

DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v7i3.1722

Citation: Koryakina, A., & Zhirkova, E. (2018). Stable and Transformed Motives in the Yakut Olonkho (Northern Epic Tradition). *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 7(3), 99-107. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v7i3.1722>

Stable and Transformed Motives in the Yakut Olonkho (Northern Epic Tradition)

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Abstract

In Yakut folklore studies, depending on the territory of existence, there are three traditions of narrative: Central, Viluyok and Northern. In modern science, the phenomenon of stable regional features of the plot motives of the Yakut olonkho is still relevant. The article is based on the comparative-typological study of the Northern olonkho on the material of the legends of the four Northern districts (ulus) in order to identify stable northern regional traditions in motives and establish ways and means for their transformation. The theoretical substantiation of the research is the works of folklorists on the stability of the main plot of the oral tradition (A. Lord), about a single type (with possible internal subdivisions into subtypes) of epic singers of each ethnic tradition (B.N. Putilov), about the originally creative epic beginning (Parry and A. Lord), on the influence of the improvisation of the narrator on the geographical location of folklore (V.M. Zhirmunsky), on the motive as a plot-forming element (B.N. Putilov), on the uniformity of constructing the main constituent element of the works of the oral people creativity V.Ya. Propp), regional and local traditions of the Yakut narrative (V.V. Illarionov, T.V. Illarionova, A.A. Kuzmina, G.S. Popova, G.A. Sosina), the features of the Evenk and Evenki epos (A.A. Burykin), about typical places for the epic of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples of Siberia (E.N. Kuzmina). As a result of the study, stable epic motives of the Northern olonkho are determined, some conclusions of Yakut researchers are expanded on its features, the position about the existence of a stable northern tradition is confirmed, the assumption is suggested of the mutual influence of the traditions of the Northern olonkho and the epic traditions of the Even and Evenki eposes.

Keywords: Northern olonkho, Plot motifs, Local epic traditions, Regional differences, Tales, Yakut folklore.

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Introduction

The Yakut heroic epic develops on the general mythological background, it basically has a single canon of the plot, images, language formulas, typical places. "... All the epic singers of this ethnic tradition were of the same type (with possible internal subdivisions into subtypes), they were characterized by common universals related to the nature of the epic they knew and to the historically established norms of instruction, mastery of tradition, performing ritual, etc." (Putilov, 1975, p.143).

The classical epic fund of the Yakut people, spreading throughout the territory of Yakutia, changed under new territorial conditions, adapting to the specifics of the material and spiritual needs of the indigenous peoples of Yakutia inhabiting this or that territory. Putting forward the idea, the essence of which lies in the fact that "... the cultural phenomena are naturally-landscape-localized" (Popova & Sosina, 2013, p.111), Yakut folklorists study the peculiarities of the regional existence of olonkho. In doing so, they are based on the classification of V.V. Illarionov, compiled on the basis of territorial belonging (Illarionov, 1982). Professor Illarionov singles out three regional epic traditions - Vilyuysk, Central and Northern. The Northern epic tradition exists in the group of districts adjacent to the Kolyma, Indigir, and Yana rivers.

In the history of the northern tale, the names of the olonkho-tellers (olonkosut) M.N. Gorokhov - Muoya (Verkhoyansk district), I.V. Petrov, N.S. Gulyaev, M.A. Sleptsov, P.N. Nazarov, I.V. Okoneshnikov, K.N. Tretyakov, V.E. Laptev (Kolyma district), S.M. Neustoroyev (Bulunsky district), V.V. Atlasov, D.M. Sleptsov, I.V. Cherov, G.I. Cherov, V.S. Shkulev (Momsky district) and others.

The first researchers and collectors of the Northern olonkho were I.A. Khudyakov, V.L. Seroshevsky, S.I. Bolo, N.K. Antonov, P.E. Efremov, P.P. Gabyshev et al. In modern Yakut folklore, the problems of the northern story-telling traditions of the heroic epic are specially studied by V.V. Illarionov, T.V. Illarionova, A.A. Kuzmina, N.A. Dyakonova, V.M. Nikiforov, E.N. Protodiakonova, Z.G. Sysoljatina and others.

V.V. Illarionov in his monograph "Local Traditions of Olonkho-teller: Features of Olonkho Performance" noted a simplified beginning, a brief description of the homeland, the dwelling of the hero, fairy motives, the marriage of the heroes on women-slogans, the frequent werewolves of the characters as characteristic features of the Northern olonkho; the main purpose of the heroes is to become the ancestor of the tribe. Another difference noticed by the researcher: "In the olonkho of the Yana river region, the idea of the meeting place of the heroes of Aiy and Abaasy - the ice hole, in the Srednekolymsk olonkho - the path of the hero of the Aiy and the hero of the Abaasy begins with an ice hole, and this idea becomes a kind of boundary for the beginning of a whole picture of actions, a reference point, being a distinctive manifestation of the epic tradition of the northern olonkho-teller" (Illarionov, 2016, pp.244-248).

A.A. Kuzmina considers as main regional features of northern heroic epic tales comparatively small volume, transformation of a genre of olonkho and fairy tales, low level of ethnic identification of characters of the heroic legend (Kuzmina, 2015).

Apparently, generally, specialists in folklore have considered local features of epic traditions of separately taken districts of the Northern region. Identification of stable features of its territorial existing and development still is one of less developed directions and demands a further research.

From the works of Russian folklorists a lot of cognitive information and ideas gave us research on the Northern epic of A.A. Burykin. As a result of the analysis of the Even and Evenki epic texts, the researcher discovered the absence in them of recognized epic motives, such as the miraculous birth of the hero, the description of clothing, heroic weapons and armor, the matchmaking of the hero or the obtaining of the wife, the rare presence of the description of the zoomorphic helper of the deer hero and (in one case) horse. The conclusion of the researcher is of interest: "For most Even and a large part of the Evenki epic

tales, the type of lonely hero "is characteristic, which is recognized as a bright feature of the archaic epic" (Burykin, 2017).

In carrying out our study of motives, the theoretical basis became the definitions of V.Ya. Propp and B.N. Putilov that the motive is "a typical formula that is a specific means of realizing one of the typical elements of the epic story arsenal" (Putilov, 1975, pp.144-182), in whose diversity there is "a kind of uniformity, an invariant among a variety of options" (Propp, 2003, pp.22-24), as well as the provision: "Constant, stable elements, the number of which is limited and the sequence is the same, form the main constituent parts of the works of oral folk art" (Propp, 2003, pp.22-24).

A comparative analysis of the motifs of the Mom, Srednekolymsk, Verkhoyansk and Oymyakon olonkho will lead to the discovery of universal features characteristic of the northern olonkho and common to certain local traditions.

Methodology

In Yakut epicology today, there are works on the study of the method of comparative analysis of the genetic and typological relationship of olonkho with the epic of Turkic-speaking and Mongol-speaking peoples. In his work "The Origin of the Heroic Epos", E.M. Meletinsky (1963) considered the Yakut olonkho in a comparative perspective with the epic of other Turkic-Mongolian peoples. The scientist found in them a lot in common in motives of heroic matchmaking, struggle with monsters, loneliness of the hero who does not know his parents, the wonderful birth of a hero, etc. In the monograph "Heroic epic of Altai-Sayan peoples and Yakut olonkho" published in 2004. Pukhov compared the subjects and images of the Yakut, Altai, Shor and Khakass tales. Analyzing the Altaic heroic legend "Maadai-Kara" and the Yakut olonkho, the researcher found in them not only similarities, but also their gradual differences conditioned by historical, social, and climatic conditions (Pukhov, 2004, p.292). A.P. Okladnikov, comparing olonkho with the epic of other Turkic and Mongolian peoples of Siberia and Central Asia, found common places in content, in artistic form, in visual means (Okladnikov, 1955, pp.257-277).

Concerning our work, the doctoral thesis work of T.V. Illarionova, in which in a comparative aspect the system of plot-forming motifs and poetic-stylistic means in different-time records of olonkho by V.O. Karataev "Er Sogotokh". Today we can state that comparative studies of the plot motives of the olonkho of the Northern region have not been conducted to establish its features. Within the framework of this article, the motives of olonkho four storytellers of different districts of the Northern region were investigated in order to identify the established Northern regional traditions in motives, establish ways of their transformations: "Khetor Mulgun" by D.M. Sleptsov from the Minsky district, "Mas Batya" by P.N. Nazarov from the Srednekolymsky district, "Duguya Bögö" by M.F. Ammosov from the Oymyakonsky district, "Yuchugey Yudyugyuyen, Kusagan Khojugur" by D.A. Tomskaya - Chaika from the Verkhoyansk district. Comparative analysis is used: 18 basic motives are compared, which make up the common framework of the classic olonkho scenes (the miraculous birth of the hero, the settlement of the heroes of the hero of the Aiyg in the Middle World to protect the people of the tribes of Aiyg³ from the invasions of the Abaasy⁴ tribes, the description of the epic time, the origin of the hero, the appointment of the hero; the appearance of a hero: a description of the clothes of the hero, heroic arms and armor, the description of the homeland, the home of the hero, the description of the sacred tree Aal Luuk Mas, the heroic horse, the motivation for the departure of the hero out of the house; the battle between the hero of Aiyg and Abaasy; miraculous healing heroes, the release captive women; courtship heroic warrior, establishing a peaceful life; the feast

³ The tribe of Aiyg – the inhabitants of the Middle world; the common name of the people and the deities Aiyg

⁴ Abaasy tribe-evil spirits, monsters inhabiting the Lower world.

on the occasion of the victory over the enemy). The main motives, repeated in all four olonkho, are established, becoming traditional motifs in the Northern regional tales. At the same time, the motives that distinguish the olonkho of the Northern region from other regions of existence of the Yakut narrative are revealed.

Analysis of the epic motives of the olonkho of the Northern epic tradition

a) The established motives of the Yakut olonkho

By origin all the main heroes of the four olonkhos are single heroes: the hero Ketor Mulgun does not know where and how he came from. Mas Batya "did not acquire a family, did not even engage in hunting" (Emelyanov, 1980, p.132). Duguy Beogyo - "he lived, not knowing where he came from: he did not know the name of either his mother or his father" (Olonkho, Oyimyakonsky district, 25). Yuchugey Yudyuguyen lives with his brother Kusagan Khojugur, his parents are not mentioned.

According to the *nomination of the heroes*, all fight for the establishment of the family, their appointment is the continuation of the tribe of Aiyy. Ketor Mühlgün fights for the liberation of his wife, creates a family. Mas Batya, in search of his wife, enters into battle with representatives of the Abaasy tribe. DuguyahBögö, having freed the daughter of Mughal Thoyon and Mungha Khatyn from the captivity of the Abaasy, marries her. Yüchugey Yudyuguyen undertakes a campaign to the Upper World to search for and revitalize his wife. They "are dominated by stories about the heroic matchmaking, as a result of which a family center of the ancestors of the Uraanghai Sakha⁵ tribe is being created" (Emelyanov, 198 p.11). According to the classification of N.V. Emelyanov, they all belong to the fifth subgroup of olonkho, in which "the olonkho stories about the ancestors of the Uraanghai Sakha tribe, performing heroic deeds for the sake of the continuation of the family, the prosperity of life in the Middle World" (Emelyanov, 1980, p.9) are described.

The motives for the hero's departure from the house are similar and do not differ from the motives of the archaic olonkho, all the heroes undertake military campaigns to save the women of the Aiyy: the motive for the hero's departure from the house in the olonkho "Khetor Mulgun" by D.M. Sleptsov is kidnapping of Aytalyyn Kuo by the Tungus warrior Arjaman-Jarjaman, in "Mas Batya" by P.N. Nazarov it is the capture of the Aiyy girl by the mythical bird Yoksyokyu (usually depicted as a nine-headed eagle), in "Duguya Bögö" by M.F. Ammosovit is the protection of the daughter of Mughal Toyon and Mungha Khatyn from the unbidden son-in-law-abaasy, in the olonkho "Yuchyugey Yudyuguyen, Kusagan Khojugur" by D.A. Tomskaya – Chaika is the search for an escaped wife.

The motive for the release of a captive woman is present in the texts of the olonkho "Khetor Mulgun", "Mas Batya" and "Duguya Bögö". Ketor Mulgun starts in pursuit of Arjaman-Jarjaman, who kidnapped his wife. Between them, a long warriors battle begins, during which both begin to exhaust forces. But unexpectedly appears a hero of Aiyy, who turns out to be the son of Aytalyyn Kuo and Ketor Mulgun. He rescues his father and mother, killing the hero Arjaman-Jarjaman. In "Mas Batya" the Aiyy girl is at the very top of the tree, in the nest of the nine-headed bird of Yoksyoku. The hero rescues her by cutting down the tree with his only weapon - a wooden palm tree. The hero of "Duguyya Bögö", in order to free the Aiyy girl, is fighting with the hero of the Abaasy, who wanted to marry her by force, and with his sister, the Abaasy-girl. In olonkho about Yuchugey Yudyuguyen and his brother, this motive is absent. Yuchegei Yudyuguyen, on the contrary, holds the Siberian Crane by his own power, hiding her feathers so that it does not fly away.

The oldest motives of the heroic matchmaking of the hero and protection of the women of the Aiyy from the heroes of the Abaasy in the northern olonkho are preserved, and they form the main plot of the northern olonkho. In this case, each olonkho-teller in its own colorfully conveys the motive of the heroic

⁵ Uraanghai Sakha is the self-name of the Sakha (Yakut) people.

matchmaking of the hero. According to Saerken Sasen's prediction, Ketor Mulgun should marry a luminous, with eight-pointed oblique Aitalyyn Kuo and become the ancestor of three Sakha (Yakut) tribes. Ketor Mulgun in the guise of Soruk Bollur, having entered confidence and seizing the moment, kidnaps Aitalyyn Kuo and marries her. In Olonkho "Mas Batya" the hero once hears in a dream the song of a woman calling him to her. She is a shaman-hoodwinker Uruku Surouku, who steals the only weapon of the hero - a wooden palm tree. Mas Batya is looking for a girl and marrying her. In the Olonkho "Duguya Bögo" the battle of the hero of the Aiyy with the hero of the Abaasy ends in the fact that both heroes fall into a pit of 22 fathoms deep, freeze and become moldy. Here there is a motive of self-sacrifice for the sake of saving Aiyy girl. In the olonkho "Yuchugey Yudyuguyen, Kusagan Khojugur", the elder brother cunningly catches the Siberian Crane, plucks all her feathers, hides them and marries her.

In all four epics there is a miraculous healing of the hero, which is characteristic of the Yakut olonkho. In the olonkho "Khetor Mühlgün" the hero is healed with the help of the sacred milk received from his mother Kyung Kyubei. In "Mas Batya" with the help of celestial ramrots enliven the son of the protagonist, the future warrior Kun Erel. In "Duguyya Bögo", the horse transmits the "revitalizing moisture" to the hero. In olonkho "Yuchugey Yudyuguyen" miraculously healed not the hero, but his escaped wife.

In the texts considered, the heroes of the Aiyy, like all the heroes of the olonkho, establish a peaceful life. Olonkho "Ketor Mulgun", "Mas Batya" and "Yuchugey Yudyuguyen, Kusagan Khojugur" end with a happy ending: the heroes with brides return safely home, they start a happy life in peace and prosperity. Only "Duguya Bögo" olonkho breaks off unexpectedly: the warriors, exhausted after the bout, fall firmly into the pit.

On the basis of a comparative analysis of Moma, Srednekolymskiy, Oymyakon, Verkhoyansk districts olonkho we can see the preservation in them of the most basic motives of Yakut Olonkho, continuing the epic of the Northern region sustainable tradition of epic art.

b) Motives typical for Northern olonkho

Keeping the traditional canons in the plot motives, the northern olonkho-tellers at the same time bring features that have become characteristic of the epic of the Northern region.

Detailed descriptions of the manor, dwelling, hearth, home decoration, courtyard are found only in the olonkho "Ketor Mulgun". Mas Batya lives in a snow house, which is not typical for the Yakut olonkho. In the "Duguyya Bögo" describes only the decoration of the heroic booth, in which the upper part of the bogatyr's chimney reaches the Upper world, which is a rarity in the olonkho. The home of Yuchugey Yudyuguyen brothers and Kusagan Khojugur in the Verkhoyansk olonkho seems to be old and skewed, but at the same time strong, thorough.

In the olonkho of the Northern region there are not only motives of epic time, the colorful description of the hero's native land, the miraculous birth of the hero of the Aiyy, the settlement of the heroes of the Aiyy hero in the Middle World to protect the people of the tribes of Aiyy, a detailed description of the life of the hero, a description of the figure of the hero. In the Momo olonkho about Ketor Mulgun, in the middle Kolyma olonkho on Mas Batyaya, in the Oymyakonsky olonkho about Duguya Bögo, in the Verkhoyansk olonkho dedicated to Yuchugey Yudyuguyen, Kusagan Khojugur, there are no motives for the heroic birth of the hero, the settlement of the heroes of the hero of Aiyy in the Middle World to protect people tribes of Aiyy from the invasions of the tribes of Abaasy. The description of epic time is given only in the beginning of "Duguya Bögo": before "the Sakha had bred", "glorious people" turned out, from which everyone had a "good name".

In describing *the appearance of the hero* there is no description of the clothes of the hero, heroic arms and armor. Of the heroic armor, only Mas Batya has a wooden palm, which he gave to his son, the hero Kun Erel. The sacred tree Aal Luuk Mas is present in the Mas Batya (the tree of Aar Kuduk is mentioned), in the olonkho "Yuchugey Yudyugyyen, Kusagan Khojugur", the hero adviser wise old Sekerken Sasen lives on the lowest branch of the world tree Aal Luuk Mas. Warrior's horse is described in different ways: blacksmiths forging Kotyor Mulgun are forged by the blacksmith. Mas Batya does not have a horse, he rides a sleigh. For Duguya Bögö, the horse is an assistant, it is he who at the right moment transmits the "revitalizing moisture" to the hero - breast milk leyehsit. In olonkho "Yuchugey Yudyuguyen, Kusagan Khojugur", the brothers have a herd and 80 stallions.

Thus, a comparative analysis of the motives of the northern olonkho showed that the traditional motives of the Yakut narrative in all the olonkhos we examined are: the motive for the hero to leave the house for battle with the adversaries, the motif of the battle in defense of the woman from the Aiyy tribe, the motive of the miraculous healing of the heroes, the hero's victory motif Aiyy after all sorts of adventures, the motive for the release of a captive woman, the motive for the heroic matchmaking of the hero, the motive for establishing a peaceful life. Olonkho-tellers keep them unchanged, in strict sequence.

According to the classification of N.V. Emelyanov, all epics belong to the type of olonkho about the ancestors of the Uraanghai Sakha tribe. Warriors, mostly single, do not know their origin. Heroic campaigns of the hero are committed in the name of saving the Aiyy woman from capturing of the Abaasy and marrying her. The opponents of the hero are monsters are Abaasy. The conflict resolution is traditional: the hero of Aiyy returns to his homeland with victory and his wife. The hero begins a new life time: he begins to live a peaceful life and becomes the ancestor of the tribe Aiyy.

The absence or only partial mention of the motives established in the Yakut narrative was revealed: epic time, colorful description of the hero's homeland, miraculous birth of the hero of the Aiyy, settlement of the heroes of the Aiyy hero in the Middle World to protect the people of the tribes of Aiyy, detailed description of the hero's life, description of the figure of the hero.

There are motives that distinguish the Northern olonkho from the tales of the Central and Vilyui regions. This is the predominance of wonderful motives, for example, the motive of werewolves is widely used, characters are endowed with magical abilities, they can turn into animals, birds, and fish. In the stories, the influence of the fairy tale is revealed: the plot of olonkho by D.A. Tomskaya – Chaika is based on the plot of a fairy tale with the same name. The development of conflict sometimes becomes a dream, which in olonkho is crucial. The contents of the Northern olonkho are associated with the life of northern peoples, which are expressed in the presence of household items of northern peoples: the arkan, tuut (skis), etc. There are words that are common in the Northern region and are used by the northern Yakuts: "kyyl" (beast) instead of "man", "Oygot, Nolbet Mogul" - "holy water", "Uol-buudjal buollun", "Uoy-djallik buollun". Mas Batya was fed by an airy wind; He has a house from the nether than in winter or in the summer of snow; went skiing a tuut. The name of the hero of the Abaasy, Timir Tuuchchahtai, comes from the "Nelma", which indicates the predominance of the fishing industry in the North. Instead of the word "house", the word "durda" is used - a hush (the hunter's duck's hiding place). In the sense of "in the future," the word "eiuunnguleekh" ("has a day after tomorrow") is used, while in the Yakut language it is usually said "sarsyngylaakh" ("it has tomorrow"). In Olonkho about Mas Batya and "Yuchugey Yudyuguyen, Kusagan Khojugur", there are many Russian words: ystaraastaah - terrible, a portrait of a poet, a simiert - a death, an atamaan - an ataman, a dustaaba - a mace, a chukka - a chock.

There is a transformation of the stable motives of olonkho. In olonkho "Khetor Mulgun" the hero has a wrought iron forge by a blacksmith. Wives of heroes are not beauties, but shamans who save their fiances with their magic.

Olonkho-tellers D.M. Sleptsov and M.F. Ammosov were born in the second half of the nineteenth century. They may have caught the performance of more archaic olonkho by story-tellers. P.N. Nazarov and D.A. Tomskaya - Chaika, born at the beginning of the 20th century, could be witnesses to the performances of the more transformed olonkho-inspired trends of modern times. The mentioned olonkho-tellers were all illiterate, the texts of their olonkho were written down by folklorists. All four olonkho-tellers lived in remote Northern regions, and due to severe natural conditions, the mastery of the tale in the first years followed the indicated by B.N. Putilov path: "The most common way of learning, at least initially, is long enough is self-education, when a young singer, consciously or involuntarily, tries to reproduce fragments of what he has heard, add and sing (or pronounce) epic poems" (Putilov 1975, p.13). In the course of further enthusiasm for the art of narrator, the northern olonkho-tellers, while traveling, mutually adopted the manners of the narrative and performing skills, enriched plots, images, and the language of their olonkho. So gradually they approved the northern tradition of narrative with their canons in the plot-building, the system of images.

Conclusion

The results obtained by us confirm the conclusions of the researchers V.V. Illarionov and A.A. Kuzmina about the following established traditions of the olonkho of the northern region: small volume; the protagonist is a lonely hero who does not know his origin, he does not have a mother or father; influence of the fairy tale on the plot of olonkho.

We established that the northern olonkho is distinguished by the lack or simplicity of stable motives (epic time, colorful description of the native land of the hero, wonderful birth of the hero of the Aiygy, etc.). There are many wonderful motives of magic, motives of fairy tales. For them, the motive of sleep is characteristic. Many moments related to the life of the region. Transformed motives are also noted. These features of the northern olonkho were formed in the course of its long development against the background of the traditional canons of the Yakut heroic epic in conditions of remote geographical location.

Because of the territorial proximity, the northern olonkho-tellers closely communicated with the narrators of the Even and Evenk peoples, which could well affect the development of the Yakut narrative of the North. There is no doubt that there was a process of mutual influence. A researcher of the epics of indigenous northern peoples A.A. Burykin finds: "For most Even and a large part of the Evenki epic tales, the type of "lonely hero" is characteristic, which is recognized as a bright feature of the archaic epos. Descriptions of dwellings and everyday scenes do not give ethnographically identifiable material at all. The description of clothes, heroic weapons and armor is also reduced to zero" (Burykin, 2017, p.11). It seems correct to explain the similarity of motives to the fact that "... the areas of existence of the Evenki epos coincide with the zone of the Tungus-Yakut ethno-cultural contacts and do not go beyond it," thus, he "experienced the influence not only of the Yakut olonkho, but also of some other forms of the Turkic or Mongolian epic" (Burykin, 2017, p.12). The question of the influence of the Northern olonkho on the epics of the Even and Evenki peoples can be considered as a separate very interesting topic and requires further study.

The results obtained in the study can be used in the scientific study of one of the little-developed topics of Yakut folklore studies - the traditions of the Northern olonkho as a whole.

Acknowledgments

The research is held with the financial support of the RFFR (RFFI) on the topic "Epic and folklore heritage of the peoples of the arctic and subarctic zone of the North-East of Russia: the transformation of cultural space, digital archives, information system" No. 16-06-00505 (2016-2018).

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