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Types of the Yakut Female Decorations Based on P. A. Oyunsky Articles

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Abstract

In the article, the authors consider the female decorations of the Yakut, based on the materials of Platon Alekseevich Oyunsky article “Yakut tale (olonkho): it’s plot and composition”. He is the first author to write about the Yakuts’ decorations based on the olonkho materials yet in 1927. P. A. Oyunsky is a famous writer, linguist, folklorist, outstanding public and state figure of the Yakut people. Terminology of the Yakut decorations is poorly studied in the Yakut linguistics. There are no monographic studies, aimed at analyzing the vocabulary of decorations in the Yakut language. That’s why P. A. Oyunsky article, containing interesting data on the Yakuts’ decorations, is one of the source materials in studying this issue. As the result, the authors come to conclusion that, P. A. Oyunsky was the first to analyze four types of the Yakuts female decorations in chapter “Female decorations” in his article. He left a full description of a big solid decoration, composed of a few elements. By implementing contrastive-comparative, lexico-semantic and descriptive methods, this research reveals female decorations in olonkho.

Keywords: Female decorations, Olonkho, Terms of the Yakuts female decorations, Neck-pectoral, Head, Worn on one’s hip, Arms decorations.

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Introduction

There were no special studies made of the female decorations vocabulary in the Yakut linguistics. The studies of the given object in linguistic aspect is restricted only by separate fragments, articles in historical-ethnographic studies. In this context, we refer the issue of the Yakut female decorations study to the extent of timely, in elaborate problems of the Yakut linguistics.

Jewelry business has been dynamically developing in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) in the last years. But the pieces of jewelry lose their native and traditional names.

The Yakut female decorations are the most diverse articles on their shape, appearance, method of execution; made of silver, copper and other alloys. The Yakut national decorations differ from that of other peoples of Siberia and Far East not only by their separate details, but by the whole complex (aggregate of decorations' elements for different areas and different age groups), characterizing the ethnos representatives. For the most part, they refer to the category of decorations, defined in ethnographic literature as movable ones, a quite sufficient supplement of a costume. This is that bright element of the ancient origins of the traditional culture, that reflects the ethnic singularity and perception of the Yakuts' world in full, uncovers traditions and artistic peculiarities of the northern jewelry art.

Up to date, there are studies on current Turkic languages, enlightening the vocabulary of decorations (G.A. Selimova, T.B. Kokova, T.V. Loseva-Bakhtiyarova, N.V. Yerlenbaeva, S.N. Burzhumova, G.N. Niyazova, D.B. Ramazanova, L.F. Tukhbiyeva, R.P. Abdina and others). Besides the linguistic studies, certain knowledge on the Turkic languages decorations vocabulary may be drawn from the scientific researches of historical, ethnographic, culturological and philosophic nature (L.I. Roslovtseva, A.I. Mambetova, D.F. Madurov, T.P. Alekseeva and others).

Decorations, especially the Yakut female ones, have always drawn attention of researchers of very different profile as an object of research. The Yakut decorations, as well as other elements of culture, are closely connected with the history of the nation.

Data about the Yakut female decorations was referred in the notes of the first explorers-travelers in pre-revolutionary times. One of the first mentions about the Yakut female decorations belong to Polish prisoner Adam Kamensky-Dluzhik. His diary, printed in 1875 in the Polish, contains a few lines about the female decorations of the Yakuts: "the Yakut women wear on ears the great earrings, as the silver plates, on forehead they wear circles, and the silver and copper hoops on neck" (Zykov, 1976, p.126). The female decorations were described by the participants of the Kamchatka expedition (G.F. Miller, Y.I. Lindenau, I.G. Gmelina and others). In the first half of XVII century, they refer to the silver and copper rings, earrings, torques, neck decorations, plait ornaments when describing male and female clothing. The female decorations are reflected in fragments in the works of A.F. Middendorf, N.S. Shukin, V.V. Radlov in XIX century. The names of female decorations are described in detail in R.K. Maak's major work "Vilui district of Yakutia region", written upon the results of expedition in 1854 in chapters "Yakut clothing and attires" and "Iron craft" (Maak, 1887). The terms of the female decorations (such as: syurakh, begek and others) are partially referred to in "Art and craft" chapter in "Yakuts: Ethnographic study experience" of V.L. Seroshevsky's monography (Seroshevsky, 1993, pp.371-376). An academic "Dictionary of the Yakut language" of E.K. Pekarsky has been one of the source materials, presenting the words, defining the Yakuts' decorations, more precisely in comparative approach. (Pekarsky, 2008). It contains a large amount of distinctive titles and short descriptions of some archaic types.

Based on E.D. Strelov's materials, artist-ethnographer M.M. Nosov published two articles with a description of different female decorations in the Soviet period. The author had tried to systematize a huge material in "Clothing and decorations of the Yakuts in XVII-XVIII centuries" article, written on the base of the regional

museum archeological diggings; and reconstruct a traditional complex of the Yakuts' ancient clothing. The female decorations are included into the chapters "Clothing and other articles of soft material, their decorations" and "Articles of hard materials (wood, birchbark)".

V.P. Dyakonova wrote a separate article, devoted to one of the Yakut national decorations-torques. (Dyakonova, 1959)

Ethnographer I.V. Konstantinov's "Material culture of XVIII century Yakuts" monography contains a comparatively vast and diverse material, describing different decorations of male and female dress: plaques, copper buckles, jewelry made of beads, chaplets, and metal plaques (Konstantinov, 1971).

F.M. Zykov (1976) is one of the first researches who studied the jewelry art of the Yakuts more precisely. He revealed the history of the Yakuts jewelry art from the ethnographical point of view for the first time in "Yakuts jewelry art" article. He also described many traditional decorations and gave valuable data on jewelry technology there. The author was first to make some ethnographic parallels with the articles of other Siberian peoples. It contains the literature, museum, archival materials and the author's field records.

A.I. Gogolev's (1993) monography covers the decorations of the Turkic peoples in contrastive-comparative aspect for the first time. His piece of work was first to bring the terms and descriptions of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples' decorations.

The studies of this subject in linguistic aspect is limited to just a few fragments and articles in historical-ethnographic works.

Ethnographer A.A. Savvinov made a great contribution to the studies of the Yakut female decorations. He brought the terms of the Yakuts traditional metal decorations in contrastive-comparative plan with the similar terms of the Altaians, Buryats, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Mongols, Tuvinians, Turkmen, Tatars, Uzbeks, Khakassians. The author marks that, "the full complex of the Yakuts female decorations is probably the brightest ethnic symbol of the Yakut culture; it wasn't occasional that many researchers called the Yakuts one of the most "silver" peoples of Siberia. They deserved such a definition, being the glorious keepers of artificial metal ancient traditions for the unique and original attires they have always been noted for" (Oyunsky, 1975, 6) The author composed "Dictionary of national names of the Yakut traditional decorations" and included 49 terms in it (Savvinov, 2001, pp.135-136).

According to him, the issues of the female decorations vocabulary refer to the number of undeveloped problems. The scientific literature has not enlightened enough the traditional names of decorations, with many of their native national names not introduced into a scientific circuit yet, though they represent a valuable material for studying the monuments of material culture.

We distinguish the work of K.M. Yakovleva (2011), an ethnographer among the young researchers. Her thesis "Classification of the Altaian cultural community peoples' decorations" is dedicated to the complex research of traditional decorations of the Altaian cultural community, living in Siberia.

Symbolic meanings of the Yakuts female decorations is uncovered in the study of culturologist S.V. Nikiforova (2003). The thesis determines a functional value of the decorations' symbolic meanings in the traditions of the Yakut culture.

The studied matter shows that, the Yakut historiography contains very diverse and valuable factual material on the female decorations and in jewelry of the Yakuts as a whole. It is believed that decorations are the object of study of historians and ethnographers. At the same time, the semantics and ethnolinguistic features of the decorations are in the spotlight of linguists.

Female decorations possess a big vocabulary material as a main part of the Yakuts' jewelry. A man has strived to all the beauty since the moment of self-culture. Aesthetic sense has become an integral part of

the human culture in time. And all these have reflected in the language of a particular nation, having enriched its vocabulary. The decoration language has enriched itself with the development of jewelry. Therefore, we refer the issue of study of the Yakut female decorations vocabulary to the number of undeveloped problems of the Yakut linguistics.

This article's purpose is definition of the female decorations types based on P.A. Oyunsky's article materials, written in 1927.

Methods

On the basis of the study purpose, the study applies contrastive-comparative, lexico-semantic and descriptive methods of research when comparing descriptions, meanings of the given terms of the Yakut female decorations on their etymological and lexico-semantic characteristics.

Contrastive-comparative method is used at establishing similarities and dissimilarities of descriptions, the etymological characteristics of the given terms in different sources, in particular in the work of P.A. Oyunsky, dictionary of E.K. Pekarsky and other ethnographical works.

Lexico-semantic method is used at analyzing the Yakut female decorations in description of their semantic structure and meaning.

Descriptive method is used at describing the etymological characteristics of the Yakut female decorations terms, their classification and interpretation. The main technique of this method in our study is observation at discovery of the Yakut female decorations and arranging them into the types.

The applied methods help to develop the peculiarities of the terms lexico-semantic structure in whole and promote the discovery of the Yakut female decorations types and setting the rules of their lexico-semantic development.

Discussion

The Yakut heroic epos *olonkho* is of great scientific value, including in studying the Yakut language vocabulary. The *olonkho* language is rich, deep and it abounds with the expressive means. The *olonkho* texts contain frequent detailed descriptions of the female decorations.

P.A. Oyunsky is an author of the "Nyurgun Bootur the Swift" *olonkho*. He wrote the first scientific work on *olonkho* study in the collected works of "Keskil of Sakha" scientific research community for the first time in 1927 (Oyunsky, 1927). And he was the first to describe the Yakut female decorations based on the *olonkho* in "Female decorations" chapter. He brings the following Yakut decorations in his article: *kyldjyy* 'necklace of silver', hair decorations, *tyes simege* 'chest decorations', *saryn simege* 'shoulder decorations', *ettyk simege* 'thigh decorations', *kyabaka simege* 'decorations, covering the uterine body part, from navel to feet', *syaldjyia simege* 'decorations of female drawers', *begek* 'wide silver bracelets with ornament' (Oyunsky, 1975, 347). Herewith, the author noted that "there are no rings and earrings".

A *kyldjyy* 'necklace' belongs to the **neck-pectoral decorations** by its functional belonging and the way of wearing. It is one of the main types of the Yakuts female decorations. A *kyldjyy* word is of the Turkic origin. According to Pekarsky E.K. dictionary, the word *кылҕы, кылчы* has two meanings. Of them, the second one suits our example 'a necklace (*kyldjyy simekh*), a silver massive neck ring (hoop) in form of an oval circle, that has silver or metal plate with the long silver chains, hanging in front and in the back, worn by a woman as a decoration (watch *ilin kebiher, kelin kebiher*)' (Pekarsky, 2008, p.1390). P.A. Oyunsky described the decoration as 'necklace of silver. The necklace consists of the neck ring and long tassels, falling onto chest and back ("*kyldjyy*", "*ilin kebiher*", "*kelin kebiher*"). With "*ilin kebiher*" having a round silver plate with an

ornament (image of the sun) in the middle. The tassels consist of a few rows, joined with each other by the thin rings. The rows consist of the plates, joined by the same method, and have ornaments and carved edges' (Oyunsky, 1975, p.347). The both authors call the *kyldjyy* a "necklace". This decoration represents a big solid decoration, consisting of a few elements. The first element is a basis of the *kyldjyy* decoration. Herewith, it may serve as a separate decoration. The ethnographers call it a "torque", emphasizing the similarity of the Yakut *kyldjyy* with the ancient Scythian torques. They note that the torques really represent one of the most archaic elements in the Yakuts culture. The second element is a silver decoration, hung in front on *kyldjyy*, called *ilin kebiher* 'chest decoration'. Chest decoration *ilin kebiher* is "one or two silver or metal engraved plate and 4 inches of length and 2 of width, hung on the straps to the front part of the *kyldjyy* neck ring, usually there are 12 little holes on the lower part of such plates, having 4-6-8 silver chains attached to them" (Pekarsky, 2008, p.926). The third element is a decoration, hung on the back of *kyldjyy*, and called *kelin kebiher* 'decoration worn on back'. It represents a silver engraved plate in the form of trapeze, attached to the back side of *kyldjyy* neck ring, or hung by the straps to a nape part of headband; with the little holes on the lower part, having 4 or 8 silver chains attached to them, that consist of different plates joined with each other, of quadrangle or triangle shapes; sometimes the chains interleave by big plates through the whole width of decoration (Pekarsky, 2008, p.1022). Consequently, *kyldjyy* 'necklace' complete with *ilin kebiher* 'chest decoration' and *kelin kebiher* 'decoration worn on back' refer to the neck-pectoral type of the Yakuts female decorations. P.A. Oyunsky left a full description of the big solid decoration, consisting of a few elements.

P.A. Oyunsky marks a hair decoration the next. It refers to the type of **hair decorations**. He left a description of this decoration, consisting of the "tassels with the beads of big size and different colors, and silver chaplets" (Oyunsky, 1975, p.347). Herewith, he didn't mention the name of the decoration. A term *syhyekh kiistete* 'plait decoration for single women' was first introduced by O.N. Betlingk (Betlingk, 1989, p.182). E.K. Pekarsky describes the hair decoration as *kiiste*, having a meaning of 'fillet at a single women plait; plait decoration for single women and children, of one or more trapeze plates, attached to the plait ends – *syhyakh kiiste*' (Pekarsky, 2008, p.1113). Ethnographer A.I. Savvinov brings three terms of the hair decorations in the post-Soviet period. The first term – *syhyekh simege* means a plait ornament. The second – *syhyekh kiistete* is a 'plait decoration for maidens and children. Consists of one and more trapeze plates, attached to the plait ends'. The third term *battakh eryyte* also means a plait ornament (Savvinov, 2001, pp.39-40). None of the terms suits the P.A. Oyunsky's description. He specified the following elements of the hair decoration as the tassels with the beads of different colors, big size and silver chaplets. E.K. Pekarsky and A.I. Savvinov emphasize the presence of trapeze plates in hair decoration. Consequently, we think that P.A. Oyunsky left the description of another, more ancient female hair decoration, according to its completing elements.

Further, we proceed to analyze a *ettyk simege* decoration - 'decoration worn on hip'. E.K. Pekarsky brought a short description of the term as a "decoration of silver and beads, hung onto the female clothes near the hips" (Pekarsky, 2008, p.2225). P.A. Oyunsky brought only a simple description of the decoration as the "hips decoration" (Oyunsky, 1975, p.347). A.A. Savvinov brings the term *ettyk simege* and explains it as a "female decoration, worn on one's hip, consisting of metal drops and some small items, such as: a pouch, flintstone, toilet articles" (Savvinov, 2001, p.135). Being an explorer of the Yakuts metal decorations, he brings a full description of the given decoration: "it's a costume supplement, representing a set of different drops of decorative and practical character, worn by women on waist. The traditional satellites of the Yakut typesetting belt, as well as that of the other nations, were: a flintstone (*khatat*), pebble (*chokuur*), pouch of tinderbox (*kyalyk*), but in sheath (*byhakh*)" (Savvinov, 2001, p.56). According to him, the custom of wearing such a set of the female decorations on waist goes back to the ancient Turkomen culture. The decorations, worn on hip, were necessary for a nomadic way of life and widespread among the nomad women (the

Altaians, Tuvinians, Buryats etc.). According to A.A. Savvinov's descriptions, it turns out that the decoration *ettyk simege* 'decoration worn on one's hip' itself is one of the female silver belt components, and is a part of the decorations complex, worn on one's hip. P.A. Oyunsky noted the decoration functional belonging as a decoration of hips. We refer the whole complex of the set – the female belt and *ettyk simege* 'decoration, worn on one's hip' to the type of the **decorations, worn on one's hip**.

Now we consider the next decoration – *kyabaka simege* 'ancient female attire decoration' out of the **Yakut women decorations, worn on one's hip**. The term itself consists of two words. The first one *kyabaka* has two meanings. The first meaning is "a body part between navel and crotch". The second meaning of *kyabaka* is "an ancient female metal attire, worn in front, below navel, over underwear" (Pekarsky, 2008, pp.1351-1352). The second word *simekh* means "decoration". P.A. Oyunsky brings a description of *kyabaka simege* as of "decoration, covering uterine body part from navel to feet" (Oyunsky, 1975, p.347). E.K. Pekarsky brought another explanation of *kyabaka simege* – "a set of decorations at woman's on-pelvis (*syaldja, syalyja*); is hung onto strap of woman's short trousers or on-pelvis (*syaldja, syalyja*)" (Pekarsky, 2008, pp.1351-1352). Consequently, he wrote about two different decorations, worn on hip. An ancient Yakut estimated the decorations of his daughter-in-law by the ring of "*kyabaka simege*", when she stepped across her husband's yurt threshold; he also estimated wealth of the daughter-in-law relatives by this decoration ring. According to the descriptions, P.A. Oyunsky brings one decoration named *kyabaka simege*. According to E.K. Pekarsky materials, the Yakuts had two different decorations named *kyabaka*. The first decoration – *kyabaka*, an ancient female metal attire, worn in front, below navel. It covers uterine body part and is worn over drawers. The second decoration – *kyabaka simege* is hung onto *syaldja* 'on-pelvis'. It means, P.A. Oyunsky wrote about *kyabaka* "ancient female metal attire, worn in front, below navel, over underwear".

Further, Oyunsky brings another interesting term *syaldjyja simege*. E.K. Pekarsky gives two explanations of word *syalyja* and *syaldja*. *Syalyja* means "short leather or fabric trousers, covering only a stomach and genital region; on-pelvis, breeches". *Syaldja* has a meaning of "short trousers, covering only stomach and genital region, kind of the Russian swimming ones – are made mainly of leather (summer variant) or of skin (winter one); breeches, drawers" (Pekarsky, 2008, pp.2423-2424). Generally, the words *syalyja* and *syaldja* have the same meanings. But P.A. Oyunsky wrote *syaldjyja*. Probably, it was a dialectism or grammatical error. He took *syaldjyja simege* in the meaning of "decoration for woman's drawers" (Oyunsky, 1927, p.347). It was said before that E.K. Pekarsky brought *kyabaka simege* as "a set of decorations at woman's on-pelvis (*syaldja, syalyja*); is hung onto strap of woman's short trousers or on-pelvis (*syaldja, syalyja*)" (Pekarsky, 2008, pp.1351-1352).

Consequently, *syaldjyja simege* decoration, described by P.A. Oyunsky, is identical to *kyabaka simege*, the decoration, hung onto a woman's on-pelvis. It is our opinion that, *syaldjyja* (or *syalyja, syaldja*) as a term, brought by P.A. Oyunsky, conveys the essence and specificity of the particular decoration, worn on one's hip, more precisely, than another term *kyabaka simege*.

The next decoration, described by P.A. Oyunsky, is *begek*. It refers to the arm decorations. He described them as "wide silver bracelets with ornament" (Oyunsky, 1975, p.347). In E.K. Pekarsky dictionary, the Yakut word *begek* as a female decorations term has two meanings. The first meaning of *begek* means "a bracelet; a cuff-type silver bracelet with a width of up to 3 vershoks; a bracelet on a mammoth tusk at the Dolgans". The word second meaning is "a thin blade of 2 or 2 ¼ width, usually engraved, worn over a silver necklace (*khabarga simege, mooj simege*)" (Pekarsky, 2008, p.516). Oyunsky intended the first meaning of the word – "wide silver bracelets with ornament". It is interesting that the term *begek* is implied to other types of decorations – *khabarga simege, mooj simege*, referred to the **neck-pectoral type of decorations**.

It is a strange fact that P.A. Oyunsky claimed the absence of rings and earrings at the Yakuts. We have no data about the rings yet. An article of L.S. Efimova and O.A. Luginova, that analyzed 22 varieties of the decoration, is devoted to the subject of the Yakut earrings language designation (Efimova & Luginova, 2018, pp.104-111).

Conclusion

Therefore, Oyunsky was the first to make the interesting descriptions of the basic Yakut female decorations, based on *olonkho*, in his article “Yakut tale (*olonkho*): its plot and content”. Having analyzed ten terms, we made a try to classify them. The classification, composed by us, contains 4 types of female decorations:

I. Neck-pectoral decorations: we prefer to include *kyldjyy* ‘necklace’ into this group due to its functional belonging and the way of wearing. Platon Alexeyevich Oyunsky left a full description of the big solid decoration, consisting of a few elements. The first element is the basis of *kyldjyy* ‘necklace’. The second one is a decoration *ilin kebiher* ‘chest decoration’, hung onto *kyldjyy* in front. The third is a decoration, hung onto *kyldjyy* on the back – *kelin kebiher* ‘decoration, worn on one’s back’.

II. Head decorations: We may refer here the description of the hair decoration, consisting of the tassels with the beads of big size, and the silver chaplets. It is our opinion that he left a description of another more ancient female hair decoration.

III. Decorations, worn on one’s hip: are represented by three terms as *ettyk simege* “hips decoration”, *kyabaka simege* “decoration of a woman’s attire” and *syaldjyya simege* “decoration for woman’s drawers”. The Yakuts had two different decorations named *kyabaka*. The first *kyabaka* is an ancient female metal attire, worn below navel, in front. The second decoration – *kyabaka simege* – is hung onto *syaldja* ‘on-pelvis’. The term *syaldja simege*, brought by P.A. Oyunsky, has been called *kyabaka simege* later. Then, these terms are synonyms and represent one and the same decoration.

IV. Arm decorations: *begek* is may be referred. A term *begek* happened to mean two varieties of decorations by its functional belonging in the Yakut culture. The first decoration *begek* means a bracelet. The second meaning of the term is for another decoration – *khabarga simege*, *mooj simege*, worn on neck. P.A. Oyunsky intended the first meaning of *begek* term, referring to the arm decorations. We should note that we haven’t cleared yet the names of decorations *tyes simege* ‘chest decoration’ and *saryn simege* ‘shoulders decoration’. These terms semantics is to be cleared henceforth.

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Efimova, L. S. & Luginova O. A. (2018). The Yakut female decorations: lexical-semantic field YTAGA ‘earrings’ (in Russian) (based on materials of E.K. Pekarsky “Dictionary of the Yakut language”). NEFU herald, 1 (63), 104-111.

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