

**DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v7i5.1910**

**Citation:** Savvinova, G. (2018). Special Features in Expressing the 'Homeland' Concept in the Yakut Heroic Epic Olonkho. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 7(5), 168-179. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v7i5.1910>

## Special Features in Expressing the 'Homeland' Concept in the Yakut Heroic Epic Olonkho

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### Abstract

Presently, the study of epic texts is undergoing one of the most significant stages of its development, i.e., a theoretical basis is being created and established. The theoretical category of epic studies is being thoroughly revisited from the point of view of its objectiveness, its ontological and specific nature, as well as its functionality and importance in the field of epic studies in general.

Due to the growing interest in the humanities among scholars in the modern academic research society, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is unfolding in an essentially new research environment, which needs to be revisited and analyzed. The necessity to study the existing status of the topic under discussion is first of all justified by the fact that it encompasses a process of qualitative changes in the epic text representations, epic texts being a subject of humanitarian, historical and cultural studies; this is one of the key aspects in the epic studies as a whole and in the study of Yakut heroic epic olonkho in particular.

In the process of its establishment in the oral folklore tradition, the Yakut heroic epic olonkho underwent a process of transformation from a heroic epic to a philosophical and didactical one. The "multi-layer" content of the Yakut olonkho, which includes in itself the archaic and worldview components of the Yakut peoples' culture, is a unique source for the historic and typological renewal of the various examples of traditional art, which is obliquely depicted in the epic texts.

Currently, a large scope of historical and graphical materials, literature on the study of the worldview depicted in the Yakut olonkho is easily accessible. The study of the world creation in the Yakut olonkho about the Middle World, and the native land in particular, where the bogatyr lives, is one of the main categories in theoretical epic studies.

The present article describes distinctive features in the depiction of the main character's homeland in Yakut epic olonkho in the context of a comparative study. By distinguishing its unique features in the image depiction of the main character's homeland, the role that the latter plays in the Yakut olonkho, we provide ourselves with an opportunity to reconstruct a traditional world representation, which would allow to achieve a better understanding of the outlook that the Yakut people had about themselves and the world in the ancient times.

**Keywords:** Olonkho, Homeland, Country, Turkic-Mongolic epic traditions, Northern olonkho, Genesis, Archaism.

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## Introduction

Turning to the traditional ideological systems, based on the integrity of traditional oral art is of a great importance and relevance for the modern-day humanitarian studies. In recent years, one of the most promising topics in the sphere of epic studies has become the study of living space as a component of the ethno-cultural landscape.

The given article attempts to address the problem connected with the description of local materials, based on the research results on epic studies. Most significant are the results of research, in which a greater number of scientists turned their attention not only to applied but also to theoretical aspects of the history of the epic heritage of the peoples, to which the Yakut heroic epic *olonkho* is closely related both – typologically and territorially. A series of collective monographs are devoted to the traditional worldview of the Turkic peoples of Southern Siberia, which provide an important insight into the typical spatial representations of the Turkic traditions; this became one of the most important aspects of the study (Sagalayev, Oktyabrskaya, Lvova, & Usmanova, 1988; 1989; 1990). The authors of these monographs have chosen such a research trend, in which they introduced the study of the traditional Turkic worldview, presented and analyzed in the form of extensive data materials. N.L. Zhukovskaya carried out an analysis of spatial representations, which are predominant in the Mongolian tradition in their connection with the methods they use to develop cultural space. N.L. Zhukovskaya argues that the concept of space represented in the form of concentric circles diverging from the sacral center is typical only for the agricultural peoples, the scholar also claims that the Mongols have both types of space interpretation models – concentric and linear (Zhukovskaya, 1986, pp.118-134). The scientific trend in the worldview studies which was introduced by V.N. Toporov (1971, pp.9-62) in his works within the epic science framework, focuses on the semantics and structure of the world tree as a universal mythological and poetic world concept. In addition to this, I.V. Pukhov notes that Yakut epic art has attained significantly different features compared to the epic art of their ancient neighboring peoples; it developed in a different way (A Typology of the Traditional Epic Art, 1975, p.13).

Thus, since the researcher is often faced with the choice of which study features to focus on, we decided to take a closer look at the epic worldview in the Yakut epic tradition, and, precisely speaking, to highlight the key features in the description of the native land of the Yakut bogatyr represented in the Yakut *olonkho*.

The Yakut epic studies do not contain any special studies devoted to a thorough description of the conceptual modality of the protagonist's native land in the Yakut *olonkho* as a significant component of the historical and cultural space. At the given stage in the study of available resources, there is a need for a wider approach to the problem of the correlation between *the sign* and *the epic*. This serves as the justification for the relevance of our topic.

The attempt to give a characteristic description of the homeland image in the Yakut *olonkho* was undertaken with the aim of focusing on the role played by symbolism in the Yakut folklore tradition. The aim of our study is to analyze the meaning of and features in the depicting the image of the homeland in the Yakut heroic epic *olonkho*, as well as to distinguish in its characteristics some elements of archaic ideas and their role in such context.

In order to achieve this goal, the following tasks were set:

- to identify the significant features of the protagonist's homeland represented in the Yakut *olonkho*; to consider the traditional ideas of the Yakut people about the space of their native country;
- to consider the archaic tradition of cherishing the natural landscape, in order to determine the genesis of the native land representations.

## Methodology

The comparative study is an important method in epic studies. Using comparison, it is possible to define the boundaries of close correlation of various epic heritage examples as well as the degree of their relatedness. As a result of different historical events and cultural processes, the content and the plots are enriched, and remain unchanged in others, or, as an alternative, they impoverish and lose their ontological rootedness. Traditional worldview ideas can be regarded through the analysis within the scope of several sciences, such as ethnography, archeology, and an insight into early written sources, etc. In addition, the attitude towards the texts of the peoples' oral art of is of great importance.

It is a largely known fact that the ancient Yakut, Altai and Khakas peoples share common ethnic and historical features. All this is stated in the historical and ethnographic works by A.P. Okladnikov, G.V. Ksenofontov, L.P. Potapov, L.N. Gumilyov, S.V. Kiselev, L.R. Kyzlasov, S.I. Rudenko, S.A. Tokarev and others. Referring to the concept of a historical and ethnic community, I.V. Pukhov emphasizes the following: "In ancient times, when they [the Yakut ancestors] were living in their southern homeland – the Baikal and the Angara region, the Yakuts had contacts with the peoples mentioned earlier ... In this regard, there are many common features in their folklore, and in the heroic epic in particular. The Yakut people's contacts with their ancient ancestors are lost somewhere in the late period of the first millennium AD" (Typology of the National Epic, 1975, p.13).

In the mean time, a comparative historical study of the Middle World depicted in the heroic epic of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples is the most interesting research aspect in epic text research. With this in mind, it is necessary to consider and formulate the idea of the protagonist's homeland concept with respect to the developed typological studies.

The methodological and theoretical aspects of the research are based on the particularly valuable fundamental works by A.N. Veselovsky, V.Y. Propp, V.M. Zhirmunsky, E.M. Meletinsky, I.V. Pukhov and others along with the findings of the epic studies experts of the Altai and Khakassia regions and the studies of the authors of a number of special works on folklore and ethnography of the Turkic-Mongolian people devoted to the Yakut epic heritage.

In the Yakut olonkho, the description of the native land of the main character is the most important one for all the epic works of art of the Yakut people. The homeland of the bogatyr in the Yakut olonkho "Modun Er Sogotokh" ("The Mighty Er Sogotokh") is inextricably linked with the outside world, which is represented as an energy substance: "In our blessed world, there lived some kind of demigod (Er Sogotokh, the bogatyr), bordered by reclining mountains, he will not move, they say, held together by standing mountains – or if he falls over, they say, he will supposedly turn the world head over heels – with the ground to the where the top is, with water in the middle and turf serving as clothes for him" (Yastremsky, 1929, p.13).

In his works, G.D. Gachev writes that the key definition of a national group is nature, where "the imagery capacity of the national culture (archetypes and symbols), the metaphoric assets of literature, and the creative plots are all very stable in their representation" (Gachev, 1999, pp.27-47). A special feature in the image of the main character's homeland is the degree of human involvement in the existence of the natural world.

A Russian ethnographer, L.P. Potapov writes the following: "Among the epic monuments, loci in the description of one's native land, the land of the main characters play an essential role. They are realistic images of individual and national life moments and the peoples' world view" (Potapov, 1953, p.447). The idea of how the main character's homeland is seen in terms of the worldview, which in its turn is composed of concepts and connections between these concepts, is closely intervened with the Yakut ethnic mentality.

In connection to this, the *homeland* formula in the Yakut olonkho is considered as an instrument of expressing thoughts and a transmitter of culture.

### **The Contextual Meaning of the *Homeland* Concept in Yakut Olonkho**

The description of the bogatyr's native land in the Yakut heroic epic mainly preserved its most ancient features. The epic *homeland* in the olonkho has a significant similarity with many epic works of art created by the Turkic-Mongolian peoples. In the process of studying the Turkic-Mongolian epics, we are faced with a large number of geographic names, and a variety of natural landscapes. These are the names of mountains, rivers, lakes, and valleys. Predominantly, geographical places and names in the epic context are a genuine product of the narrator's imagination; these places and names create a certain world where heroes live and perform series of actions.

In the Yakut olonkho, the birthplace of the bogatyr begins with a description of an ideal, perfect country. In the song of the olonkho "The Mighty Er Sogotokh", the main improvisation theme is the appraisal of the *alaas* (a place of living): "On this beautiful motherland, in its midst of it all, for my vicious falcon flying with all its might for thirty days to reach the edge of the highest and darkest place with his back curved inwards, and its withers up high, but could not reach it, the great *alaas* was placed on it, as it turns out ... " (The Mighty Er Sogotokh, 1996, pp.82-83). In the Altaic heroic epic, mountains are one of the main elements of the epic landscape. In the epic "Ochi-Bala", a beautiful country of the Altai warrior unfolds with a depiction of an image of tall and mighty mountains:

Under the moon it stretched across  
Golden-headed, dappled mountain,  
... Its peaks are like a rainbow,  
They reached up to the skies.  
Her native and beautiful river  
Mixed with Toibodum  
Her mountains with flashing roes  
Reached the white-blue sky (Ochi-Bala, 1997, lines 3401-3423).

In the center of the universe in the Altai "Ochi-Bala" from the golden peaks of the mountains originate the rivers "flowing in golden channels". With deep sorrow and bitterness in their hearts, the Khakass storyteller remembers everything that connects him to his native country: "his father's wonderful property is far away, but in his memory (it always lives on), the bogatyr rushed off to a foreign land on his horse. The beautiful motherland is far away, but it (always lives) in his memory.... ". D.M. Aydarova notes that the landscape of the epic world in the Kyrgyz epic "Manas" is constructed using an insignificant number of elements: a steppe, a road, a plain, a river, a sea, mountains, the main of which is the steppe. The steppe is almost a permanent place where the hero's actions unfold. Almost the entire space of the epic world is occupied by the steppe (Aydarova, 1993, p.19).

In the Yakut olonkho, the main character – the bogatyr of the *aiyy aimaga* tribe is depicted an ideal person from the point of view of the people of the tribe society (*aiyy aimaga* > Yak. 'tribe'). The *aiyy* bogatyr descends from the heavens by the will of the supreme deity, Yuryung Aar Toion, or is born and settled in the middle of a flourishing valley, and maintains his own simple household:

... This man [the bogatyr] grew up and settled

In the light blue country  
.... he grew up and matured, this man  
Right in the middle of the glittering valley,  
Where do happy cranes winter? (Kulun Kullustuur, 1985, pp.142-202).

In the Khakass epic "Ai-Huuchin", the settlement of the land by the bogatyr is also inspired by epic ideas:

On the banks of the [great river] Khanym-talai  
... From the front side of the beautiful aal  
... he [the bogatyr] steps up to the great river,  
There is a nine-sided [rock] Hyzyl-haya,  
On the other side [of the Khanim-son ridge]  
A sandy steppe stretches ... (Ai-Huuchin, 1977, lines 9-18).

The motif of the mountains is a permanent element of the epic works art of many South Siberian peoples:

His altai, where he appeared and was born,  
Was the Ak-Sumer Mountain  
With six sides - his father,  
And the Ak-Syut Lake with six bays  
was his mother (Ochi-Bala, 1997, lines 62-66).

Traditionally, in the Altai and Khakass epics, "bogatyrs descended from the spirit of the mountain or their father is a mountain and the mother is a lake" (Oinoshev, 2006, p.114). Mountain motifs abound with steep rocks, imbued with a feeling of love on the part of the Altai narrator:

...The Black River with ninety tributaries  
Twinkling, flowed,  
Nine identical black mountains  
Gleaming, towered.  
A golden cuckoo of a horse-head size  
Cuckooed here.  
A brown cuckoo of a sheep-head size  
Was calling out day and night (Ochi-Bala, 1997, lines 1164-1179).

The fact that the origin of many heroes in the tales of the peoples of Khakassia and Altai is associated with the ancestral mountain is probably the result of an epic transformation of the cult of the mountains.

The storytelling traditions of the Yakut people originate from the distant past. The archetypal images of the narrator's texts represent fragments of ethnic cosmologies. "The variability (of the storytelling) is partly a manifestation of the creative evolution process experienced by the narrator ..." (Putilov, 1997, p.160).

Olonkhosut (olonkho teller, narrator) in the Yakut culture is a mediator between the sacred and profane levels of existence. At the time of the performance of the epic, the narrator-improviser is in a state of special creative enthusiasm, the inspiration “comes” along with the description and the recreation of the universe. In the description of the time of the first creation of the earth, and the bogatyr's native land, the narrator may attain vague pictures, incomprehensible sensations or emotions. As can be seen, the narrator relies on genetic memory during the storytelling process. As a rule, genetic memory is detected in conditions of emotional outbursts, when the narrator acts unconsciously. According to K.G. Jung, “the manifestation of genetic memory can be stimulated artificially by immersing the subject into a state of trance” (Jung, 1996, p.384). Here is the case of the “characteristic manifestation of epic improvisation typical for the archaic storytelling. ... In such a “state of real trance”, the “gift of improvisation” manifests itself (Putilov, 1997, p.154). In this connection, the hypothesis of B.N. Putilov regarding the “sacrament” of storytelling and stating that “creative performance, freedom of the singer in dealing with the text, variations in the process of storytelling have such a wide range that it is extremely difficult to designate the whole range of possibilities and realizations with one term. In addition, it is necessary to take into account the historical typology and national specificity of the storytelling process as a form of art” (Putilov, 1997, p.166).

In his work, P.A. Sleptsov writes that “the archaisms in olonkho in their direct sense can be identified as the so-called “dark places”, which have been mentioned since the times of A.F. Middendorff and his studies, and which, according to many, even the storytellers themselves do not understand” (Sleptsov, 1989, p.5-22). Today, the concept of storytelling genetic memory in the context of epic studies remains unexplored and it is not yet clearly defined.

A particular information load in the description of the native land of the main character in the Yakut olonkho is represented in the landscape and topographic signs, which reflect the archaic features – designations of the hero's native land areas. The most distinguishable and characteristic feature of poetics in the Yakut storytelling is the richness of its vocabulary with deep archaisms. In the olonkho “Nyurgun Bootur the Swift” (1947), the following formula expression occurs repeatedly – it is an archaism according to the description of the protagonist's native land:

1. aghys taraah haya 'eight (many) striped mountains' - 4 times;
2. tallan taraah haya 'huge striped mountain' - 5 times;
3. with the addition of a numeral to this form of the formula - aghys tallan taraah haya 'eight (many) huge striped mountains' - 1 time;
4. tallan taraah suorba taas haya 'an enormous striped (stone) rock' - 1 time;
5. aghys taraah suorba taas haya 'eight (many) striped (stone) rocks' - 1 time. (Robbek, 2009, p.20).

The distinguished scholar, E.M. Meletinsky, points out that the more archaic the tradition, the greater the number of mythological elements and religious beliefs it represents in the epic texts (Meletinsky, 2001, pp.56-62).

In the Yakut olonkho, “one of the established centers of the main character's “homeland” is the alaas” (Semenova, 2006, p.38). According to the “Dictionary of the Yakut language” by E.K. Pekarsky, an alaas is “a land, a meadow and field space surrounded by a wooded mountain, (piedmont) valley, a small valley, a clear meadow among the forest, a field and a meadow surrounded by the forest” (Pekarsky, 1907, p.67). Archaeologists have established that alaases in Yakutia were inhabited by people in the Neolithic era (Argunov & Pestereva, 2014, pp.173-177). Since ancient times, the Yakut people have a special relationship with the alaas. The alaas for the Yakut people is filled with a sacred narrative. As noted by R.I. Bravina, being

in an *alaas*, a Yakut person “does not yet realize with his/her mind the hidden processes, but its biological emotional mechanism already affects them” (Bravin, 2005, p.135).

The ancient Yakut people were more acutely aware of their involvement with nature. When describing the *alaas*, the beautiful native land of the protagonist, the narrator (*olonkho* teller) did not separate himself from wildlife and existed in unison with its rhythm. Also, the way the Yakut people cherish their *alaas*, is emphasized in the Altai epic, where it was forbidden (it was a taboo) to pronounce the animal zoonym aloud standing on the ancestral mountain of the Altai people: “standing on the slopes of the mountain, it forbidden to pronounce the names of the deer, the groundhog, and the birch-tree, which, if necessary, are referred to using their false names” (Potanin, 1881, p.93).

In the Altai area, just like in other areas populated by the Turkic-Mongolian peoples, the cult of the mountains is still preserved. Noting the existence and the spreading of the mountain cult, L.Y. Schternberg attributed its origin to the role of mountains in the process of rain formation, a much-needed and fate-deciding harvest (Schternberg, 1936, p.284), as well as fertile grasslands in the *alaas* for the Yakut cattle-breeders.

A worldview is “a set of objective content possessed by humans” (Thematic Philosophical Dictionary, 2008, p.164). Frequently, apart from the natural component, in the Turkic-Mongolian epics, the sacredness of the native land is also justified by the anthropogenic factor. Traditionally, the geo-architectural components are depicted in the center of the universe in the *alaas*: the world tree – *Aal Luuk mas* and house dwelling and horse tethering post (*serge*), both created by the *bogatyr*. A renown folklorist specializing the *olonkho* studies, I.V. Pukhov, in his special monographic work titled “The heroic epic of the Altai-Sayan peoples and Yakut *olonkho*” gave a detailed analysis on the description of the central point of the hero's native land – the family tree (*Aal Luk mas* in *olonkho*), the horse tethering post (*serge* in *olonkho*) and the home dwellings of the heroes in the epics of the peoples, who are genetically related to the Yakut people. For example, “the tree in the *olonkho* and the Altai epic is the central aspect of all living things, the center of the hero's native land. This is especially noticeable in the *olonkho*, where a long description is given not only of this tree alone (like in the Altai epic), but also of the entire hero's native land” (Pukhov, 2014, p.167). I.V. Pukhov is sure that “the *olonkho* developed in the direction of enhancing descriptive moments, retaining (and perhaps strengthening) the mythological moments, while the Altai epic explicitly “reduced” the descriptive moments, and now they remain in it as rudiments and do not have the same value as in *olonkho*. However, these rudiments are connected with the nodal moments of the epic (guardian tree, sacred horse tethering post) and also retained some mythological features” (Pukhov, 2004, p.176).

In *olonkho*, the native land of the hero plays a multifunctional role. The homeland of the hero, as a universal matrix, is perceived through the “prism” of signs and symbols. In the *olonkho*, the attitude of a person towards his native land as a special place begins with the presence of the method of his detour or flight time: “This man grew and settled in a light-blue land, the circumference could not be flown around by nine free white-headed cranes”. Here “the narrator’s storytelling technique emphasizes the establishment of the *alaas* as a spatial center” (Semenova, 2006, p.40).

In the *olonkho* “*Er Sogotokh*”, a complex of expressive means reinforces the expressiveness that gives the statement an emphatic character: ... “that on this beautiful motherland, in its midst of it all, for my vicious falcon flying with all its might for thirty days to reach the edge of the highest and darkest place with his back curved inwards, and its withers up high, but could not reach it, the great *alaas* was placed on it, as it turns out ... (The Mighty *Er Sogotokh*, 1996, line. 1391-1424). The image of a falcon becomes sacred, since it is considered that a large bird according to the belief of the Yakut people is directly related to the sacral forces of nature. Among many Turkic-Mongolian peoples, such beliefs and rituals were widespread.

In the Altai epic tradition, the significance and vastness of the bogatyr's native land are both characterized by numerical codes, just like in the Yakut olonkho in the phrase "for thirty days": "The Black River with ninety tributaries, glimmering, flowed; Nine identical black mountains, gleaming, rose..." (Ochi-Bala, 1997, p.1164-1179). The mightiness, the power of nature is depicted by the number of rivers and the height of the mountains in the Altai epic: "Under the moon, the Golden-headed black-and-white mountain stretched, With sixty sides, With gold-silver fortresses, With seventy-seven highly esteemed sides ..." (Ochi-Bala, 1997, lines 3401-3423).

Adoration and admiration for the beauty of the native land of the protagonist is vividly depicted in the Woman Bogatyr Kyys Kyydaannaah, a northern Verkhoyansk olonkho. Here the land of the heroes is described as follows: "In ancient times, there was Kyydaannaah Kyys, a bogatyr, with her sister Kyun Tunalyngsa, not knowing where they came from. The two women lived happily, not having to worry about anything. They lived in a beautiful, fertile country, where the Siberian crane flying eight days and nights in a row, a crane flying nine days and nights in a row, could not find the end of the alaa and rivers. They thought that neither in the Middle, nor in the Lower, nor in the Upper World there is anyone equal to them ..." (Kyydaannaah Kys Bukhatyr, 2016, p.279).

From the information presented above, it follows that in the sequence of events describing the birthplace of the main characters in the northern epic tradition, common comparisons, numerical epithets, and multiple repetitions that are characteristic of the Yakut olonkho are used.

The Yakut epic tradition is characterized by a thorough and comprehensive overview of the hero's native land. An extended and in-depth study of the protagonist's homeland in the olonkho reveals the interpretation of the concept of the natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Yakut people. In the olonkho, the most expressive means are especially visible in the description of the anthropological sphere of the earth and the Universe, which has its own spatial structure.

In the depiction of the main character's native land in the world of olonkho, the forms of expression are very diverse, reflecting a deep mindset, and the narrator's natural intelligence: "yellow-spotted creek valley with a wide river", "non-freezing sea with nine bays", "three jubilant silver hills", "bulks of stone cliffs", etc. (Kulun Kullustuur, 1985, lines 144-202). In the Khakass epic, the bogatyr having arrived in the "terrible" land of the enemy, "saw rivers with a different direction", comparing it with his own rivers, which in his beautiful country flowed in the right direction (Ai-Huuchin, 1977, lines 4020-4023).

The ideological concept expressed by nominative means of language is often noted in the Turkic-Mongolian epic traditions. It is known that the consideration and contemplation of the world surroundings by human beings begins with themselves, since the most comprehensible and true for them is their own body, which is directly and best known to the humans and close to them.

In the Turkic languages, the formation of spatial vocabulary from anatomical terms has been recorded as a tendency since ancient times (Sevortian, 1974, p.104). This idea is developed by L.L. Gabysheva: "human consciousness, anthropocentric in its nature, creates a spatial picture of the world in which the center of the system of orientation projections is the human body itself" (Gabysheva, 2003, p.20).

In the Yakut olonkho, the process of anthropomorphism and, subsequently, orientation of a person in space along his own body are quite clearly visible. Thus, the olonkho, "kien daidy kirgis kiine" has an orientation value (the navel of the earth is the center of the earth); kin 'navel, small navel' are present not only in the Yakut, but also in the Khakass epic. The spatial picture of the protagonist's homeland, in which the center of the orientation projection system in the olonkho is: yuyu dulaiygar (the top of the lake of an alaa), toghus yostekh (with nine biles) (Kulun Kullustuur, 1985, lines 142-202); Aan daidy alaghar byara (liver of the country), (Gorokhov, 2016, p.25).



In his work "On the language of the Yakut people", O.N. Betlingk provides an example of the olonkho with all the traditional, fixed clichés in the description of the hero's homeland and the surrounding nature: "If you look to the south, you can see a forest of their shaggy pines, similar to beautifully dressed girls standing in a high pinewood..." (Betlingk, 1990, p.646). The heroes' merging with natural surroundings and the Universe in the Khakass epic "Ai-Huuchin" is poeticized: "Hys-Khan is a great hero, that the Earth itself serves as her ear"; "Fearless Kys-Khan herself has the Universe as her pillow" (Ai-Huuchin, 1977, p.34).

The comparisons in the image of the main character's homeland are interestingly represented in the olonkho recorded by S.V. Yastremsky at the end of the 19th century "owning a black horse, Kulun Kullustuur, experienced in magical transformations," in which phenomena and objects of nature are compared with the national Yakut dish: festive land, ... not a shadow to be seen – bright lakes, the milky lakes are not covered with foam, cottage cheese is present in amounts comparable to mud on the ground, there are salt marshes of dairy products; the dark depths are the butter with pickled milk, the forest lakes are butter, the mountains are made of abdominal fat, cliffs are made of under belly fat...". Dairy products of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples, including the Yakut peoples, are a frequent universal means of transmitting the ancient ethnic characteristics of the people.

A distinctive description of the nature of the bogatyr's homeland is represented in the Yakut olonkho "Dzhyrybina Dzhyrylyatta", as a means of expressing feelings, it is narrated by the narrator in an especially talented manner: "... from the northern direction of the alaa, as if large-sized people with a noble gaze walk alongside each other, the mighty forests grow taller around them, it turns out ..." (Yadrikhinsky, 2011, p.45). The most important aspect of the Turkic-Mongolian epic tradition is the stable connection between the trees and humans. The narrator describes the world (including trees) in terms of human existence, in its similarity and likeness.

Thus, the geo-cultural space of the epic ethnic landscape in the Yakut epics is of great importance in solving the issue of Turkic-Mongolian peoples ethno-genesis in general.

As researcher of the Yakut olonkho L.N. Semenova noted, "isolating the borders of the hero's native land contains a semantic characteristic of four cardinal points correlated with the corresponding animal symbols":

... If you look up from the bottom

To the south side of this country land-

There are huge stone cliffs,

Resembling four-year-old stallions,

Rearing up during the fight (Kuruubai Haannaah Kulun Kullustuur, 1985, lines 144-202).

The study of the olonkho text titled "Kuruubai Haannaah Kulun Kullustuur" ("The Shrewed Kulun Kullustuur") allows us to single out a special place, which depicts its own kind of "an epic land" interconnected with the bogatyr and his surroundings. This is a land where he was sent from the heavens and where the hero, the shrewed Kulun Kullustuur grew up, the hero who is the center of the whole earth and the whole Universe. The description of the hero's (Kulun Kullustuur's) native land reflects the national outlook on the world, a vision that can be correlated with a system of cultural concepts.

Representations of the animal world were realized in the Yakut epic tradition through various forms of verbal creativity, enhancing them with imagery and expression, promoting the appearance of symbolic meanings. The ethnic zoonimic code of the Yakut epic tradition found in the olonkho "Modun Er Sototokh"

("The Mighty Er Sogotokh"): "A set of winged creatures laid rows of colored eggs. Four-legged people raised a fuss, a hustle and bustle – they found comfort for themselves and were fruitful" (Yastremsky, 1929, p.13).

In the northern olonkho, "Uchughey Yuduguyen, Kusagan Hodzhugur", which strongly resembles a fairy tale, in the home land of the protagonist, when the elder brother goes into the taiga to hunt, seven wonderful Siberian cranes fly to the younger one and play fun games with him. In the shape of Siberian cranes appear the aiyy girls. In the olonkho "Uchuhey Yuduguyen, Kusagan Hodzugur", the natural landscape of the brothers homeland – the heroes of the aiyy – is full of wonders; the olonkho describes various fabulously magical birds and animals. Epic zoological images in folklore art form stable formulas. For example, "as if my red horse had a long, withered head, they vigilantly uplifted – black woods surrounded it (homeland), it turns out, as if a swan-bird had feathery feathers gathered in a bunch – smooth-bore black woods tightly approached it (homeland), it turns out" and others.

Thus, the above examples on the description of the protagonist's native land in epic works of art make it possible to understand the specific features of the archetypes system, the structure of worldview representations of the people and the peculiarities of the ethnic perception of the world.

## **Conclusion**

A review of the research literature presented on the concept of homeland in the Yakut heroic epic olonkho shows that there are practically no studies that would reflect the most complete picture on this topic.

We came to the conclusion that the existing motifs of the protagonist's native land make it possible to state that the ancient ancestors of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples had largely developed and complex ideas about the protagonist's native land as the source of his peoples ancestry. The material we studied indicates that the idea of the protagonist homeland was initiated and developed in close cultural and historical interactions of the epics of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples.

The image of the native land in the Yakut heroic epic olonkho has a relatively integral structure. The symbolism of the image of the native land in the Yakut olonkho goes back to the most ancient traditions. It is necessary to highlight the fact that the symbolic meaning of the native land in the olonkho is fixed in the history, traditions and culture of the Yakut people. The considered materials show that in the description of the hero's homeland, the main mediating role is played by the protagonist of the epic - the hero, who is directly involved in the actions between the different levels of the universe. However, in the epic Turkic-Mongolian traditions, the omniscient force, connecting the hero and universe to the homeland is not only the protagonist of the epic him/herself, but also all the representatives of the animal world, and the entire natural landscape.

## **Acknowledgements**

*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 (a).*

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