

UDC: 821.511.157.09-13:398

■ ON THE WRITINGS IN YAKUT OLONKHO HEROIC EPIC

MARINA GOGOLEVA¹**RUSLAN ANISIMOV²**

Research Institute of Olonkho,
M. K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University,
Yakutsk, Russian Federation

Rad je usredsređen na delove jakutskih herojskih epova koji se nazivaju olonko. Autori prepoznaju i analiziraju tipične primere regionalnih olonko epova. U radu se tvrdi da su u jakutskim epovima iz olonko mitologije očuvani tragovi pisma drevnih turkijskih plemena.

Ključne reči: olonko, epska sfera, likovi, drevni tragovi, kameni stupovi, „nebeska arhiva”.

1. INTRODUCTION

Yakut olonkho heroic epics are a gold mine of information about epic poetry, the development of epic style forms, and the dependence of this development on the conditions of life.

Integrating the data from different sciences as consistent with the contemporary methodology does not depreciate the significance of V. Y. Propp's cornerstone provision formulated by him in studying the reflections of reality in folklore texts. The distinguished folklorist emphasized that “inductive method is the only method which can be used in folklore studies, i.e. the researcher must proceed from studying the material to conclusions” (Propp 1976: 128). Accumulating the facts from the extensive materials of olonkho gives us an opportunity to see the ethnographic data contained in olonkho in a new perspective, especially the data which repeatedly occurs in epic texts in different variations. What especially draws attention are references to inscriptions and ancient writings, which are considered to be later developments by modern scholars. This is possible if we are speaking about a living epic tradition. However, no supporting evidence exists and there is no counter evidence either.

1 Kontakt podaci (Email): mtgogoleva@mail.ru

2 Kontakt podaci (Email): teployakutia@mail.ru

K. V. Chistov believed that folklore studies belong to the field of philological and ethnographic sciences alike: "it is essential to fully realize this distinctive feature of folklore studies" (Chistov 1986: 7). In other words, folklore texts should be interpreted only within the framework of ethnic history and culture. At present, such topics as the peculiarities of the reflection of reality in different epic traditions, the transformation of the epic style elements throughout the existence of different genres is very relevant in folklore studies.

2. THE MOTIVE OF THE PREDETERMINED FATE OF A HERO-WARRIOR IN THE WRITINGS

According to epic traditions, the feats of a hero and the marriage with his betrothed are predetermined long before his birth, and are fixed in writing on an octagonal column of the heaven archive. This obvious analogy with the Ancient Turkic inscriptions on stones (VI-VIII centuries AD) leads to the question: *Is the information about these inscriptions and ancient writings mentioned in olonkho based on some real facts?*

To find the information about the ancient writings we have explored all the olonkho texts that are currently known. 17 of them contain 86 examples of references to the writings immortalized on stones and other objects. This number is approximately one-third of all major epics published. As E. M. Meletinsky (Meletinsky 2004: 253) points out, it is noteworthy that the above mentioned writings occur in such archaic epics as olonkho with a certain regularity, especially if we take into account the fact that a writing system appears, as a rule, only in societies whose development level is quite high from the perspective of the state structure. Olonkho mythology sheds light on the assumed era which olonkho writings originate from.

Three olonkho worlds (Upper, Middle and Under-) are inhabited in accordance with a strict hierarchy. The Upper world is occupied by *aiyy* – gods-creators, the Middle World – by people and spirits, and the Underworld is the domain of *abaasy* – evil creatures. Among other inhabitants of the Upper World there are Lord Dzhyлга Khan and Mistress Chyngys Bhys who are, according to ethnographer N. A. Alekseev, much older than some people believe. He draws parallels with real historical persons such as Genghis Khan: "Obviously, the image of this deity was brought from the southern land of Yakut ancestors and then completely forgotten. This is attested to by the fact that the deity's abode was, according to the Yakuts' mythology, marked with writings all over; hence the deity is associated with a time period when the ancestors of the Yakuts had a writing system or, at least, had a contact with people who had a writing system" (Alekseev 2008: 100). According to V. M. Ionov, Lord Dzhyлга Khan and his wife Mistress Chyngys Bhys lived in the north-western sky, which was covered with inscriptions and patterns (Alekseev 2008: 99). Consequently, it is likely that the images of gods originated from the times when recollections about rulers were still alive. Let us proceed to specific texts.

The example of the Column Mountain with inscriptions on it is very expressive:

Thanks to its artistic features and the depth of ideas expressed in it, a wonderful olonkho "Kuruubay Khaannaakh Kulun Kullustuur" ("Obstinate Kulun Kullustuur") by I. G. Teploukhov-Timofeev has gone through several editions, and is considered to be

one of the best examples of the Yakut epic genre. The text of this olonkho was written at the beginning of the 20th century in one of the central regions of Yakutia. From V. N. Vasilyev's preface to the first edition of the text of olonkho "Obstinate Kulun Kullustuur" it can be concluded that this work was a planned task of the Academy of Sciences: "The tales included in this volume were written down by me in winter, 1906, from hearsay of storytellers from different lineages in the village of Amginsky, Yakut area, where I was sent to by the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Imperial Academy of Sciences to gather an ethnographic collection" (Koer Buuray 2000: 61). Speaking about an olonkhosut's skills, the author quotes the storyteller's words: "He taught me (Tekelle-author's remark – G. M.) about forty olonkhos, taught me his skills, and I became an olonkhosut myself" (Kuruubay Khaannaah Kulun Kullustuur 1985: 603). Hence it follows that I. G. Teploukhov-Timofeev's olonkho corresponds to the canons of the traditional Yakut epic and has an ancient epic basis³.

Добун халлаан үнүоргү өттүгэр,
Кыырмаҕы сыһыарбатах
Кылбаҕыр халлаан анараа өттүгэр,
Андагардаах араҕас халлаан
Анараа кырыытыгар суруктаах Остоолбо
Хайа
Үнүоргү өттүгэр олохтоох дьон,
Халлаан гиэнэ алта атыыр
Дьылга суруксуттара
Халлаан аркыабатын арыян көрбүттэр...
(Teploukhov-Timofeev 1985: 64)

On the other side of the clear sky,
Which does not hold hailstones,
Which does not even hold light snow grains
On the outer edge
Of the bespelled yellow sky,
On the opposite side of *the Column*
Mountain
The Column Mountain with writings,
Those scribes of powerful Doom
Opened the heaven archive,
And, having looked into it, they said ...

Бу арыян көрөн бараннар
Чынырыыр хаантан дьылжалаах,
Мөнүрүүр хаантан төлкөлөөх,
Орулуур Одун хаантан оһоһуулаах
Туһааннаах хотун ойобо диэбиттэр
Күн Толомон Ньургустайы.
Бу атабынан оонньуур Айдаар кугас аты
«Анабыллаах ата» диэн суруйбуттар
Атыыр дьылга суруксуттара.
(Teploukhov-Timofeev 1985: 64)

About Kyun Tolomon Nyurgustay:
"Chyngyryyr Khaan's faith is predetermined,
By Mengyuryuyur Khaan her faith is sealed,
To Oruluur Audun Khaan she is destined,
She will become his wife. "
And about that unbridled red horse
Which tittups and clatters about,
The scribes of Powerful Doom wrote:
"This horse will be his to possess."

It is noteworthy that one can trace the reflection of the realities of another historical epoch through the example of the same olonkho. For instance, there are many new notions related to everyday life such as "bond" or "written undertaking" in olonkho texts.

3 Hereinafter, italic highlights are made by the author – G. M.

Тыыннаахпар, эһиги сибииргитигэр таһаарбакка,
Илиибиттэн ииминэй баппыыската ылын,
Хааннаах хабалата суруйан биэрин.
(Teploukhov-Timofeev 1985: 76)

A bond is now upon me,
For I have signed the contract with blood from my little finger.
As long as I live, I will not allow him to reach your land.

So, one and the same epic contains recollections of the ancient writings on stones, and notions (such as "bond", "contract", "written undertaking" and other notions related to business correspondence) which came into common use only during the last two centuries. The second case demonstrates how writing system is used in everyday life. And here is an excerpt from P. A. Oiunsky's olonkho "Nyurgun Bootur, the Swift". V. Derzhavin's translation is more authentic to the initial, more mythological variant:

Равные властью судьбе –
Владыками трех миров
На вечные времена
Избраны были – Одун Биис,
Чынгыс Хаан
И Дьылга Тойон,
А писарем был приставлен к ним
Чудовищный великан –
Длинный Дьурантай, -
...
Великой будет его судьба,
Счастливой будет долгая жизнь!
Так волю свою изъявили мы.
Это наша воля
Давным-давно
На каменном восьмигранном столбе
Письменами запечатлена,
Там записана кровью она.
(Oiunsky 1975: 60)

They are equal to the power of fate -
Audun Bees,
Chyngys Khaan
And Dylga Toyon
Were forever chosen
To be the lords of the three worlds
And a monstrous giant
Named Long Djurantay
Was made their scrivener-

.....
Great shall be his fate,
And happy shall be his long life!
That was the expression of our will.
That is our will
Once upon a time
That will was inscribed,
Written in blood
On a stone octagonal column

3. ON THE FORMS OF ANCIENT WRITING SYSTEM IN OLONKHO

The text, which describes the stone columns and mountains with writings, is also found in the olonkho "Yuryung Yuedyuyen" written down by A. S. Poryadin:

Онно кини
Собуруу халлаан анныгар
Суруктаах суорба хайа
Төбөтүн оройугар
Дуйулаан олорор
Тобус ойуун төрдө буолбут
Өнөх Кыырдай ойуун диэн
Таайдаах буолуохтаах,
Онно баран хорбойуоба.
(Poryadin 2013: 262)

Over there
Under the southern welkin,
At the top of the
Rock with inscriptions,
His uncle lives
Whose name is Osokh Kyyrday,
And who is the progenitor of the nine
shamans
This shall be the place of his hiding.

The recurrence of this motif in olonkho leads us to the assumption that the Yakut ancestors had their own system of writing at a certain time period of their historical development. The Yakut folklore has a legend according to which the progenitors of the Yakuts dropped a tablet with writings into the water during their journey down the river to the north side, and this led to their loss of the written language. According to the opinion of researchers, the story about the lost tablet is an artistic representation of real historical facts when writing system was actually lost due to the harsh conditions in which struggle for survival came to the fore. This version is confirmed to some extent by the fact that some artifacts containing Turkic writings were discovered within the Lena River basin. A very interesting fact regarding the work of the Kultobinsk expedition which has been exploring the artifact of the Arys archaeological culture (2nd century BC-4th century AD) for a number of years under the supervision of Professor A. Podushkin is provided in the article "Arys tablets speak" by P. Zolin (2006: 12). Thanks to these archeological diggings, the world has found out about the existence of ancient writings outwardly similar to the runic scripts. According to Zolin's version, "a local center of ancient writings was situated on the territory of South Kazakhstan region", and "the shape and material of those tablets suggest that the center was, in fact, the State Archive of some unknown governor". Further the author states: "The first examples of this writing system are two clay fired brick-tablets with texts inscribed on them. The bricks were discovered in 1991... Today the scientists have 8 fragments at their disposal; two of those fragments are on full bricks containing 29 rows which consist of 250 scripts... They were dated by the use of the artifacts found nearby. According to the dating results, they belong to the period between 1st century BC and 4th century AD, the time of the ancient Kangui state" (Zolin 2006: 12).

Do olonkhos contain any valuable information about the tablets with inscriptions? A passage from the olonkho "Uryung Yuedyuyeen" written down by A. S. Poryadin contains an indirect reference to the tablets:

Ону буоллабына,
 Үрүҥ Аар Тойон
 Таныы бэс курдук
 Арабас дьаптылга
 Аркыыбатын арыян көрөн,
 Туорум бэс курдук
 Тонолуйбат сырдык сокуонун
 Толкуйдаан көрдө:
 (Poryadin 2013: 210)

Uryung Aar toion
 Drew out his Archive,
 Flipped through the pages
As in a bunch of pine sapwood
 And he opened the indestructible set of laws
 Like they were wooden plates
 And fell to thinking ...

Although a reference is made to wooden plates (which are one of the natural materials in the north) in this olonkho, the point that draws our attention here is that the heaven archive has the form of tablets.

The information about the material on which the inscriptions mentioned in the Yakut epic were made is contradictory. Here is an excerpt from the text of olonkho “Myuldzhyu Boeghe” by the famous storyteller D. M. Govorov:

Үтүө дьүүлү
 Кэрдиинэн киэргэппит,
 Туос аранганы
 Толкуйунан арангалаабыт,
 Торго сииги сииктээбит...
 (Govorov 2010: 105)

He decorated his wise decision
With carved writings,
He understood and interpreted
Birchbark layers
And sewn with a silk stitch

Хамсаабат хара таас
 Хайа курдук
 Халын хахха буол диэн,
 Долгуйбат туруук таас хайа курдук
 Суон дурда буол диэн,
 Абыс халлаан аркыыбата
 Былыр маннык этэ диэн
 Албаатым диэтэ,
 Тобус айыы укааһа диэн
 Мин умсуйдум диэтэ...
 (Govorov 2010: 265)

Be a strong barrier
 Like a black stone mountain
 Which cannot be moved,
 Become a strong defender
 Like a high rugged rock
 Which is insuperable –
So it was destined
In the archives of the eight heavens,
 I bless thee
 By the order of the nine sacred aiyy.

Orientalist E. S. Sidorov translated D. M. Govorov's olonkho “Myuldzhyu Boeghe” into Russian. He points out two forms of ancient writings in the preface: inscriptions on stone steles and archives on the birch bark and silk. Below there is the full quote: “An absolutely illiterate Yakut from a far-away one-horse town speaks about ancient steles with inscriptions in his Olonkho. 8th century ancient monuments (stone figures) with runic inscriptions were discovered in the late 19th century, the first broad publications were made by professor S. E. Malov in 1951. D. Govorov could not know about these discoveries. Olonkhos give us evidence proving that the ancestors of Yakuts were familiar with some forms of ancient writings: when addressing the heaven court, the

warriors used to say: “Tuos arangabyn arangalaan, torgo siikpitiin siikten” (make sense of our birchbark layers and follow silk stitches) – this is a direct reference to the ancient archives written on birchbark and silk (torgo). There have been birchbark letters in the northern Eurasia, India and Tibet and silk scrolls in China” (Govorov 2010: 9). As it turned out, this is not the only example in the Yakut folklore tradition. Almost the same thing was said in the aforementioned olonkho by A.S. Poryadin:

Саматтан тус хоту диэки

Чугас аҕай олохтоох

Харыс бытык,

Хаччы сото

Сээккээн Сэһэн,

Лабья Лабысха диэн

Үс сибири

Торго сиигин сииктиир,

Туос арангатын арангалыыр,

Бири биэс уон сала[а]тын

Бичиктээн билэр

(Poryadin 2013: 132)

Two tiny old men

Named Seekkeen Sesen and

Laba Labyskha

Live nearby,

To the very north from here

They stitch silk stitches

And make sense of birchbark layers

For all three worlds,

And they note

Fifty meanings in each layer

In the olonkho by a Namsky storyteller P. P. Yadrikhinsky we can see two versions of the heaven archive:

Сир кулгааҕа аатырбыт,

Халлаан хараҕа буолбут

Сээркээн Сэһэн оҕонньор

Кэскиллээх сэхэнинэн,

Дьүрүс халлаан дьүүлээхтэрэ,

Дьулуо халлаан тойотторо

Сул туос

Суруктарыгар суруйаннар,

Арынга таас

Аркыымаларыгар анньаннар

(Yadrikhinsky 2011: 426)

He is called the ears of the Earth

He is known as the eyes of heaven,

Seerkeen Sesen,

A wise old man,

The Judge of the resounding sky,

Toion of the happy sky,

What he said *was written*

On the birchbark letter,

And noted in the stone archive

In the original text it is written *arynga taas arkyyma* which can be more accurately translated as *an archive made of laminated stone*. As of yet, it is not possible to determine whether stone tablets were meant or it was just an analogy to books.

A common motif of an archive in the form of a book can be found not only in D. M. Govorov's olonkho, but also in many others, and this particular motif can be considered as one of the later elements of the epic narrative tradition.

Юрюнг Аар тойону,
 Окроплящему вселенную
 Белой благодатью.
 Подняли Великий свод
 Небесных законов – Книгу Судеб
 Мировых...
 (Govorov 2010: 298)

A great heaven's code of laws,
 The Book of World Destiny,
 Was taken out
 For Yuryung Aar Toyon
 Who sprinkles the Universe
 With white grace.

There is a single reference to writings on the feathers and claws of birds. In this reference one can see an epic motif of proliferation of the universal law. Here is an example of an olonkho which appeared in the Vilyui region:

Үтүе аата,
 Үрдүк сураба
 Көтөр кынаттаах
 Көхсүгэр суруллубут,
 Сүүрэр атахтаах
 Тынырабар бэчээттэммит....
 Сутуругар сокуоннаах,
 Ытыһыгар ыйаахтаах
 Көр Буурай бухатыыр диэн
 (Koer Buuray 2000: 100)

The hero Koer Buuray
 His good name
 And his valiant feat
 Are written
 On birds' spines,
 And on animals' claws...

4. CONCLUSION

Thus, the analysis of the collected material allows to conclude that frequent occurrence of the information about writings in olonkhos of different regions, and the nature of this information speaks in favor of the version that the given element is quite stable in the olonkhosuts' folklore and cannot be an all-new addition in epic texts.

The identified extracts from olonkho are grouped on the basis of the following features:

1. Form of the heaven archive – stone column.
2. Form of the heaven archive – stone (clay) tablets.
3. Form of the heaven archive – writings on birchbark and silk.
4. Form of the heaven archive – scrolls of paper.
5. Inscriptions on animals.

A diversity of inscriptions and writings makes us put forward a hypothesis that there was a time when the ancestors of Yakut's had a writing system and used it for perpetuating the crucial events and deeds.

REFERENCES

- Alekseev, N. 2008. *Ethnography and folklore of the peoples of Siberia*. Novosibirsk: Nauka.
- Chistov, K. 1986. *Folk traditions and folklore*. Moscow: Nauka.
- Govorov, D. 2010. *Myuldzhyu Boeghe / Myuldzhyu Boeghe the Unbeatable. An olonkho in two books*. The first book, recorded by A. F. Boyarov, compiled by A. N. Zhirkov. Yakutsk: Bichik.
- Koer Buuray. 2000. *Olonkho written in the Yakut language. Written down after from hearsay of olonkhosut N. S. Aleksandrov-Ynta Nikita*. Yakutsk: Bichik.
- Meletinsky, E. 2004. *Origin of heroic epic: Early forms and archaic monuments*. Moscow: Military Books.
- Oiunsky, P. 1975. *Nyurgun Bootur the Swift (Yakut heroic epic olonkho)*, translated by V. Derzhavin. Yakutsk: Yakutsk Book Publishers.
- Poryadin, A. 2013. *Yurung Yuedyuyeen. Olonkho written in the Yakut language*, compiled by M. T. Gogoleva, S. D. Lvova. Yakutsk: NEFU Publishing House.
- Propp, V. 1976. *Folklore and Reality*. Moscow: Nauka.
- Teploukhov-Timofeev, I. G. 1985. *Kuruubay Khaannaah Kulun Kullustuur. Saha olonkhoto / Kulun Kullustuur the Obstinate*. Moscow: Home Edition Oriental Literature.
- Yadrikhinsky, P. 2011. *Dyrybyna Djyrylyatta Kyys bukhatyyr / Dzhyrybyna Dzhyrylyatta the Maiden warrior. Olonkho*. Yakutsk: Saydam.
- Zolin, P. 2006. Arys tablets talk. *Izvestia Kazakhstan*, August № 18.

SUMMARY

ON THE WRITINGS IN YAKUT OLONKHO HEROIC EPIC

The article focuses on the writings mentioned in Yakut olonkho heroic epic. The authors have identified and analyzed typical examples taken from regional types of olonkho. The authors assert that the Yakut olonkho epics have preserved traces of the ancient Turkic tribes' writing system.

KEYWORDS: olonkho, epic sphere, characters, ancient traces, stone columns, "heaven archives".

(Original scientific paper received 28.10.2014;
revised 06.07.2015;
accepted 07.07.2015)