SCTCMG 2021
International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»

MEMORATIVES IN ANCIENT ANTHROPONYMIC SYSTEM OF THE YAKUT LANGUAGE

Monastyrev Vladimir Dmitrievich (a)*, Prokopieva Svetlana Mitrofanovna (b)
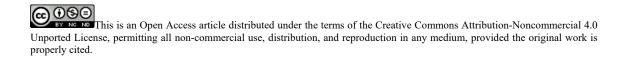*Corresponding author

(a) Institute of Humanities Research and Problems of Small Peoples of the North under Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1, Petrovsky Str., Yakutsk, Russia, dimamon92@mail.ru
(b) Institute of Languages and Cultures of Peoples of North-Eastern Russia, North-Eastern Federal University named after M.K. Ammosov, 42, Kulakovsky Str., Yakutsk, Russia, dsmplana@mail.ru

Abstract

Currently, studies of linguistic units in the context of linguistic cognitology takes a special place in anthropological problematics. If previously anthroponymics of a specific people, society or region were considered within the framework of traditional structural linguistics where the main focus was on linguistic description of anthroponymic vocabulary, recently, there has been an increased interest in the problems of relations between personal names and cognition. It is related to the anthropocentric paradigm of the modern linguistics that is assuming analysis of linguistic units as a result of human cognitive activity. As it is evident from early works dating to 17th and 18th centuries, Yakuts had a well-developed system of naming. It reflected the most important historical moments and events in the life of the ethnicity, as well as their traditions, customs and typical activities. Thus, Yakut names were very diverse in their semantics, as name creation had always been very important for Yakuts. First of all, circumstances of child's coming-into-being were always taken into account. Newborn child got protective names, as according to pagan world view of Yakuts, the world was full of evil spirits. In addition, Yakut anthroponyms reflected occupations, social structure and religious concepts of the people. In this article, the authors consider dedicating names in the early anthroponymic system of the Yakut language, divided into totemic, theophoric (ones with religious meaning), repelling and deceptive. In pre-Christian Yakut anthroponymics, there is additionally an abundance of figurative personal names describing appearance, gait or body parts of a person.

1.   Introduction

Formation and development of anthroponymic system in Turkic languages is directly related to cultural traditions of ancient Turks. Adoration of natural phenomena, totemic and animistic beliefs had become a part of spiritual culture. Names of the period reflected an inseparable link of Object-Name-Person, which allowed seeing name as a part of a person. Features of anthroponymic usage in traditional Turkic culture are determined by mythological beliefs about the nature of name: equation of a name and its bearer, or a belief in existence of an innermost link between a name and a person, belief in ability of name to substitute the person; name is a kind of eternal sign, connecting its bearer to ancestors and descendants, i.e., it is becoming a sign of immortality of a person or a tribe.

2.   Problem Statement

Name is the most ancient anthroponymic unit. Yakuts of 17th–18th century had many diverse names. Before contact with Russians, Yakuts only had personal names. There was no need in patronymics or surnames, because they lived in small groups at *alases* (drained lakes), knew each other personally and it was enough to be able to address each other only by one's personal name. In linguistics, such anthroponyms are called pre-Christian names (Fomin & Ivanova, 2020; Podolskaya, 1978; Vikstrand, 2009).

Among studies of pre-Christian names, an especially important source is the work of Safronov, containing an historical and ethnographic overview of personal names and an onomasticon. Information for the book was sourced from archival memos, lists, materials and documents. In total, the author compiled the onomasticon of over 7000 names of Yakuts, Evenki, Evens and Yukaghirs inhabiting the territory of Yakutia (Safronov, 1985). The first attempts at analyzing Yakut anthroponymics in the phonetic aspect were made by Afanasyev. He analyzed 5954 of male Yakut names from Safronov's onomasticon. According to Afanasyev (1990), 1300 of the names are figurative words, which "... being turned into personal names are to a degree getting their primal free state lost, they as though are jumping into a different orbit, getting a more substantive state" (p. 117).

A special place in studies of Yakut anthroponymics is taken by works of Ivanov-Baagdaryyn Siulbe, which contain about 50,000 of personal names. His work *Оройтон саҕалаан* (*Oroiton saghalaan*) (Ivanov, 2013) is dedicated to analyzing native Yakut names. He also published more than 500 articles on Yakut personal names in various journals.

Yakut anthroponymics was also considered in Monastyryov's (1993) thesis for Candidate degree. It records 527 toponyms formed from personal names, family names and nicknames. Personal names are more often used for names of old settlements, hunting cabins and summer houses (Balatynaptar Otordoro, Lepsey Elgeene, Lyksygyr Sayylyga, etc. (Былатыанаптар Отордоро, Лэпсэй Элгээнэ, Лыксыгыр Сайылыга). In linguistic cultural context, Yakut personal names were analyzed in a monograph authored by Nikolaev (2020). Structural-semantic aspect of pre-Christian personal names of Yakuts was considered by Vasileva (2019). The nature of the names includes a capability to reflect not just linguistic, but also extralinguistic information; they absorbed various sides of societal, cultural and spiritual life of people,

thus, this theme is relevant for modern researchers as well (Danka, 2018; Handschuh, 2019; Leibring, 2016; Pustyakov, 2017; Smagulova & Parmanova, 2019; Suliamova, 2018; Walsh et al., 2018).

Thus, it may be concluded that recently Yakut anthroponymics is becoming a subject of complex research.

3.   Research Questions

The main object of the research is Yakut names-dedications (memoratives).

The subject of the research is semantic features of pre-Christian Yakut personal names-dedications (memoratives). Scientific value of the article lies in the fact that memoratives reflect not only linguistic, but extralinguistic information as well, information about life, traditions and customs of the people.

4.   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to analyze the concept of cognition, which is in the foundation of pre-Christian Yakut personal names.

The following tasks were involved in attaining the set goal:

- ▪ to show national specifics of ethnic world view, as reflected in pre-Christian anthroponymic units;
- ▪ to consider principal causes influencing changes in the composition of Yakut anthroponymicon of that period.

5.   Research Methods

Methodological foundation of the research is formed by theoretic propositions developed in the works of Bondaletov (1983), Nikonov (1974), Superanskaya (2007). In addition, works of Yakut ethno-linguists, such as Antonov (1971), Gabysheva (2003), were used.

The research used methods of component analysis for dissecting words into minimal meaningful parts and identification of domination of either denotative or connotative aspect of the name; etymology was established with comparative historical and descriptive methods. The common method used was the inductive-deductive method. Names-dedications were collected by continuous sampling from lexicographic and monographic sources.

Meanings of words were established using the following dictionaries: *Dictionary of the Yakut Language* by Pekarsky (1959), *Unabridged Dictionary of the Yakut Language* in 15 volumes (Likhanov et al., 2004–2017).

The following works in Yakut anthroponymics were also used: *Dictionary of the Yakut Language* (Pekarsky, 1959), *Personal Names and Nicknames among Yakuts* (Gritsenko, 1970), *Pre-Christian Personal Names of Peoples of North-Eastern Siberia* (Safronov, 1985), *Kihi aastyn tuhynan* (Zhirkov, 1990), *Yakut Names* (Samsonov, 2000), Ivanov-Bagdaryyn Syulbe, *Oroiton saghalaan* (Ivanov, 2013).

6. Findings

One of the principal source for studying Yakut anthroponyms is the *Dictionary of the Yakut Language* by Pekarsky (1959). According to calculations of Okoneshnikov (1982), the *Dictionary* contains over 700 anthroponyms, of them more than 500 were formed from native Yakut words related to certain concepts. Most Yakut nicknames consist of figurative words and figurative verbs, which may be explained by their semantic features.

It should be noted that there are certain issues with separation between Yakut names and nicknames, for example, for such names as *Maadyay*, "to become bowlegged", *Arbay*, "to be uncombed", *Choy*, "clueless, stupid". Before Christening, nicknames were used as personal names. Some of them were assigned at birth, some other were "obtained later" (Gritsenko, 1970). It should be emphasized, that some nicknames are Mongolic in their origin, such as *Maadyay* 'to become bowlegged' from Mongolian *mayzhiykh* 'to lean sideways' (Monastyryov et al., 2019). Thus, nickname in the Yakut anthroponymics is the same as personal name. In the Yakut language of the period, a large number of nicknames were recorded that represent various figurative words. They characterize appearance, gait, features of character, behavior, speech, physical advantages and disadvantages of a person. For example, there are personal names describing apperance and gait, such as *Akyi* "long, ungainly, thin and a bit crooked", *Nakyi* 'to bend knees, to stand on bended knees", *Oercheger* "stooped, drawn forward" (usually about a tall and slim person with sunken breast); *Takyr* "crooked (about fingers, arms, legs), etc. Thanks to their emotional expressive semantic, figurative words are a preferred method for description of personal appearance and serve as a motivation for transition of such words into the group of personal names, onyms.

According to the world view of pagan Yakuts, the world around them was full of spirits, both good and evil Thus, in order to save a newborn child from diseases, their parents undertook preemptive measures. Families that had lost children used protective names. They invented words that should frighten or repel evil spirits from kidnapping children or gave their subsequent children names with negative semantics, as it is evident from early records. After death of a child, Yakut parents would give subsequent children repelling names. People believed that protective names will save their child's life and protect against misfortunes, evil eye, bad spell and evil spirits Similar traditions of naming present among other peoples of Siberia.

Well-known linguist Nikonov in his book *Name and Society* divided Turkic personal names according to their semantics into three groups with subsequent division into subgroups.

I. Descriptive names (descriptives);

II. Names-wishes (desiderates)

III. Names-dedications (memoratives) (Nikonov, 1974).

By their semantics, pre-Christian personal names of Yakuts are close to Turkic personal names. Descriptives prevail among Yakut names, followed by memoratives.

In this article, we are considered with names-dedications (memoratives) They may be divided into the following three subgroups:

1. Totemic names.

2. Theophoric names (with religious meaning)

3. Disgusting names.

4. Deceptive names.

1. Totemic names. In the past, each Yakut tribe considered a certain animal as their sacred ancestor; members of the tribe were prohibited from killing, eating and naming their totem animal. Among totem animals were swan, goose, raven, eagle, white-lipped steed, falcon, hawk, jay, crow, weasel, squirrel and chipmunk. Bolo, in comments to his work noted that in the past, each Yakut ulus admired a certain bird as their divine ancestor and totem protector (Bolo, 1938). It should be noted, that the most common totem animals were eagle, swan and raven. (Alekseev, 2008). Childless women pleaded eagle for a child's soul. Many totem names may be seen among pre-Christian personal names, for example: *Kuba* "swan", *Suor* "raven", *Khotoy* "eagle", *Moghotoy* "chipmunk", *Syrghan* "bear", *Yunyuges* "bear cub", *Sahyl* "fox", *Boeroe* "wolf", *Tayakh* "moose", *Kookaaky* "Siberian jay". Yakuts gave their children such names in order to make them bearers of attributes of these animals.

A number of archaic Yakut rites and concepts was connected to adoration of such animals as bear, fox, wolf, lynx, moose, deer. Most well-preserved were rites and concepts related to veneration of bear. Bear cult was common for all Yakut groups. Out of caution, Yakuts call bear *ekhe* (grandfather) or *kyrdiaghas* (old man). It is worth noting that if children were dying in a family, a newborn child was wrapped in a bear hide and named "bear cub" (*Yunyuges*), but later such child would have ill nature (Alekseev, 2008).

2. Theophoric names (with religious meaning) Such names reflect the whole religious and philosophical system of the people. According to their views, such names had magic powers, for example:

Sata 'magic stone, found in stomach or liver of cattle, moose, deer or woodgrouse'. Yakuts believed in amulets (*ymyy*) saving a person from troubles and misfortunes. *Sata* stone was considered one of them, it was deemed being capable of inducing wind with rain and snow. (Alekseev, 2008). Verkhoyansk Yakuts believed in several types of *sata*: thunder sata, eagle sata and one from mare's heart. The latter was used to protect newborns and treating cattle, it protected its owner against curses of shamans (Khudyakov, 1969).

Kut, "human psychic domain, foundation of personal spiritual and bodily state, health, soul". According to Yakut beliefs, some living beings posses mysterious essence, that gives them ability to live in the Middle World. This substance is called *kut* and had been obtained from protecting deities. In order to give birth to a child, it was assumed necessary to obtain *kut* from protecting deities. It was given by the head spirit of *aiyy*, *Yuryung Ayyy toyon* (Alekseev, 2008).

Oyuun 'a person with supernatural abilities, bone-setter and healer, clairvoyant, soothsayer, shaman'. Shamans were considered having the most powers in fighting against evil spirits. "Shamans are translators of gods on Earth. They are elucidators of divine will, givers of health and illness, prosperity and famine, good and evil: (Khudyakov, 1969). Exposure to materials on Yakut shamanism shows that by the time Russian came to Lena, shamanism among Yakuts had been a well-formed profession (ibid).

Baianai 'protector spirit', spirit master of woods. According to beliefs of Yakuts, hunter's luck depends on favorable attitude of *Baai Baianay*.

Serge 'a tethering post, installed at the house entrance, i.e., on its eastern side'. Yakuts respected and venerated the tethering post *serge*. According to Yakut legends, serge had its own master spirit, called *Khaan Tyusyumer toyon* (Honorable Tyusyumer Sir) Yakuts believed that he could be helpful or send illness.

3. Repelling names. *Angkyi* 'spread (about smell)', *Barbakh* 'unimportant, poor, mediocre', *Elemte* 'unimportant thing'. In ancient times, there were people with the names of *Elemte oyuun, Elemte Bootur, Elemte Boeghoe*, and they all were very strong and powerful people. *Modiuun* 'mange'. Skin diseases were very common among ancient Yakuts due to their living conditions.

4. Deceptive names. *Kyuryuoeyekh* "runaway", *Tuora* "alien", *Byrdakh* "mosquito", *Kyhaghan* "bad", *Byrtakh* "bad, nasty", *Kutuyakh* "mouse", *Yt* "dog", *Byt* "louse", *Akaary* "fool", *Omuk* "from other nation", *Bagha* "frog", *Ahaakh* "morbid", *Bodon* "morbid", *Barbakh* "unimportant", *Bulumdiu* "foundling", *Diellik* "vagabond, vagrant", *Khaarbakh* "unimportant, bad", *Koengkoeloey* "airhead", *Moekiu* "bad, unpresentable", *Sytygan* "rotten".

Thus, pre-Christian personal names largely had protective characteristics. The main motivation behind such names is to preserve one's kindred. They contain not only linguistic, but also extralinguistic information about life, customs and tradition of the people.

7.   Conclusion

Studies of personal names of Yakuts of pre-Christian period are deemed most fruitful, as they store unique information concerning not only linguistic, but historic, ethnographic and cultural aspect as well.

Ancient people of Sakha believed in power of the word, thus, they put their dearest wishes or most powerful spells in naming. To that end, they turned to names of totem animals, used deceptive names, theophoric names. In addition, the studied sources contain a lot of zooanthroponyms, which store rich information about Yakut naming traditions. It was all done in aspiration to preserve and continue one's family.

The people of Sakha manifested their world view, culture, way of life, thinking in their personal names, thus, we may safely say that pre-Christian Yakut anthroponymics contains enough riches for subsequent etymological and linguistic cultural studies.

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