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Yakut-Even Folklore Correlations in Epic Genres of the Evens of Yakutia

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Abstract

The topic of article focuses on the examples of epic and fantastic genres interaction represented in the Yakut and Even folklore traditions. The author takes examples from the texts and describes some fragments of Yakut and Even epic texts in which there is an ornitomorphic feature connected with the name Yoksyokyu, and in the Evens texts – with the name Yugseki or Yevseki. This feature is present in various examples of epic texts of the Yakut traditional epic olonkho and in some folklore texts of the Dolgans; it can be seen in the epic legends of the southeast Evens, living in the Khabarovsk Krai, who have come there from the east of Yakutia and are presently living in the neighboring regions with the Yakut people. Apart from epic texts, the image of a bird of Yoksyokyu occurs in examples of Dolgan and Yakut fairy tales.

In our research, the descriptive method was used providing a large scope of primary textual data analysis; as well as the categorizing method allowing to show specific features of each text and its details; the comparative method aimed at defining similarities and differences in the context of both – the Yakut and Tungus folklore traditions and texts, representing different genres – the epic olonkho and fairy tales. A text material was selected using the method of computer analysis of large scope of texts, allowing taking texts containing proper names, age and social signs of characters, living beings and subjects as well as these subjects' names.

Occurrence of such a character as a predatory fighting bird Yugseki similar to an eagle – Yevseki in the Even legends – is an unequivocal cultural borrowing from the Yakut folklore tradition: the group of Evens where these legends have been written down, is native to the Ust-Maya ulus (administrative division) of Yakutia and their dialect is close to the Even dialects of eastern Yakutia. In all Yoksyokyu referred to in the texts – the ornitomorphic character with a number of heads ranging from 1 to 8, capable of turning into a well-built human being and of participating in epic hero duels. It is a typical example of a cultural borrowing: in folklore, separate motifs and the characters connected with such motifs are usually borrowed. The image of Yoksyokyu – the birdlike human represents such type of a hero as the mediatory force connecting the different worlds (in this case the world of people and birds as a category of characters and Middle (terrestrial) and Top (Upper) worlds as spheres of action and narrations. The given example of character borrowing from the Yakut folklore tradition by the Even epic tradition is a rather bright one and the attention of researchers is drawn to it, but it appears by far not the only thing in weight of examples displaying influence that the Yakut folklore had on that of the Evens.

Keywords: Yakut folklore, Yakut epics, Olonkho, Tungus, Even legends, Fairy tales.

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Introduction

The problems of Yakut-Tungus correlations in the epic forms of folklore, in particular the problematics of the Yakut influence on the form, subjects, motifs, poetics and language in the Evenki and Even epic narrations until recently were one of the most unpopular topics in Tungus epic studies. At the same time, contacts and aerial correspondences of the epic traditions of the Tungus people with their neighbors is a serious problem that deserves attention. In this regard, there co-exist two approaches to the problem. One of the approaches is a characteristic for specialists in Yakut folklore, who pay significant attention to the aspects of correlations between the Yakut *olonkho* (Y. 'epic texts') and Tungus epic narrations, marking the Yakut influence on the examples of the Tungus epic texts (Pukhov, 1971; 1975; 1980; 2004), now this problem is raised on a higher level (Ivanov, 2013); researchers show their interest in the reality of the Yakut and Tungus texts, and in the general co-existence of the corresponding epic worlds (Illarionov, 2013). At the same time, scholars who write about the Tungus epic, are deeply indulged in its descriptive categorization, or do not mention any citations of particular scientific findings on the Tungus epic at all; and do not include this information in the list of references to their researches; or are limited to a small number of references to any one work of I.V. Pukhov, where the Tungus epic is mentioned.

We believe that there is a correlation of the Tungus epic with the Yakut traditional oral folklore. There are plenty of Yakut words used in the language of the Evenki and Even epic texts, a part of which, especially in terms of the Even language, are not fixed in dictionaries; in one of the stories, it is directly called – *olonkho* (Romanova & Myreeva, 1971, p.48, 71). In the Tungus epic texts, the important place is occupied with the horses; one of creative means of the Tungus epic are instances of naming various metals and metal products. The given list can be continued, and, it will be seen later, when analyzing the new Tungus epic products published recently, that the number of the Yakut elements in the Tungus epic increased.

The focus of our study in the present article is the ornitomorphic character, who in Yakut and Dolgan folklore tradition bears the name of Yoksyokyu (Efremov, 2000, pp.200-223), and – Yugseki or Yevseki in the Even epic.

Methods and Methodology

The descriptive method was used to gather the research materials presented in our work, provides a selection and a primary data analysis on a variety of texts. For each text the given method turns to the feature distinction method – studying the text in all its features, first of all, individual ones, revealing the character interesting us; extraction from the text of the characteristic external signs of the given character and its subject functions. At the following stage of research the comparative method was used – a comparison of two traditions (Habibullina, 2013, p.3, 11), directed at revealing similarities between the compared objects in terms of their genre and poetics (Habibullina 2013, p.11); in our case, the purpose of applying the comparative method is to define the similarities and differences in relation to both – the Yakut and Tungus folklore traditions and the texts representing different genres – the *olonkho* epic and fairy tales. For the analysis of the text material and reliable delimitation of object of research distribution, the author of the article applies the method of computer analysis of a scope of epic texts and fairy tales of world nations (Basangova & Burykin, 2013), providing a complete picture revealing the material on the names of characters and subjects.

Discussion

A bird of Yugseki in the Even epic. The ornitomorphic hero with the name *Yugseki* or *Yevseki* is mentioned in most of the represented Even epic legends, namely – in all three epic legends which have been written down in 1936-1937 by the local teacher Nikolay Prokopevich Tkachik (1905-1944). The fate of these

materials is quite dramatic: after the death of the collector in 1944 (he spent some years in the sieged Leningrad and in German occupancy during the World War II) they have been given to G.M. Vasilevich (1895-1970, stored in the archive of the Yakut Centre of Science of the Siberian Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences. Based on their copies, these texts are accessible to other researchers; an experimental edition was published (the Epic, 1986) in which the text transcription has been replaced and prepared, the translation was excellently created by N.P. Tkachik, and underwent insignificant changes. Thus, by the beginning of the new millennium, all copies of the materials compiled by N.P. Tkachik have become inaccessible to researchers and their preparation for the edition has become extremely complicated (Burykin, 2005). A unique copy of the texts collected by N.P. Tkachik accessible to us has appeared in a typewritten copy of these materials which some time was at the disposal² of K.A. Novikova (1913-1984) and has later been donated to the Magadan Regional Museum of Local Studies.

The study of this copy shows that the collector or someone among the researchers attempted to prepare these texts for the edition. In the course of this preparation, there was the number of the Yakut loanwords found in the Even language texts, however, the editing of texts has not been finished. In the first text titled *Chibdevel*, there are few Yakut loanwords, but they remain in the texts titled *Delgeni* following it and in the third text titled *Geakchaval*. It is strange, because all texts have been written down from one Even performer, N.G. Mokrousov, from the settlement the Arka of the Ohotsk area of the Khabarovsk Krai; hence, variations in the language of the texts have not been expected. It seems that variants of the hero-bird's name – Yugseki and Yevseki – are also attempts to somehow correct the language of the texts written down. Differentiating alternativeness of the name under study is not clear to us.

In the *Chibdevel* legend, the bird of Yugseki is present in the following episodes³:

Here Helergun tells Chibdevelu:

"In three days I will deliver person to you".

Helergun has travelled on foot. Helergun, having jumped, has turned into a bird of Yugseki:⁴ with four wings, four claws, and two heads. Here it has departed.

Karalan, if I am the person,

Karalan, from air movement,

Karalan, upwards do not lift!"

*Having said this, the **Yugseki-eagle** has departed. When this eagle has departed upwards, the downpour had seized too. Then, the eagle flew upwards all time. The sky happens to be a way for the eagle to make an exit. As soon as it has caught sight of this hole for the first time, the former person flies upwards, having turned into a bird. Helergun seized this man quickly, and caught up with him. <...>*

*When Hulinnu came there, he began to look around: with four double wings with two double heads, with two double sharp-clawed **paws**, with feathers from shod iron plates the **Yugseki-eagle** stood. When Hulinnu gave a stern look, it has occurred to this **Yugseki-eagle** that Helergun battles only with his hands,*

² In K.A. Novikova's obituary (Sem, 1985, p.70), the date of her death is not clearly identified (it is not on November 2nd and not on November, 1st): this discrepancy extends forward on the reference media.

³ Hereinafter the Russian text as well as the English version is based on N.P. Tkachik's translation under the text, which the author of article prepares for the edition together with S.I. Sharina. Italics allocate the changes made by the author of article.

⁴ In N.P. Tkachik's translation – has turned into an eagle. The tsar of birds of Yoksekju in Dolgan to a fairy tale (see more below), and in the Yakut texts it has a form of an eagle.

there is no weapon he can use. When they start to battle and when the **Yugseki-eagle** waves his wings, fire comes up and when his wings knock down the flashes, the thunder claps. The **Yugseki-eagle** has seen this Hulinnu, <...>⁵

When (an eagle – N.P. Tkachik's remark) strikes its wings, Helergun **hands** come to the rescue - Helergun is protected by his hands when the beak of his opponent strikes him, because he can only protect himself with his hands.

Huliroi, huliroi,

What for do you fight with the **Yugseki-eagle**, huliroi,

All the same, after all, you will not overcome it, huliroi, ...

He looked aside, there was a large desolate plain. In the middle of the big glade, there was an iron house. This iron house was standing outside surrounded by a threefold fence. Hulinnu approached this house. There could be heard women playing in the house. Hulinnu began to shout outside:

"Sisters, sisters! Helergun has seized the **Yugseki-eagle**,⁶ with one wing and seized it by the neck with the other hand. The **Yugseki-eagle** asked, if it has been sent to him. This Helergun came here to kill me, caught me, you go and cut it with its axe or he will attack. All twenty women went to attack Helergun". So the **Yugseki-eagle** has told.⁷

Women opened the door, **here**, having opened the doors, all twenty women have rushed at Helergun, reached out their hands to cut it. As soon as the women left, Hulinnu entered into the house, and here (he sees), in one iron cradle with iron hair a child lies, its **one old sorceress-utakan**⁸. Hulinnu beheaded the **old woman-utakan** at once. He seized the head of the child by hair, chopped off the child's head quickly, getting control over this head, Hulinnu jumped out on street. **Here**, then he ran from the battle, having turned into a person, and before, going here Hulinnu was a fox. <...>

Immediately after this, the head of the child struck the **Yugseki-eagle** twice, the eagle was gone, having scattered in ashes".

In the text titled "Delgeni" the same ornitomorphic character has the name of Yevseki. We will present a fragment of the text featuring this character:

"Herakulta that had laid down all the arms, Herakulta has run through the streets of this world, has jumped through dimensions: turned to an eagle-Yevseki on one on the neck of which two heads appeared. Four double covered.

Here it has pursued it. When it had done so, a strong wind began to blow, snow had gone, the big snow-storm had risen. Continuing to fly, Delgeni started talking:

"Chemdan, here, here I perish,

Chemdan, here I perish, Chemdan,

Hengtuni, my son, chemdan, <...>

⁵ Here in after so the reductions of song inserts which do not have the importance for the characteristic of the hero with a name of Yugseki are designated.

⁶ Here in typewriting of transfer of N.P. Tkachik a typing error of Ugseni.

⁷ At N.P. Tkachik - Ugseni- here is a typing error already and in the original.

⁸ In N.P. Tkachik's translation «one servant» - obvious discrepancy. The old woman-utakan about whom it is often said that it is shamaness – the character of the Even folklore, usually she acts as the wife of the leader - kagankan.

While in the nomad house covered with deer skin, Hengtuni heard a voice of his grandfather. Hengtuni, then jumped out, went outdoors, covered a distance on foot. It turned to a hawk **by the custom**. It **became a hawk** with iron feathers. He met the voice of his grandfather. Here when it moved, the strong wind blew against it. Hengtuni could not move, against such wind, and was lifted upwards. Above, near the sky he departed. Here, looking from above, he saw that his grandfather has come, and then flew past him. After Herakulta has come, this hawk saw from the sky that the Eagle-Yevseki was approaching. The Eagle-Yevseki has come. A hawk has flown up to him and looked directly at it; in the bottom part of the two necks there was a beak. Here, the Eagle-Yevseki, having fallen to the ground, has died. The head has flown away at once. Here, then Delgeni reached the house".

In the text titled "Geakchaval" the ornitomorphic character Yevseki is presented in the episode that follows below:

«And here when they came to this place, the strong wind (*khunge*) suddenly began to blow. When the wind has ceased a little, the voice of a person was heard:

- Gukiro guke, Barginikan,

Gukiro guke, under our arrangement I go.

Gukiro guke, accept me well!

And here, when such words have been said, the eagle-Yevseki arrived.⁹ When the Eagle-Yevseki arrived, Bargini prepared the weapon. **Chanting, he spoke** to it:

- Barginu, well **to do**,

Barginu, I accept your call!"

Barginu began to shoot at the bird that arrived, **at it directly**. Nine arrows, one part of arrows he **has completely let out**. When it **shot**, not a single arrow has touched the bird. The bird caught all the arrows with its wings.

Barginu, **well here**,

Barginu, failure, a trouble,

Barginu, the neighbour

Barginu, Sergemej,

Barginu, **well, now at least you**

Barginu, try to shoot.

Sergemej shot an arrow. Sergemej sent out nine arrows at once, as well as its friend. All these nine arrows have got stuck in the feathers of the bird. Then Barginu spoke:

Barginu, **Delkini**

Barginu, it brags,

Barginu, it seems.

Barginu, now you, there is nothing to lose,

Barginu, shoot.

⁹ Fantastic bird, in the text "Chibdevel" named Yugseki, and in the text "Delgeni", as well as here – Yevseki.

Delkini began to shoot. When Delkini made a shot, non of its arrows entered the body (meat), it only reached it, all the arrows only have got stuck in feathers.

Barginu, Njulgini,

Barginu, now you, there is nothing to lose,

Barginu, shoot!

When Njulgini shot, all arrows which were let out by Njulgini, have got stuck in feathers of wings of a bird.

- Njulginju this is so terrible!

Njulginju, what is this?

Njulginju, well I will repeat (at N.P. Tkachik - once again I will shoot!)

Njulginju once again, the second time he shot. The bird caught seven arrows with its wing feathers, the eighth arrow missed, and evaded from the ninth. Having evaded from the arrow, the eagle-Yevseki, having turned into a person, fell to the ground.

- Gukiro guke, Njulgini

Gukiro guke, you are a man of courage.

Gukiro guke, well come on,

Gukiro guke, we will play,

Gukiro guke, try!"

From the analysis of the text fragments above it becomes clear that in two legends "Chibdevel" and "Delgeni", a bird of Yugseki ~ Yevseki, having two heads, four wings and four paws is an epic image which has one hostile feature compared to the basic character: this opponent invariably comes off second-best and loses life. In the third text "Geakchaval", Yevseki is a separate ornitomorphic epic character with whom some heroes make the narration compete – it appears in the shape of a bird, shows the invulnerability and only then turns into a person, having fallen to the ground (further duels proceed with smaller intensity).

It is interesting that the image of Yugseki ~ Yevseki in the texts which have been written down from the same story-teller, in each of the legends has differentiating characteristics, and duels with its participation considerably differ under the description.

The Bird of Yoksyokyu in the Yakut epic olonkho. There is no standard ornitomorphic image of the epic character in the Yakut folklore. In olonkho "Kyys Debiliye":

Three-haired,

With an eagle forehead,

Having transformed himself to Yoksyokyu-bird,

has shot up into the sky promptly;

Aan Ahtalyja,

Having transformed himself into a bird

With doubled tail, like a jail,

With wide copper paws,

With skewbald feathers,

A hook-nosed eagle,

Wings whistled (Kyys Debiliye, 1993, p.205; see also p.287).

This character is a kind of a three-headed bird who comes up in Olonkho "Nyurgun Bootur, the Swift" (1947, p.147, 151. A comment.: with p.41). In other texts, blood and bile of a bird of Yoksyokyu act as a magic medicine (the Yakut folklore, 1936, p.47, 48, 63); the child, escaping from malicious spirit-abaasy, turns into a two-headed bird of Yoksekju (the Yakut folklore, 1936, p.87). In the comments to the edition it says: "the Eksekju-bird — a mythical bird with many heads. Its images are a part of the shamanistic ritual suit. Wooden images of Eksekju are put on a tomb of the shaman" (The Yakut Folklore, 1936, p.295). L.N. Semenova has noticed that in variants of olonkho "Er Sogotoh" the bird Yoksyokyu acts as a death symbol (Semenova, 2000, p.39).

Descriptions of the Eagle-Yoksekju images seated on a horse tethering post (*serge*) are given in olonkho "Shrewed Kulun Kullustur" (Obstinate Kulun Kullustur, 1986, p.8, 59, 84, 97, see also with p.239, 309); this was noted by some researchers (Danilova, 2013, p.95). The same can be seen in other examples of olonkho, and the dwelling description in olonkho begins with the description of a traditional Yakut a horse tethering post (*serge*) on which sits a bird of Yoksyokyu, an owl (a bird especially cherished by the Yakut people), and a cuckoo, which performs the function of a story-teller (Koryakina & Gerasimova, 2016, p.131).

The bird of Yoksyokyu can be seen in other Yakut epic texts as well. N.N. Nikolaeva writes: "... in olonkho "Erbehchin Bergen" there is a one-eyed female shaman character, Uot Ugaydaan, pursuing Suksuydaan Batyr. Magic power of the female shaman is a considerable one – she addresses the lightning to amaze the enemy. Warriors cannot overcome its force – only by cunning. In order to rescue Suksuydaan Batyr, the bogatyr Erbehchin Bergen sends the female shaman out onto a sea island where the bird of Yoksyokyu nests. Having turned into lightning, Uot Ugaydaan, falls from the sky onto its nest. Taken by surprise, the bird has time to evade and fly up in the sky, and then dissects the female shaman into two pieces" (Nikolaeva, 2008, p.52).

In the Dolgan folklore, the bird of Yoksyokyu is one of the heroes of the legend titled "Brother and Sister" (Efremov, 2000, pp.117, 121). The same image in the form of the tsar of birds of Yoksyokyu is the hero of a fairy tale "War of animals and birds" (Efremov, 2000, p.203). In itself, the Dolgan fairy tale "War of birds and animals" featuring a character who is a tsar-bird Yoksekju (the tsar in a kingdom of people and the tsar of birds in an image of a bird) being characteristic one for folklore traditions of the late formation, unites a number of plots beginning with a plot "the Birdie with a Mouse". It is connected with a plot about a choice of reigning the birds, meeting with the people of Southern Siberia (see Muzraeva, 2014). Sometimes, it is said about Yoksekju that it is eight-headed (Efremov, 2000, pp.245, 247, 251, 257).

Revealing the description of a bird of Yoksyokyu in the texts represents a rather difficult problem as the visual image of this supernatural character is diverse and ambiguous. N.N. Nikolaeva notes: "The bird of Yoksyokyu is a version of an eagle, it has two, three, and sometimes up to nine heads, each of which speaks different languages also one of them is typically immortal. In its blood and bile temper of the fighting weapon, warriors sometimes turn to the aiyy. Yoksekju is considered the tsar of birds, and the strongest and mighty of all the winged creatures. It is interesting that in another olonkho, "Mas Batyja", the bird of Yoksyokyu and the woman-abaasy are represented as natives of the Under World and are closely connected among themselves" (Nikolaeva, 2008, p.53). It is necessary to specify that the bird or a bird-person of Yoksyokyu is an occurring character appearing in the process of action, with its own locus -

an island in the olonkho "Erbehchin Bergen" on which there is its nest, or quite a prosaic nest of a bird (thus, it is a female bird with baby birds) in the Yakut fairy tale.

Yoksyokyu Bird in examples of fairy-tales. The same character with qualities of a person and a bird, capable of changing its shape, appears in Dolgan fairy tales "the Poor Peasant's Seven Sons" (Efremov, 2000, p.233) and "Happy day, ill-fated day" (Efremov, 2000, p.293). The bird of Yoksyokyu is present also in the Yakut fairy tale "The soldier who does not know satiety" (the Yakut fairy tales, 1990, pp.325-326): the hero gets to a tree with a nest with baby birds of a bird of Yoksyokyu and eats its contents – two horses: the bird of Yoksyokyu kills the hero. In another fairy tale titled "Warrior Borkov with a blunt sword", the ornitomorphic character Yoksyokyu acts as an assistant to the hero, executing the requirement of the hero's sister: "the Young man has come home with a bear cub and bear milk. The sister splashed out the milk and said: "Bring milk of Yoksyokyu". Soldier Borkov went to the sea and began to ask Yoksyokyu: "Yoksyokyu, give me some of your milk". Yoksyokyu has given an eagle and milk to the soldier" (Dyakonova, 1984, the Appendix. With. 18). It is essentially important that in both Yakut fairy tales where there is a character Yoksyokyu, there are also signs of their loaning from Russian folklore.

Conclusion

The occurrence of such a character as a predatory fighting bird of Yugseki similar to an eagle ~ Yevseki in the Even legends – is an unequivocal loan from the Yakut folklore tradition: in settlement of the Arka of Ohotsk area of the Khabarovsk Krai, where these legends have been written down, lives up to this day a small group of Yakut people and the Evens of Arka are native to this land from the Ust-May district of Yakutia. We can also conclude that there is a significant difference between different Yakut olonkho, Dolgan olonkho and fairy tales about the tsar of birds of Yoksyokyu, on the one hand, and the Even legends on the other hand; there is no direct coincidence, it is not a counterargument in this case – in the folklore, the motifs and the characters connected with motifs are usually simply borrowed. The image of Yoksyokyu – a birdlike human is concerned with a category of the mediators-intermediaries connecting the various worlds (in this case the world of the people and birds and the Middle (terrestrial) World and the Upper World), as this defines its multi-personality in texts and the complexity in fixing a static image which in the Even texts has a large degree of definiteness and a smaller degree of a variety, than in Yakut olonkho and in Dolgan fairy tales. Possibly, a fixed example of character loaning of the Even epic from the Yakut folklore tradition, it appears by far not the only thing and it is necessary for us to continue researches in the field work.

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