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Olonkho 'Nurgun Botur the Swift' By Platon Oyunsky as a 'Strong' Text of the Yakut Culture

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Abstract

The article deals with the 'strong' text of the Yakut culture – olonkho *Nurgun Botur the Swift* by Oyunsky. A convincing evidence of the 'strength' of Oyunsky's text is its continuing popularity among native speakers, the steady interest of researchers in the author's version of the epic, its high educational and cultural potential, as well as the regular translatability into the languages of verbal and non-verbal semiotic systems. Being the classical example of epic tradition, olonkho demonstrates close connection with the Yakut real life and the genuineness of the events described, which makes Oyunsky's text a reliable historical and ethnographic source of information about the culture and the history of the Sakha people. Along with the cultural information, an important place in the complicated information continuum of olonkho belongs to cultural memory resulting from mythologization and sacralization of the past of the indigenous Sakha people, being of collective nature and providing the cultural identity of the ethnic group. The present research considers the cultural information and the memory, which reflect the unique cultural code of the 'strong' text (primarily in translingual and transcultural prospects) and identify effective strategies for preserving in the secondary texts the Yakut historical experience and generic memory. The fact that the recipients understand the text of olonkho despite its complex cultural meaning, and the ability to continue its 'life' in 'native' and 'foreign' cultures implies the interpretation and adaptation of information from the epic work by means of verbal and non-verbal semiotics. The secondary texts of olonkho of various semiotic nature preserve the cultural information and the memory of the original text, which proves the universality of this type of information as a unit of translation of epic literature.

Keywords: Epic, Olonkho, 'strong' text, Cultural information and memory, Translation, Translation unit, Secondary text, Interpretation, Cultural adaptation.

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Introduction

In a rapidly changing world, there are two prevailing trends aimed at further cultural development. First of all, this is an obvious tendency towards cultural unification, which is closely connected with the broad globalization, the formation of the globalist consciousness, the rise of mass culture and, accordingly, the lowering of the status of folk and elite cultures. Cultural unification, on one hand, implies cultural diffusion and universalization, standardization and stereotyping of cultural experience and models of modern society. On the other hand, nowadays, the aspiration of certain cultural subjects to preserve and revive the ethnic identity of their cultures and languages is getting more and more pronounced. In many cases, ethnic preservation based on the accumulated cultural experience of previous generations of national culture bearers, acquires various forms of cultural survival, which, above all, is relevant for the cultures and languages of the indigenous small-numbered peoples. In the cultural space of Russia, Siberia occupies a special place, while there are multicultural regions represented on its territory. Thus, the major ones are the Krasnoyarsk Krai and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), which are inhabited by more than 150 and 100 nationalities, respectively.

The state policy regarding the indigenous peoples of Siberia is reflected in the main documents of international organizations and the Russian Federation. The creation of the written language for the majority of languages of small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation is an indisputable achievement of the state language policy of the 20s-30s of the 20th century. The appearance of a written form of the previously unwritten languages has contributed to the fact that the Soviet Union began to publish educational and fiction literature in the languages of the indigenous small-numbered peoples. In 2012, it was 80 years since the first books in such regional languages were published. This resulted in the active involvement of the cultures of small ethnic groups of Russia into the broad processes of intercultural exchange and communication and made significant objects of these cultures available for representatives of 'foreign' cultures. In turn, the bearers of the indigenous cultures and languages were given the opportunity to re-evaluate and reflect on their cultural heritage in the global cultural context. An important place among the significant cultural objects of indigenous peoples belongs to mythological and folklore texts traditionally bearing a unique cultural code, which for ethnic groups are early forms of understanding the reality and retain high functionality in the modern cultural space of ethnic regions. Heroic stories (that first appeared in an oral form), which have mythological and folklore basis and reflect the past of the nations ('absolute' and collective past), form a peculiar type of literature, the epic. The existence of epic texts in their 'native' cultures and their involvement in intercultural and, accordingly, inter-literary exchange can be defined as one of the effective strategies of ethnic preservation. Epic works of the peoples of the world are traditionally popular objects of study (Jakobson, 1966; Konstan & Raaflaub, 2010; Lovatt, 2013). A significant expansion of geography and an increase in the intensity of the dialogue between cultures in the modern multicultural world has contributed to the involvement of the languages and cultures of small-numbered indigenous peoples of Russia in this dialogue. This circumstance necessitated the appeal to the epic heritage from the standpoint of theory and practice of translation, which has become especially evident in the 21st century (Bandia, 2011; George, 2003; Nakhodkina, 2014; Petrova, 2010; Raine, 2014; Tymoczko, 1995).

Materials and Methods

The comparative and descriptive methods were used to obtain reliable results. The selected original text of olonkho *Nurgun Botur the Swift* by Platon Oyunsky and the related interlingual and intersemiotic translations were used as the present research material. The results of the conducted comparative and descriptive analyses were described. In order to understand the similarities and differences found in the secondary texts of various nature derived from the Oyunsky's Yakut original version and to determine the

units of translation the method of interpretation was extensively applied. The present study is theoretically and methodologically based on the works devoted to the general issues of language and culture of epic texts (Victor Zhirmunsky, Dmitry Likhachev), and the works dealing with peculiarities of the texts of the Yakut olonkho (Anatoly Burtsev, Innokentiy Pukhov), as well as the problems of translation of epic texts (Alina Nakhodkina, Tamara Petrova). The selection of the cultural information and the memory as the basic units of epic texts' translation is based on the classic works on the cultural memory (Jan Assmann, Maurice Halbwachs, Carl Jung).

Olonkho – the Heroic Epic of the Yakuts

The national epic tradition, undoubtedly, is an integral part of the spiritual and artistic culture of the narrating people. The Karelian-Finnish Kalevala, the Kalmyk Djangar, the Bashkir Ural-Batyr, the Buryat Geser, and the Yakut heroic epic olonkho traditionally belong to the group of the most well-known and large-scale epics of multicultural Russia. The uniqueness of olonkho is noted in the studies devoted to the research of various aspects of its existence (Ivanov, 2014). The oldest Yakut epic rightly occupies one of the leading positions in the hierarchy of the epic works of the peoples of the world considered the world's cultural heritage (*Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, *Gilgamesh*, *Manas*). The high cultural status of the Yakut epic art is evidenced by the fact that olonkho is often defined as the Yakut *Odyssey* or the Northern *Iliad*. In 2005, the oldest epic tradition of olonkho was recognized by UNESCO as one of the masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of mankind.

Olonkho widely represents the history, ethnogenesis, mythology, life, customs, rituals, religion and traditional beliefs of the Sakha people, half-a-million Turkic-speaking ethnos of modern Siberia. Olonkho contains a unique cultural code that allows one to securely record, store, and also transmit the cultural information and the Yakut memory to other cultures. In epic studies, epic works are traditionally considered as repositories of cultural information and memory of the peoples of the world with epic traditions. The epic texts describe an idealized epic time, the 'absolute' past. Likhachev (1979) argues that the epic time is perceived as the ideal old times, the era of 'forever'.

An important place in the continuum of cultural information of the epic belongs to cultural memory. Defining cultural memory as a form of collective memory, the German cultural expert Assmann (1992) interprets this phenomenon through the concept of the "remembering culture" (compare Lotman's "memory of culture and culture of memory" or Jung's "generic memory of the humanity"), understood as a collective, group memory, generating a collective identity and having a pronounced supra-individual character. The definition of cultural memory proposed by Assmann for Ancient Egypt is fully applicable to the cultural memory of the Yakut olonkho. "For the ancient man, olonkho was a universal information system that absorbed all the knowledge accumulated by the humanity. Moreover, the latter was stored in the text in a repeatedly recoded form, resulting in olonkho, which appears to us as a naive (pre-scientific) picture of the world ..." (Burtsev, 2013, p.215). It can be argued that olonkho contains joint (collective) emotional experiences of the Yakuts, which have retained their sharpness to the present day. The olonkho tradition is unique in the fact that its thousand-year history, stable popularity among the narrating nation and high cultural significance have contributed to preserving the ability of the Yakut people to successfully decode information from epic texts to the present day. The high degree of repeatability of the plots and images of the characters in the information space of olonkho texts allows modern readers to perceive and decode the complex meaning of the epic. The high polytextuality of the oldest epic tradition of olonkho is accompanied by the interpenetration of individual legends, the regular repetition of themes and subjects, the similarity of the compositional structure, and the common character (hero, beauty, blacksmith, deity, demon) and the similarity of their characteristics. Appealing to the Yakut legends in a historical perspective allowed scientists to come to the important conclusion that

the Yakuts recorded historical episodes of the past in their epic with the accuracy that in many respects exceeded the accuracy of the surviving written artifacts. The researchers of the Yakut history and culture believe that the folk memory keeps the most valuable information about real historical events in the oral traditions and, therefore, through a careful comparative analysis of the records of oral legends, one can restore the history of the Yakut people (Ksenofontov, 1977). A striking example of the historical reliability of Olonkho is the fact that the Yakut philologist and writer Platon Oyunsky referred to the texts of olonkho and, above all, the toponyms presented in them to study the pre-Russian time in the history of the Yakut people, which ultimately enabled him to conclude the likely ancestral homeland of the Yakuts (Antonov, 2013). The researchers of the scientific heritage of Oyunsky say, “unlike his predecessors, P.A. Oyunsky approached olonkho not only as an artifact of oral-poetic creativity, but also as a valuable historical source reflecting the history of the people’s life, its material and spiritual culture in the distant past” (Illarionov & Orosina, 2013, p.17). The first olonkho researcher of Yakutia believed that olonkho contributed to preservation and traditional transfer of information not only about the Yakut worldview, but also the oral history of the people and ideas about the world, life, customs, rites, beliefs of the people (Sidorov, 2017). “P.A. Oyunsky back in the 20s came close to the modern understanding of the significance of the heroic epic as peculiar in character, remarkable in its historical and ethnographic source, and caught the direction of the tasks of studying olonkho and the practical use of its material in scientific research” (Konstantinov, 1974). “Olonkho reflects the most ancient layer of patriarchal-clan relations, that is the ‘epic time’ of the historical life of the Yakuts” (Burtsev, 2013, p.204). Thus, it can be stated that the texts of olonkho are a collective fund of the Yakut memories of their history, presented in the form of idealized retrospective reflection and serving as a reliable repository of cultural information and memory of the people.

Having started in the remote antiquity, the information space of olonkho can be measured both synchronically and diachronically. It is formed by numerous texts that had been created during the many centuries of the Yakut ancient epic existence. In 2000 it was 1250 years since olonkho epic creation. The peculiar feature of olonkho is, first of all, its aesthetic multi-levelness, which is due to the indivisibility of poetry and music. This feature corresponds to the syncretic form of culture, which appeared at the intersection of mythological and real perception of the world (Illarionov, 2016). The main functions of the olonkho texts are strong aesthetic impression on the listeners (and after appearance of the written form, readers), education of the future generations and, beyond any dispute, preservation and transfer of the cultural memory of the Yakut people from one generation to another. After its existence in oral form for many centuries, olonkho got its written form two hundred years ago. Thus, the creation of the Yakut written language and the targeted activity of philologists, ethnographers and culture researchers allowed recording the texts of olonkho in the written form. This happened at the turn of 19th-20th centuries.

Olonkho by Oyunsky: Continuation of the Original Text’s ‘Life’ in Translations

The first case of creating full-text written olonkho is associated with the name of Platon Oyunsky, the narrator of olonkho, who later became a famous epic researcher, a writer and a founder of the modern Yakut literature. It is especially important that Oyunsky was not only the expert, but also the bearer of the Yakut folklore. One of the most popular artefacts of the Yakut epic work is olonkho *Djuluruiair Nurgun Bootur (Nurgun Botur the Swift)*, a version of which was recreated and written down by Oyunsky in 20s-30s of the 20th century. Without any hesitation this epic can be considered a ‘strong’ text of the Yakut culture, as it certainly possesses all basic features of the fiction text mentioned by N.A. Kuzmina (2009), i.e. it is well-known and popular among most Yakut native speakers, it is included in the educational standard at various levels, and it is broadly translated into the ‘languages’ of other semiotic systems. Popularity of this epic is strongly supported by the fact that it is traditionally determined as the

“encyclopedia of the Sakha people” and is the symbol of self-identity of the Sakha (Sidorov, 2018). Along with other Yakut epic stories, olonkho by Oyunsky is included into educational programs of educational institutions within the framework of the State target program on preservation, study and dissemination of the Yakut heroic epic olonkho in 2007-2015. In 2014, the Head of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) declared the period from 2016 until 2025 the second decade of olonkho in the Sakha Republic. The epic work by Oyunsky totally corresponds to the requirements to the cognitive and educational role of the epic as determined by Zhirmunsky (1974, p.195): “... the epic is a living past of the nations in the scale of heroic idealization. Therefore, it has scientific historical value and at the same time, outstanding social, cultural and educative significance”.

The possibility to create written texts in the Yakut language, the high cultural significance and, accordingly, the aesthetic value of legends, as well as the entire cultural and historical context of the olonkho existence, resulted in the involvement of the Yakut epic in the active translation process. The translation language was primarily Russian, and later many languages of the world (Nikolaeva, 2016).

The first written epic texts and translations of olonkho into Russian were completed by ethnographers during scientific expeditions in Yakutia in the 19th century (Alexander Middendorff, Richard Maak). An invaluable contribution to the study of the Yakut folklore, as well as to the appearance of the first translations of Olonkho was made by political exiles and Yakut scholars, Ivan Khudyakov, Sergey Yastremsky, Nikolay Gorokhov (Illarionov, 2014). The creation of Russian-language texts of olonkho ensured a reliable basis for a successful dialogue between the Yakut and the Russian cultures in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), which we witness in the 21st century. The fact that the translation of the Yakut folk art is considered one of the five main areas of translation activity in Yakutia (Efremova, Varlamova, Rozhina & Feoktistov, 2018) convincingly proves the great importance of translating the epic texts for research and promotion of the Yakut culture in Russia and beyond its borders.

One of the popular translation objects is the text by Platon Oyunsky, *Nurgun Botur the Swift*. The first full-text translation of Oyunsky’s olonkho into Russian was completed by Vladimir Derzhavin, the translator of famous national epic texts of the USSR peoples. This translation was first published by the Yakut publishing house in 1975. At the Moscow International Book Fair this Russian translation was awarded with the special diploma “Book-1975” and the translator received the State Award of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) named after Platon Oyunsky. According to Sleptsova-Kuorsunnaakh (2007), the text by Oyunsky was chosen for translation into Russian as the most complete and traditional version of olonkho. The edition of the translation by Derzhavin contains illustrations by Elley Sivtsev, Vladimir Karamzin and Innokentiy Koryakin. The famous epic researcher Pukhov (1975, p.422) noted that Derzhavin “accurately and reasonably transfers the spirit and image system of olonkho and its plots. Preserving the style of the original text, he creates a parallel system, which gives new coloring to the poetic system of olonkho”. The high quality of Derzhavin’s translation allows this secondary text to actively participate in cultural processes even 40 years after its creation.

In 2012, Egor Sidorov offered a new version of translation of Oyunsky’s olonkho into Russian with scientific notes included therein. “It took the genius of P. Oyunsky to leave to the Yakut people such a creation of the spirit as olonkho *Nurgun Botur the Swift*. It took the knowledge and talent of E. S. Sidorov to make such a complete, equivalent to the original translation of this olonkho. In the translation by E. Sidorov, olonkho appears in all its ancient wisdom and beauty” (Illarionov & Utkin, 2011). The scientific value of Sidorov’s translation was highly evaluated by scholars: “His work may, first of all, become the basis for the promotion of olonkho in the wide scientific field, giving the Yakut researchers an opportunity to carry out comparative and typological analysis with the epic texts of other peoples, and the researchers of other peoples, mainly Turko-Mongol, vice versa, to compare their epic with our olonkho” (Illarionov & Orosina, 2013, p.19). Egor Sidorov considered his translation mission to transfer the main contents of

olonkho in full, as well as to help the Russian reader to understand the complicated linguistic structure of the alien cultural epic text.

The first translation of olonkho *Nurgun Botur Swift* in the version of P.A. Oyunsky into English was a mediocre line-by-line translation of the Russian translation by Vladimir Derzhavin. The translation was dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Platon Oyunsky and it was completed by three groups of translators in 1992-1995. The first song was translated by Albina Scryabina (published in 1993) and Ruslan Skrybykin (published in 1995).

The first full translation of Oyunsky's olonkho into the English language was done in the 21st century and contains 600 pages. A group of Yakut and international translators and editors under the supervision of Alina Nakhodkina, the Associate Professor at Northeastern Federal University, translated the epic into English. This has certainly contributed to the inclusion of the Yakut pic into the world epic space. It took 10 years to complete the translation of the 36 thousand lines of the Yakut original text. The translation was published in London in 2014 by Renaissance Books and was titled *Olonkho: Nurgun Botur the Swift*. The special value of this work is that the translation was performed from the original text.

The text by Oyunsky is presented in the world cultural space also in the translations into other foreign languages. Thus, the Russian translation by Derzhavin became the basis of the translation of olonkho into the Slovak language (translator Miloš Krno). This translation was published in 1984 with the illustrations by Miroslav Kipar. There was a project of translating olonkho *Nurgun Botur the Swift* into Kyrgyz, the language of the legendary epic *Manas*. The Kyrgyz translation was also performed on the basis of the Russian translation by Derzhavin and was published in 2014. Olonkho by Oyunsky was also translated in the Evenki language by the Evenki poet Krivoshapkin-Nyimkalan. It was published by Bichik publishing house in parts in 1996, 2000 and 2003. It is noteworthy that the translation of the Yakut olonkho into the Evenki language was extremely significant not only for prolonging the life of the Yakut epic by means of another verbal semiotic system, but also for the demonstration of the art potential of the translation language and culture. Olonkho by Oyunsky was also translated and abridged into the French language. The French version was created for children by Jankel Karro and Lina Sabaraikina.

The main task of a translator of an epic text is to preserve in the secondary texts the cultural information and the memory, which are presented in the original by the system of culturonyms (according to Viktor Kabakchi). These cultural units reflect realia, symbols and customs of the narrating people. In this case cultural information and memory and culturonyms can be determined as the translation units, in relation to which the translator decides upon the translation. The language of the olonkho texts is a complex aesthetic and cultural system based on the close interpenetration and interdependence of the lexical and semantic originality of the epic language, cultural information and memory, as well as the whole complex of artistic and visual means of the epic discourse. Liya Robbek (2009) notes that the system of artistic and visual means of the Yakut epic is based on such fundamental regularities of the ethnic language as synharmonism and agglutination, semantic breadth of poetic words, reconsideration of connotative possibilities of the word.

Translations of Oyunsky's olonkho into foreign languages have repeatedly become the objects of special studies, within which various culturonyms and, above all, proper names were analyzed (Vasilyeva, 2017; Vinokurov, 2008; Tarasova, 2013). The accumulated experience of translating olonkho allows Yakut translators and translation theorists to determine the type of translation used as a semantic translation, which to a large extent approaches the philological translation as understood by Sergey Goncharenko (1999). Tamara Kazakova (2001) believes that the semantic translation is focused on the text of the original and, as a rule, is used in translation of literary monuments and texts of high artistic value for academic publications. The Yakut translation scholars Nakhodkina (2006) and Petrova (2010) agree that

such a translation contribute to the precise preservation of the national originality of the Yakut epic in the secondary texts. With the help of the semantic translation, modern translations of olonkho are being created and edited, which makes it possible to preserve cultural information and the memory of the original and consider the texts of the olonkho translation as a reliable source of cultural information.

The types of translations mentioned above demonstrate two main strategies, two approaches to making a translation decision with various options for obtaining an adequate translation. They are foreignization and domestication (according to Lawrence Venuti). Nevertheless, it should be noted that for the purposes of olonkho popularization the adaptive translation is also used, as well as cultural interpretation, which is frequently accompanied by the creation of a parallel visual text. Thus, the creolized comic polytext reflects the complicated information complex of the original text of olonkho in all its diversity, which contributes to the popularization and enhancement of the prestige of the Yakut language and literature. The most famous olonkho legends translated into the languages of the world, have become the property of the world culture and turned out to be accessible to representatives of 'foreign' cultures. In this case, one cannot but agree with Vladimir Khairullin (1995) that the expansion of the national literature beyond 'its own' linguistic and cultural environment through translation promotes cultural interaction, which ensures global cultural diversity of the modern world. The materials of the olonkho translation can be also used for the development of the general theory of literary translation in the study of such 'eternal' theoretical questions as translatability and non-translatability, the nature of the translation unit, the strategy of transmission of cultural information in translation.

The preservation of the cultural potential of olonkho in translation is achieved by solving individual tasks (*ad hoc* and *ad libitum* tasks) to recreate in secondary texts the cultural information and the memory that are hyper units of translation and are formally represented in the culturonyms of the original (translation hypo units). Each specific task involves the use of an effective translation strategy or a combination of several strategies that can provide a solution to translation challenges and ensure the adequacy of the translation (Dyachkovskaya, 2016).

The historiography of translations of the author's legend *Nurgun Botur the Swift* into the 'languages' of various semiotic systems is especially significant: monomedia non-verbal or polymedia. Describing the polymedia non-verbal cultural space, researchers of intersemiotic translation inevitably encounter challenges that are also traditional for the subject area of interlanguage translation, and above all, they face the problems of determining the unit of intersemiotic translation of the original verbal text and the limit of its translatability. Thus, in 1954, the legend was performed in the original language by the honored artist of the Yakut ASSR Gavril Kolesov. In 1968, a set of 9 records (duration of 8 hours) of Oyunsky's olonkho was recorded by the All-Union firm "Melody" in Leningrad, where Kolesov performed speech and singing sections of the epic. Thus, the legend was 'returned' to its original oral form. The records were accompanied by the texts of abstracts and scientific commentaries by the scholar Innokentiy Pukhov and illustrations by the artist Valerian Vasilyev.

The sustainability of the plots and characters of olonkho have found their reflection in modern art as well. The transfer of olonkho into the language of art and graphics has resulted in illustrations of books and as an individual visual sequence (art series). The art heritage of Timofey Stepanov is especially popular. He created a cycle of large-scale paintings related to the Yakut epic. Stepanov is rightly called "the olonkho teller in art". Though the artist was guided by the whole epic tradition in his works, his paintings can be considered 'the translation' of olonkho by Oyunsky into the 'art language'. Thus, the image of the beauty Tuyaryma Kuo is visualized in the works by Koryakin, Karamzin and Votyakov. The depiction of the olonkho characters is especially important for teaching epic and its characters to the children of various ages.

In a certain sense, the secondary text of the considered 'strong' text of the Yakut culture is the drama *Tuyaryma Kuo*, which Platon Oyunsky wrote in 1930 basing on olonkho *Nurgun Botur the Swift*. It was staged on the stage of the Yakut National Theater in 1937. The main character of the drama was Tuyaryma Kuo, whose image is also presented in the legend *Nurgun Botur the Swift*. She is a symbol of female beauty and femininity among the Yakuts. The name of the character was chosen as the name of the drama, which has appeared to be long-living. Thus, in 2015, the Chinese version of *Tuyaryma Kuo* was presented to the audience in the national Kunqu opera in Beijing (Vinokurov, 2015).

Another example of the secondary polymedia text of Oyunsky's olonkho is the prose version of Elena Sleptsova-Kuorsunnaakh published in 2007. This version in the Yakut language consists of 201 stories and 60 illustrations by the artist Pestryakov. In a sense, this version is the result of a combination of intersemiotic and intralanguage translations of the original.

There is a cartoon based on olonkho by Oyunsky and voiced in English and German. The author's version of olonkho is also 'transferred' into the first puppet cartoon of Yakutia (*Tunalgannaakh nuurdakh Tuyaryma Kuo*). Sculptural miniatures (made of wood and bone) created after the plot of olonkho are very popular. Thus, the plot of Oyunsky's olonkho is represented in the wood works of the folk master of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) Vasiliy Spiridonov.

Secondary non-verbal monomedia and polymedia texts continue the 'life' of the verbal original in the multidimensional cultural space of the world. In this case, the success of secondary texts also depends on the accuracy of recreating cultural memory in them, which is the hyper unit of translation. In the original it is presented mostly by culturonyms (Razumovskaya, 2012; 2014). Intersemiotic translation increases the translatability of the 'strong' cultural text and, along with interlanguage translation, facilitates the involvement of the texts of the Yakut epic heritage in the intensive process of intercultural interaction and interinfluence.

Conclusion

The analysis of the main 'life events' of olonkho *Nurgun Botur the Swift* by Platon Oyunsky, which happened to the original from the moment of its completion by the author in 1932, leads to determining this text as a 'strong' text of the Yakut culture. The original of the legend and its secondary texts of various semiotic nature have been forming the center of the translation attraction during several decades, thus providing the 'preservation' of the epic original in its 'native' and 'foreign' cultural spaces. The existing verbal and non-verbal interpretations of the 'strong' monolingual artistic original form a syncretic polylingual and polymedia 'polytext', which has a heterogeneous nature and is a unique semiotic object. The verbal original is regularly interpreted by means of various languages of the world. It is also visualized by means of theater and cinema, art, graphics and sculpture, which results in the increase of translations' amount and, correspondingly, leads to the 'prolongation of life' of the original. Cultural information and memory are methodologically considered as regular and universal units of intralanguage, interlanguage and intersemiotic types of translation of olonkho (in terms of Roman Jakobson). The success of these translations depends on the fullness and accuracy of recreating the cultural potential of the original in the secondary texts.

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