on subconscious level in order to survive, keep up the kin or according to sexual instinct (Zorina, Poletaeva, Reznikova, 2002; Methods of ethological research // URL:<https://studwood.ru/1738444>). The abaasy kin representatives always keep up to their self-preservation instinct and evade extinction in the very last moment, and moreover, send threats to come back. Evil is at it is – ineradicable. Thus, the abaasy girl can't be at her lasciviousness and it brings her to deadly danger, but according to her nature, she escapes in the last moment in a shape of bluish smoke. As for the human kind, the instincts of survival is shown in a newborn son of Tuiaaryma Kuo and Urung Uolan, born in the world of the Upper abaasy, but rescued with the help of Aiyyysyt and Ieiekhsit goddesses, who puts him in the empty house, balagan, in the western (!) side of the Middle world. He lives 9 years on his own, like Kipling's Maugli, going to hunt (Oyuunskay, the 8th song). The reproduction instinct makes the Hero of olonkho to marry, and he overcomes numerous dangerous and deadly ordeals. The olonkho is finished with the description of the triumph of good and creation of a new family. The aiyy girls are prescribed to wait for their destiny - anal, so they follow such natural predestination. The maiden-booturs and shaman girls are predestined to marry only those booturs who can be at their enormous power, so they resist with all their might, so that the Hero has to call for help from the almighty Aiyy namysyn udagan lady shamans, who can lessen the upper and lower powers of a maiden bootur.

The critical analyses of the text is aimed at outlining the contradictions made by the author and suggesting the ways to overcome them (Analyses, 2014; Popova, 2016, pp. 87-91). One of the contradictions, that we found in Oyunsky olonkho is this episode from the seventh song: the abaasy of the Upper world, Uot Usumu, steals the fourth part of a golden doll that possesses the living powers, kut-siur, of Tuiaaryma Kuo the Bride. Urung Uolan could catch only three parts, though by the conditions of pre-wedding ordeals he broke the doll into four parts with his arrow. At this moment Nyurgun Bootur comes up to help and shoots off the escaping abaasy bootur his testicles, i.e. limits chances to continue his kin. So the evil one can't do anything to a stolen woman and Tuiaaryma Kuo lives there in peace and gets even a prettier look, as she is sure that

she will be solved. The Abaasy Uot Usumu suggests Nyurgun Bootur to share Tuiaaryma Kuo the Beauty by cutting her into two pieces – and asks to take the lower, child bearing part of her body. To have a full woman he then suggests to divide the heavenly daughter, Ytyk Kyimylyyn Kuo Chamchalyyn, and combine her parts with those of Tuiaaryma Kuo. Urung Uolan, instead of saving his bride, goes crazy and disappears. This is explained by us in the functional analyses, but still, it is not suitable for one of the main heroes – archetypical Prince – to go crazy and not even to try to save his promised wife. This episode, seemingly, was not taken into account in 90s, when they created “The Urung Uolan” educational course for sakha boys under the frame of the National school renovation and development concept. The author, P.A. Oyunsky, solves these contradictions in quite a witty way: the grown son, Ogo Tulaaikh, saves his mother, Tuiaaryma Kuo, finds his father, Urung Uolan, and reunites them in marriage. Such episode sometimes is seen in the mythology of other people – a son saves their parents from trouble. Here we see an archetype of Lone Prince (by Yung). And Tuiaaryma Kuo nourishes Nyurgun Bootur with the milk from her breasts and this saves his from the deadly ordeal at the heavenly rope, khalbas khara, and Ogo Tulaaikh also gives him the wonderful yellow moisture, aragas ilge—that’s how united are the destinies of two main heroes of the Oyunsky olonkho!

The functional analyses is carried to outline the role of the olonkho characters (Malinovski, 1997; Chebanyuk, 2010, pp. 102-115). We’ve come to idea that in “Nyurgun Bootur the Swift” olonkho all the three children from one generation and one family (father Adyna Siertoion, mother Aiyy Nuuraldyn khotun), who are sent to the Middle world, where there is danger for humankind to extinct (Oyuunskay, 2003, the Second song), are help to the three kut (kind of soul) of a human – it is their functional predestination. Daughter of Aitalyyn Kuo – is a help to somatical essence of Buor kut to continue the kin in case of bad luck in saving of Tuiaaryma Kuo. Urung Uolan – is a help to spiritual essence of Salgyn kut, which is seen at his sudden craziness when his wife is stolen by the abassy athlete, Uot Usumu Tong Duuraifrom the Upper world. The abassy of the Upper world make destructive influence on spiritual condition of a man. Nyurgun Bootur himself – is, correspondingly, a help of spiritual-intellectual essence of Iyie kut, which is responsible for a man’s life in general. Here we come to conclusion, that all the envoys from the Upper World have similar roles to help some part of human soul (kut). All the other characters of olonkho act according to their functional roles, which are Simlog-analysed to show the victory of Good powers.

The structural analyses is aimed at outlining the sustainability of three worlds system in olonkho (Chebanyuk, 2010, pp. 115-167). Olonkho epic – is a journey, *aian*, in space of time and number. *Space* – is a cosmic three part entity with the axis of world, its symbol is World Tree, Aar Kuduk mas, which is a idiosyncratic portal for epic journey. Epic space of the Sakha is cosmic, all events in olonkho happen in cosmos, all ways and roads, *aartyk*, between three worlds are laid in Sky/Khallaan. The way-aartyk to the Upper world of aiyy is called "sielleekh siegi magan aartyk" and goes into the eastern sky, *ilin khallaan*. The way-aartyk to the Upper world of abassy goes into the southern sky. The way-aartyk to the Lower world of abassy goes into both western and northern sky. Here we should mention, that V.V. Derjavin makes mistake in translation of the Lower world of olonkho as an underland one. *Time* – is epic three/four dimension. The fourth dimension – it is the time of olonkho, *olonkho keme*. We have a flowing theory for that. If a river – is an ancient sign image of language (Mechkovskaya, 1998, pp. 54-56), so thee myth about the Sakha ancestor, Ellei Bootur, who dropped his letters into a river means the time, when the Sakha people shifted from written culture into oral one, that is the historical time when the epic olonkho of the Sakha was created. Then, as it is know, in the XIXth c. there was forced imposition of alien written culture, that resulted in loosing of linguaculture among those people who had oral tradition. *Number* – natural rational and irrational, moreover, nonrational. In olonkho everything about natural appearances are told in a binary opposition, and everything about man-made is told in a Kut triade. These are all sacred numbers presented in Oyunsky olonkho, we and other researchers have enough convincing theoretical works about that (Popova, 2010, pp. 57-113).

The structure of the three worlds in olonkho is sustainable only because all subjects fulfil their peculiar functions. And right when someone steals others' functions or, on the opposite, doesn't fulfil his own ones – there comes violation of balance of the three worlds. P.A. Oyunsky managed to describe it very well in the introductory part of the olonkho. Clear distribution of functions among the subjects of the three worlds and their strict observance defines normative relations, thus, the sustainability of the three worlds' structure. None of the characters of the olonkho violates the relations prescribed by the gods, Chyngys Khaan, Odun Biis and Dylga Toion.

And who is that *Taas kilie ogo* – The Unsplit rock-born creature (in Derjavin's translation)? He has a function to interfere only when there is a whole three world trouble. He is mentioned in the beginning of the olonkho, then in the Fifth song, when Nyurgun Bootur couldn't beat the abaasy bootur from the Lower world, Uot Usuutaaky, and he recognized him as equal. The latter says, that The Masters of the three worlds condemned even the son of Urung Aar Toiona–*Taas kilie ogo*, that means they can't get over him. The full name of this child means the following: he has a bad temper, he is a fine slave with a capricious temper, he is a blood-thirsty destroyer of Heaven and Earth, with his arrival the time will change within three years, he is a deadly, bloody athlete/giant of Mind, Erken Baatyr. None of the olonkho that we know has any kind of such character.

Here is another contradiction – he is born from the Upper god, Urung Aar Toion and his wife, Adyna Sier Khotun. All representatives of the three worlds remain in perplexity, and masters of Upper and Lower worlds of the abaasy, hoping for possible misbehaviour, refrain from interfering the child's destiny. That's why they decide to tie him up to the octahedral pole, Aalys Luo bagana, on the Iron mountain and put special guarding athletes from three sides. In the Eighth song, those booturs are sent to the battling Nyurgun Bootur and Uot Usumu to put them on heavenly rope, *khaannaakh khara khalbas*, but before going away on this mission, they tie up the *Taas kilie ogo* even tightly to the Iron mountain with the fire (this reminds high voltage electricity cord) (Oyuunskay, 2003, pp. 428- 430).

Conclusion

There is no known interpretation on the character the *Taas kilie ogo*, the Unsplit rock-born child, only few authors consider him to be Nyurgun Bootur (such misunderstanding is rooted in not correct translation of a fragment-oluk about the birth of *Taas kilie ogo* into the Russian language (Nyurgun Bootur the Swift, 1982, pp. 17-22), which we categorically oppose, proposing our own theory, that P.A. Oyunsky used this character to show possible forth-coming threats to the world, for example, nuclear war, or other yet not known dangerous forms of energy. It is said, that the birth of such child was mentioned by the old men Aaryma kyrdagastar in its own time (such time, assumingly, was way before the birth of *Taas kilie ogo*). And the characters of the olonkho are bitterly surprised, that this time has come so fast (Oyuunskay, 2003, The First song). The given epithets tell about the intellectual nature of creation of the child. Thus, it can be a product of human mind.

Such are the brief results of the cultural analyses of the famous olonkho text by P.A. Oyunsky "Nyurgun Bootur the Swift". Hereof we come to the resolution, that the given text contains the most important meanings of the Sakha culture, that still await their interpretation and overthinking by the contemporary representatives of ethnos for taking right measures for the sake of safe future development. Besides, those decisions will have great meaning not only for one ethnos, not only for our civilization, but also for preserving the cosmic balance. The main peculiarity of this olonkho is this thought, transferred by the outstanding character, *Taas kilie ogo*, the Unsplit rock-born child, introduced by the genius of Platon Alexeyevich Oyunsky.

The text itself can be called the canonic text of the Yakut heroic epic olonkho, because it is not purely literature text, but also synthetic, syncretic one, which combines parts of authentic texts of traditional Yakut olonkho, as the authors pointed, about thirty. Thus, we can call this text as 'The text of text of olonkho'.

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