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## **Textological Features of Yakut Olonkho in the Viluy Expedition Field: Research Records of A.A. Savvin and M.N. Zhirkov**

**Anna Nikolaevna Danilova<sup>1</sup>, Anna Semyonovna Larionova<sup>2</sup>**

### **Abstract**

The article gives an insight into the textological features of the manuscripts, collected by A.A. Savvin during his Viluy expedition of 1938. The analysis of the manuscript materials, in particular, the olonkho manuscripts "Tebet Menik bogatyr", allowed singling out the main principles and methods of collecting epic works, which were implemented during the Viluy folklore expedition. The olonkho manuscript "Tebet Menik bogatyr" is stored in the Manuscript Collection Fund of the Yakut Research Center of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences and it is one of the best examples of the Viluy local tradition. This is justified by the archaic motif of the hero's birth from elderly parents. In the course of study of the fixed poetic constructions, a natural input of curses, well-wishing, proverbs and sayings text fragments into the olonkho structure, all of which perform the functions of putting together an epic formula and describing places typical for olonkho. There is additional biographical data about the famous Yakut olonkhosut (olonkho teller), S.I. Eremeyev – Dedeges.

The present study analyzes the methods and approaches to field research in process of recording the olonkho songs during the Viluy expedition organized by M.N. Zhirkov in 1943. We have selected notes text corpus of this expedition, which is stored at the A.S. Pushkin National Library of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia). We analyzed records of the characters' chants, which are typical for the Yakut olonkho and we are making a hypothesis on the type of Viluy region olonkho they could possibly belong to. We also give a comparative analysis of the chants by a Tungus bogatyr Ardzhyamaan-Dardzhyamaan in the olonkho by S.A. Zverev – Kyyl uola from the Nurbinsky Ulus (Region) and Ivan Borisov from the Verkhneviluysky Ulus (Region). It was determined that even within the regional performing styles, which the Viluy chanting style belongs to, there is a possible existence of local regional singing (performing) styles: in this case, the Nurbinsky and Verkhneviluysky regional traditions are implied.

**Keywords:** Textology, Olonkho, Collector, Record, Manuscript, Information source, Traditional chants, Field research, Note records, Stylistics.

<sup>1</sup> Candidate of Philological Sciences, Scientific Researcher, Institute for Humanities Research and Indigenous Studies of the North RAS SB, Yakutsk, Russia. E-mail: danilova.aanchyk@yandex.ru

<sup>2</sup> Doctor of Art Studies, Associate Professor in Musical Art, Chief Scientific Researcher, Institute for Humanities Research and Indigenous Studies of the North RAS SB, Yakutsk, Russia. E-mail: degerenan@mail.ru

## **Introduction**

The contemplations on the unique nature of the archive source as an example of a folklore text as well as the methods of interpreting this text remain the main focus of contemporary research in different fields of the humanities.

At the modern stage of Yakut folklore studies, an important research topic is the textological study of the archive materials collected during the 1938–1940s time-period, when the first scientific expeditions to the Viluy regions were held by the scholars of the Institute of Language and Literature Studies – A.A. Savvin and M.N. Zhirkov. Presently, there are no researches conducted on the field research features of the Viluy expedition held by A.A. Savvin and M.N. Zhirkov. Conducting scientific research on the given topic is justified by the necessity to give a theoretical outline description of the field research completed in the course of these expeditions, due to the fact that the forthcoming collectors of Yakut folklore based their own field research on their predecessors' achievements. It is equally important that the folklore materials collected during these expeditions reflect the existence of an on-going folklore tradition of the Viluy region of Yakutia and in this sense these expeditions are highly valuable.

The local Viluy region tradition became an object of a special study presented in the monograph by A.A. Kuzmina titled *The Olonkho of the Viluy Region* (Kuzmina, 2014). The archaic motif in the olonkho text of the selected region was overviewed in an article by A.N. Danilova devoted to *The motif of a magical birth of the main character in the Viluy region olonkho texts* (Danilova, 2016). In her monograph *The Chants of the Yakut Heroic Epic Olonkho: Textological and Symbolic Aspects*, a music studies expert A.S. Larionova (2012) studied the Viluy region olonkho performing tradition features:

The aim of the present research is to single out the textological features of the Viluy region field research carried out by A.A. Savvin and M.N. Zhirkov.

The originality of this research is justified by the fact that this is the first attempt to single out the key textological features of the “Tebek Menik bogatyr” olonkho manuscript recorded by A.A. Savvin in 1938 and the note records of the epic songs made by M.N. Zhirkov during the Viluy expedition of 1943.

The problem of studying textology of the archive epic text materials collected by A.A. Savvin and M.N. Zhirkov holds the central position on the contemporary research stage. Thus, there is a possibility to give a new perspective on the olonkho texts of the Viluy region, to define the methods and principles of working on the written version of the epic text, and to hold an in-depth study of the epic tales' text structure in the form that it is recorded by A.A. Savvin and M.N. Zhirkov.

## **Methodology**

The basic principle of the study is to systematize the study materials of the Viluy region olonkho. We base the theoretical part of our research on the studies of distinguished Russian folklore researchers focusing on the textological studies of L.N. Arbachakova, A.V. Kudiyarov, I.V. Kulganek, D.S. Likhachov, B.N. Putilov, I.V. Steblyova, and Sh.R. Shakurova. The methodological basis for the study of the problem presented in the research article comprises of methods and approaches presented by the expedition materials of N.V. Leonova, A.M. Mekhentsov, G.B. Sychenko, E.L. Tiron, V.M. Shurov, etc. In terms of textological research, the following research works played a significant role: *The Chants of the Yakut Heroic Epic Olonkho: Textological and Symbolic Aspects* by A.S. Larionova (2012) and *The Problems of Musical Textological Research* (Larionova, 2010). An article *The Special Field Studies Features of the First Yakut Composer, M.N. Zhirkov* was published by A.S. Larionova (2016) devoted to the research aspects of the scientific work mentioned above.

In order to achieve the research goal, the following methods were applied: descriptive, comparative, structural, contrastive, and musical analysis methods.

### **Textological Features of the Olonkho “Tebet Menik bogatyr” Recorded by A.A. Savvin**

The folklore materials collected by A.A. Savvin during his expedition works in 1938 in the Viluy region are of a great scientific value, due to the fact that the recordings include olonkho told by the most talented olonkhosuts (olonkho tellers) in the years when this oral living tradition was maintained in the area. One of the key achievements of this expedition is the full list of famous olonkho tellers of the Viluysky region with their biographical data compiled by A.A. Savvin. The olonkho texts recorded by A.A. Savvin are relatively short in size and contain motifs typical for epic texts of the Viluy region; they differ from other olonkho variations in their rich content, the logic plot structure, the completeness of the episodes and motifs together with its perfect use of the expressive means and stylistic devices.

The olonkho manuscript “Tebet Menik bogatyr” (Eremeyev, 1938, p.115) of the olonkho teller S.I. Eremeyev – Dedeges is one of the archive expedition materials collected by A.A. Savvin. The oral text was recorded from the famous olonkhosut (olonkho teller) of the Viluy region – Stepan Ivanovich Eremeyev – Dedeges. Stepan Ivanovich Eremeyev – Dedeges was 74 years old at that time. He was born in 1862, in the First Togussky nasleg of the Viluy region. His mother, Anna Vasilyevna Eremeyeva, was the daughter of Kechelir Baslay, and gave birth to her son when she was still unmarried. His father, Ivan Osipovich Eremeyev – Dosko, was a well-known olonkho teller and he was very knowledgeable in folklore. This information about him is confirmed in the travel journals created by A.A. Savvin (The Manuscript Fund, fund 5, inventory 3, book record no.250, 34). A.A. Savvin recorded 26 olonkho tales, which the olonkho teller S.I. Eremeyev – Dedeges knew and performed. When the olonkho teller turned seven, he became completely blind after getting sick with smallpox. Despite this fact, Dedeges took care of himself, he even went from one alaas (relief form in Yakutia) to another without any assistance. S.I. Eremeyev – Dedeges considered the olonkho teller from the Viluy region, Yrya Dygyiar, to be his teacher in acquiring the art of live storytelling performances.

The olonkho “Tebet Menik bogatyr” tells a story about the heroic feats of a bogatyr whose name was Tebet Menik. In terms of its content, the system of images, and the variety of expressive means and stylistic devices of the language used in epics, this olonkho is one of the best examples of the Viluy local tradition. The Viluy olonkho plots contain archaic motifs. The olonkho storyline begins with a description of a childless family living in the Middle World; this family asks the supreme gods to bring them the soul of child. A.N. Danilova notes that in the olonkho texts of the Viluy region, the motif of magical birth in an elderly family holds a special position in the plot and has archaic features, where the key role is played by the supreme gods. The holy descent of the main character and his tribe are directly connected to their special social role as the first descendants of the humankind (Danilova, 2016, p.19).

The olonkho “Tebet Menik bogatyr” is characterized by an infinite number of epic formulas and typical places. For example:

Onon ostohutun ohogoydon	That is why he took down the enemy,
Sastahyn dzaniyan...	Defeated his rival (Eremeyev, column 1872)

Similar typical places describing the main character's victories, are found in every olonkho and various expressive word combinations are used in the description, depending on the skillfulness of the storyteller.

The olonkho structure often contains text extracts of ancient curses and well-wishing along with proverbs and sayings. For example, the following proverbs and sayings occur in the olonkho under study:

Surput kerihe suoh,	A place for rest without a cross.
Otohput tonurgehe suoh...	Without the remnants of a place to live...

(Eremeyev, Column 784)

Haryhyttarara ere haraghyn uta,	Protecting oneself with eyes filled with tears,
Komusketere ere komusketin uta...	Defended by the teardrops coming from his eyes...

(Eremeyev, column 2031)

The implementation of various epic formulas in the olonkho texts by the storytellers is a signature of their creative skills.

The textological comparative study of the olonkho “Tebet Menik bogatyr”, reveals that the plot mainly coincides with the other local tradition olonkho texts traditions. However, some motifs are broader and wider in their description of various episodes; they give a more vivid description of the epic characters' individual characteristics.

#### **Textological Features of Recording the Yakut Olonkho Chants during the Viluy Expedition Held by M.N. Zhirkov**

In 1943, the first Yakut professional composer, M.N. Zhirkov organized an expedition to the Viluy group of regions (Suntar, Nyurba, Verkhnevilyuisk, Vilyuisk, without moving further into the taiga naslegs) and within one and half months collected a large number of folklore material: traditional melodies, over 20 traditional dances and ancient game, as well as improvisations devoted to the Great Patriotic War. The ballet master of the Yakut Theatre I.R. Karenin and prose writer N.M. Zabolotsky took part in the expedition.

During the expedition, the participants also recorded extracts of olonkho chants. In a folder No. 4 “Zhirkov M.N. Records of Yakut chants written down in the Viluy group of regions and thoughts on Yakut music. 212 p.”; the olonkho chants stored in the Archive Fund of M.N. Zhirkov at the A.S. Pushkin National Library of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) are featured in the “Sakha yryalara toyuktara” section. M.N. Zhirkov recorded a total of 11 olonkho chants samples: recorded from Ivan Borisov of the Verkhneviluysky region – 3 samples – No. 15 *Ardzhaman Dardzhamanyryta*, No. 16 *Soruk Bollur yryata*, No.17 *Simehsin emehsin yryta*; from K.K. Vasilyev of the Verkhneviluysky region – 2 variants of one olonkho sample – 2 variants of *Aiyy Kuo udagattar yryalara* records No. 38 and 39; from the traditional performers Sergey Afanasyevich Zverev – Kyyl Uola of Nyurba – 2 samples – No. 10 *Ardzhaman Dardzhamanyryta*; No. 30 *Uot olgyuidan dien tar buoiynun abaasy yuolun yryata* and from Ignatiy Prokopievich Kutrukov of Nyurba – 2 samples – No. 13 *Emehsin yryata*; No. 14 *Suor yryata (kotor buolan abaasy yillyr)*; from Pyotr Mikhailovich Savvin of the Nyurbinsky region of the 3rd Bordonsky nasleg of the Krasniy Plug kolkhoz – 2 samples – No. 23 *Abaasy yryata*, No. 25 *Abaasy kyyhyn yryata*.

The indicated record numbers do not contain indications that they belong to olonkho, moreover, there are no olonkho titles, which they should correspond to. Nevertheless, it is quite likely that all these chant segments are somehow related to the olonkho genre, due to the fact that chants are sung by characters living in different worlds and which are very common in Yakut folklore tales. The world in the Yakut olonkho is subdivided into: The Upper, Middle and Lower Worlds. The Upper World is inhabited by the

deities, the Middle World is inhabited by people and the Lower World is inhabited by monsters with which the humans constantly battle. In the Yakut olonkho, folklore experts subdivide the contradictory images into specific groups. “The aiyy group includes the inhabitants of the Upper and Middle Worlds. Aiyy (deity) is a general name for all the supreme creatures symbolizing goodness. These supernatural creatures inhabit the Upper World and decide the fate of the Middle and Lower Worlds. Aiyy is literally translated as “deity”, however, the word is also used in relation to the people of the good tribe <...> Deities and people of the good tribe live in close contact. The abaasy group includes the aiyy-contradicting tribes of monstrous creatures. They mostly inhabit the Lower World and they are the disruptors of peaceful life of the aiyy people” (Danilova, 2014, p.15).

In the expedition notes created by M.N. Zhirkov, there are not indications of the aiyy characters song extracts and of the people of the good tribe, due to the fact that their pieces are sung in a traditional Yakut chanting style *dzhiereti yrya* (a prolonged chanting with glottal glide sounds *kylysa*). At this initial period of Yakut traditional songs study within the music studies, the basics of note-taking of the chants *dzhiereti yrya* were not developed yet, due to the fact that their music notes adaptation is complicated by the non-temporal features of such tunes. The olonkho collector presented not only the characters’ chants, which are sung in the *degeren yrya* style, but their singing is perfectly transferable onto the European notes system.

The chant *Ardzhaman-Dzhardzhyaman yryata* by S.A. Zverev – Kyyl Uola of Nyurba (No. 10) represents a singing style typical for Yakut olonkho characters. *Ardzhaman-Dzhardzhyaman* in Yakut olonkho is a taiga Tungus bogatyr. G.U. Ergis wrote the following: “In many kinds of olonkho, a taiga bogatyr *Ardzhaman-Dzhardzhyaman* occasionally appears and is represented as the rival of the main character. Unlike the abaasy, its image is portrayed with realistic features. He is depicted as an old man in bearskins, who walks on skis or ride a reindeer” (Ergis, 1974, p.200). The image of the Tungus bogatyr is represented in the other regional olonkho of Yakutia. We can find his image in the following olonkho: *The son of a horse*, *Dyrai Bergen* (Amginsky and Churapchinsky regions), *Nerien Mulgu* (Churapchinsky region), *Ereydehburuidah Er Sogotokh* (Khangalassky region), *Alatyr Ala Tuygun* (Megino-Kangalassky region), *Muldzhu Byogyo* (Ust-Aldansky region).

All the olonkho chants recorded in the musical notes form during the Viluy expedition held by M.N. Zhirkov belong to the Viluy regional Yakut singing style. In the Viluy epic tradition, the image of a Tungus bogatyr “is represented in eight olonkho: *Kun Erili* by I.M. Kharitonov, *Kun Turalyma buhatyr* by V.D. Egorov, *Ogo Dulah buhatyr* by N. Ivanov, *Ogo Dulah buhatyr* by V.D. Egorov, *Uoluya Bootur and Dzhiribile Bootur* by V.O. Karataev, *Uol Duolan buhatyr* by M.Z. Martynov, *Tong Saar buhatyr* by S.N. Karataev – Dygiyar. Apparently, this is connected with the fact that the Yakut people of the Viluy region lived in close contact with the Evenkis and this features was reflected in the heroic epic” (Kuzmina, 2014, p.82).

The *Ardzhaman-Dzhardzhyaman yryata chant* (No.10) by S.A. Zverev – Kyyl Uola of Nyurba was recorded by M.N. Zhirkov into one note line (4 bars) using blue font. The verbal text version of the extract is represented as follows:

Segerigim ogoto	My precious
Segerteyim syyskana	My darling <sup>3</sup> .

The chant is represented in the form of a metric Yakut chanting *degeren yrya* style and has the 6/8 timing, which is typical for the Evenki songs, thus, this indicates the Tungus origin of the main character. Unlike the chant style described earlier, the Yakut *degeren yrya* chants are often represented in the form of a

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<sup>3</sup> Translation by A.S. Larionova.

double meter. The ambitus of the chant melody in *Ardzhaman-Dzhardzhyaman yryata* by S.A. Zverev forms the perfect 4<sup>th</sup>. The intonation structure is based on the repetition of a gradual descending movement to the lower reference tone.

The chants of the same character (No.15) as presented in the *degeren yrya* manner by Ivan Borisov from the Verkheviluysky region were recorded in two lines (9 bars) using blue font. There is no verbal form of the text. Near the musical key, there are alternating sings showing the d-moll tone, though it is known that the early Yakut folklore intonation system was different from the European tonal system and so it did not contain any European features. The chant is written in a 2/4 timing syncopized by the rhythmic pattern; the melody ambitus covers perfect 5<sup>th</sup>. In terms of intonation, this chant differs from the previous one in its constantly rising leaps to perfect 4. Perhaps, the differences between these two chants are connected with the local chanting varieties of one and the same Viluy regional chanting style in the two different regions (Nyurbinsky and Verkhneviluysky regions).

M.N. Zhirkov also recorded a chant called *Simehsin Emehsin* from Ivan Borisov. *Simehsin Emehsin* is an old cattle breeder woman. "In the Viluy region olonkho, this image occurs in only 12 texts out of 40 and performs the following functions: a messenger of the main character and the abaasy bogatyr's arrival, the kidnapping of the aiyy tribe young woman; female helper of the antagonist; an advisor; and keeper of the patriarchal family traditions" (Kuzmina, 2014, p.84). The chant is also written down using blue font ink and it takes up two lines (6 bars). There is no verbal form of the text. The text is presented in the 2/4 timing syncopized by the rhythmic pattern. The melody sound pattern is g<sup>1</sup>-a<sup>1</sup>-c<sup>2</sup>-d<sup>2</sup>-e<sup>2</sup>. Despite the fact that this song is performed by a male and the chant sounds lower than that of the version recorded by the researcher. The melody ambitus is major 6<sup>th</sup> with a leap in the melody to that same interval.

*Soruk Bollur* – is a young man, a messenger, rarely occurs in the Viluy olonkho performing tradition. For example, his image is portrayed in the olonkho by V.O. Karataev in *Erbehtey Bergen and in the olonkho* by A.P. Ambrosyev *Kun Nyurgun*. M.N. Zhirkov recorded this character's chants in three line (9 bars) and assigned it No. 16 among the collection of olonkho recorded from Ivan Borisov. The key tonality is G-dur, although the chant is dicrotic encompassing all 9 bars and there are no heptatonic stops. The melody is organized in a 2/4 timing syncopized by rhythm and based on the g<sup>1</sup>-h<sup>1</sup> scale.

M.N. Zhirkov also recorded the chants of the main antagonists of the humankind – the Abaasy uola and the Abaasy kyyha. These abaasy characters are represented in all the Yakut olonkho.

In M.N. Zhirkov's records from the olonkho teller Ivan Borisov, there are also chants *Aiyy dzahgyl udagattar yryalara* and *At yryata*. It is quite possible that these chants are also extracts of olonkho, however, the song fragment titled *At yryata* is followed by the collector's comment in which he indicates that *ichitiger yllyr yrya* (*the chant is sung by a spirit*). For this reason, it is possible that it is a *toyuk* or an *algys*, since in olonkho the singing/chanting is done by the horse (not the spirit), where the horse is the helper of the main character.

The information about the olonkho performers is partially provided in the not recordings. Ivan Borisov did not leave his signature. He only wrote his name. K.K. Vasilev indicated the initials but there is no indication of the place of his origin. The olonkho performers, whose performances were recorded by M.N. Zhirkov, were elderly people. Due to this M.N. Zhirkov wrote: "Due to the fact that all kinds of musical piece are of great interest to the study of musical folklore, we should not assume that any kind of performance is interesting. The choice of good and famous traditional folklore performance plays a significant role in both the repertoire and in terms of the best variants selection. It is not always easy to find good performers; in most cases, one has to give preference to elderly people" (Zhirkov, 2017, p.59).

Among the analyzed note texts, it was determined that the olonkho chants note recordings made by M.N. Zhirkov are exclusive in the laconic and schematic nature. The majority of chants are written in 1-2 or 3 note lines, which are often not supplemented with a text; this is connected with the complications in recording Yakut traditional chants. The not recordings without the text version are presented in the song extracts by Ivan Borisov *Ardzhaman Dardzhaman ryata* (No. 15) and *Soruk Bollur ryata* (No. 16). The collector indicates the alteration signs next to the musical key based on the European noting system; thus, he indicates the tonality of a particular chant. The Yakut traditional chants are based on completely different, non-European music stops and sounds foundations or a tonality system. Nevertheless, for that particular period of field research of the traditional Yakut songs it was typical to record samples using the tonal system, due to the lack of sufficient knowledge on the music stops features of the Yakut traditional songs.

In his methodology of noting down the folklore chants, M.N. Zhirkov suggests using his own method of recording the Yakut chants. He believes that the melody can be written down in fragments, but before writing it down, the song collector needs to try and remember the melody. This is how he describes the methodology of chant note-taking process: "In the process of recording mono-voice melody by listening, it is preferable that the collector is able to memorize the melody independently and to check himself by reproducing it to the performer. If the collector does not manage to memorize the entire melody, he should write down the first part, then the next, etc. and check them consecutively together with the performer (Zhirkov, 2017, p.60).

Thus, olonkho chants recordings made by M.N. Zhirkov during the Viluy expedition of 1943, became the first note recordings of the song fragment of Yakut epic tales performed in the Viluy story-telling tradition. If there are no indication of which olonkho a particular extract belongs to, one can approximately identify the tales, in which certain characters are represented. The olonkho song fragments in the Viluy expedition records made by M.N. Zhirkov also have local features of the Viluy regional chanting tradition, when in every region people sing olonkho with a chanting style which is only typical for that particular region and dating back to the old times when the Yakut folklore was commonly spread.

## Conclusion

Thus, we can make the following conclusions;

During his expeditions, the folklore collector A.A. Savvin mainly focused his attention to the heroic epic olonkho. It is not accidental that the olonkho "Tebet Menik bogatyr" was recorded from the famous olonkho teller of that time S.I. Eremeyev – Dedeges. The following was discovered in the course of the study: 1) A.A. Savvin immediately wrote down the olonkho text as he heard it; he would refer back to them later on to improve the reproduction of the authentic speech of the olonkho teller; 2) The collector made his notes with a pencil, he used blue ink only occasionally in diaries, to write on different colored and sized paper; 3) During the Viluy expedition, A.A. Savvin was the first scholar to create a network of correspondents, which cooperated closely with the scientific research institution; 4) A.A. Savvin was the first to create a record list of olonkho tellers and wrote down the biographical data of the Viluy olonkho tellers who were famous at that time. The olonkho texts recorded by A.A. Savvin during the Viluy expedition are a unique heritage of the Yakut people and they have a specific scientific value, due to the fact that they were recorded in the times when the olonkho telling tradition was alive.

In his field research work, M.N. Zhirkov implement his methods and approaches to recording the folklore chants of the Sakha people. He suggests to record the samples of the Yakut traditional chanting culture from elderly folklore tellers and to make the music notes records of the chants in fragments. The presented materials were the first examples of recorded folklore chants of the Viluy regions. The note

records consist of 2 or 3 lines (from 4 to 9 bars); the tonal alteration sounds are placed next to the music key, which was typical for that period of recording note samples of the Yakut traditional songs.

M.N. Zhirkov collected 69 samples of the Sakha chanting folklore during the Viluy expedition materials of 1943 of which 11 represent olonkho chants, due to the fact that they reflect the song subsections of the commonly used characters in the Yakut epic. In cases when the olonkho origin of a particular chant was unclear or unknown, a hypothesis was made about their potential origin. Having compared the chants of a Tungus bogatyr Ardzhaman-Dardzhamana performed by the storyteller S.A. Zverev – Kyyl Uola and the Verkhenviluyskiy region olonkho teller, Ivan Borisov, it was determined that apart from the regional stylistic features of Yakut chanting, which the Viluy stylistic tradition belongs to, in the times when olonkho telling was largely spread, there also existed local stylistics, in particular: The Nyurbinsky and Verkneviluysky singing styles.

Thus, in the 1930-1940s, the Yakut heroic epic olonkho recordings helped to preserve the presently extinct phenomena of traditional Yakut culture. The methods and approaches to field research studies introduced by A.A. Savvin and M.N. Zhirkov formed the foundation upon which the successive generations of Yakut researchers based their studies.

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