

FOLKLORIC TEXTS OF YUKAGHIR-HUNTERS OF THE UPPER KOLYMA ABOUT SHAMANS AND SHAMANISM

ФОЛЬКЛОРНЫЕ ТЕКСТЫ ЮКАГИРОВ-ОХОТНИКОВ ВЕРХНЕЙ КОЛЫМЫ О ШАМАНАХ И ШАМАНИЗМЕ

YUKARI KOLİMA'NIN YUKAGİR-AVCILARIN ŞAMANLAR VE ŞAMANİZM HAKKINDAKİ FOLKLOR METİNLERİ

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes materials about shamanism, contained in legends, stories and folk tales of Yukaghir-hunters of the upper Kolyma, institute of which officially got lost in the first half of the twentieth century. It also analyzes functional importance of the shaman as mediator between men and world of supernatural creatures, shaman-healer and shaman-defender from enemies. Attention is also paid to the personal qualities of the shaman.

The main sources of the study are comprised of the notes taken by the Pioneer researcher in this area (end of XIX – beginning of XX centuries), İ.A.İokhelson, and the compilation tapes produced by İ.A.Nikolayev and the writer of this study on old Yukaghir in the late twentieth century.

Key words: Siberia, Yukaghir, shaman, functions, shamanism, folklore.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье анализируются содержащиеся в легендах, рассказах и быличках юкагиров-охотников верхней Колымы материалы о шаманизме, институт которого официально исчез в первой половине XX в. Рассматривается функциональная значимость шамана как посредника между человеком и миром сверхъестественных существ, шамана-лекаря и шамана-защитника от врагов. Обращено внимание на личностные качества шамана.

Основными источниками стали тексты в записи пионера юкагироведения В.И. Иохельсона (конец XIX– начало XX вв.) и поздние записи конца XX в., сделанные И.А. Николаевой и автором настоящей статьи среди юкагиров старшего поколения.

Ключевые слова: Сибирь, юкагиры, шаман, функции, шаманизм, фольклор.

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ÖZET

Makalede Yukarı Kolima'nın Yukagir-Avcıların destanlarında, hikayelerinde küçük öykülerde XX asrın ilk yarısında resmen kaybolan şamanizm hakkında yer alan bilgiler incelenmiştir. Ayrıca insan ve doğaüstü ruhlarla aracılık yapan şamanın, şaman-hekim ve düşmanlardan koruyan şaman-müdafinin fonksiyonel önemi tetkik edilmiştir. Şaman kimliğinin kalitesinde dikkat çekilmiştir.

İncelemenin esas kaynakları yukagir araştırmacılığına temel atan İ. A. İokhelson'un (XIX asrın sonu-XX asrın başlangıcı) kayıtları, ve XX. asrın sonunda İ.A. Nikolayev ve benim tarafımdan yaşlı yukagirlere arasında yapılan kayıtlar olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sibirya, yukagirlere, şaman, fonksiyon, şamanizm, folklor.

The Yukaghir peoples – one of the most ancient peoples of the North-Eastern Asia. From the end of the XIX – the beginning of the XXI centuries in Russian administrative documents of the different states, numbers three Yukaghir groups (in census of population of the 2010 total population of Yukaghir for the Russian Federation is 1603).

Yukaghir of the upper Kolyma are compactly residing in the settlement of Nelemnoye of the Verkhnekolymskiy district of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). Their self-designation is *Odul*, what means “strong, mighty”. The same meaning has self-designation *Vadul* of the Yukaghir of the lower Kolyma, practicing reindeer husbandry. Yukaghir of the Chukotka *Chuvans* became Russified in XIX century (Dyachkov, 1992; Jochelson, 2005b; Tugolukov, 1979).

The group of the Yukaghir of the upper Kolyma is keeps primordial allocating, in fact Neolithic, type of activity – they are descendant hunters on elk, fur animals, upland fowls, migrating birds, they are also fishermen. They does not have any pets except dogs. This specific nature of the activity individuate the *Odul people* from *Vadul* and other neighboring peoples (reindeer herding Tungus, the Chukchee, the Koryaks, breeders and horse-breeders Yakut peoples), which in different periods of their history have moved to the producing economy. Differences in household and economic activities are fixed in worldview attitudes, folklore and mythological world view.

In present times *Oduls* residing in multinational community in wooden single-decked or double-decked mansions with central heating and lighting (winter atmospheric temperature goes below -55C). Inhabitants of the settlement of Nelemnoye are using all blessings of civilization – motor boats, snow-going vehicle, mobile telephony and other. In secondary schools they study native language and folklore.

The phenomenon of the settlement of Nelemnoye is the fact that settled down for permanent residence Russians, Yakut, Even and others become influenced by full-year nature and household cycle of *Odul* people, based on hunting and fishery, and also under the influence of *Odul* peoples' heathen attitude to the Nature. Newcomers become Yukaghir, and here, in this poly-ethnic atmosphere, there is a saying: “You don't born Yukaghir, you become Yukaghir”.

Traditional culture, including shamanism and folklore of this Yukaghir' group, became subject matter in the end of XIX-beginning of the XX centuries. The only researcher who made notes of *odul* shamans (Yuk. Alme/alma “shaman” of the verb “to do”) was V.

Jochelson. He described shamanistic views, rites of *kamlaniye*, clothes. In the end of XIX V. Jochelson by political motives was sent from the central Russia to Siberia. Finding himself in Yakut region he, as many of the political exiled, he devoted much attention to study of national culture, folklore, language of the Northern peoples. V. Jochelson took participation in three scientific expeditions on the north-east of Asia, including American Jesup North Pacific Expedition under the direction of F. Boas.

Materials on shamanism of the Odul people researcher published in two monographs. This is a volumetric set of folkloric texts, published in Saint-Petersburg in 1900; in 2005 in conjunction with 150th Anniversary of the scientist the book was republished in Yakutsk at instigation of the author of the given article (2005). Second monograph “The Yukaghir and the Yukaghirized Tungus” was issued in English in 1926 (Leiden-New York). The book was for the first time translated into Russian in Yakutsk by candidate of art criticism V. Ivanov and his spouse Z. Ivanova-Unarova, published in the same year of anniversary (2005b). These monographs we may call the unique encyclopedia of the Yukaghir culture.

Some materials on shamanism of the forest Yukaghir are contained in treatises of ethnologists of the XX century, though there are no folkloric texts about shamans (Spiridonov, 1996; Tugolukov, 1979; Yukaghir, 1975).

Since 1986 among the older generation of Odul of the settlement of Nelemnoye and some of the Odul families, residing at the district centre – township of Zyryanka, was made fieldwork post-graduate student of the Institute of linguistics (Moscow), currently DLitt I. Nikolaeva and the author of the given article, at that time laboratory assistant of the Historic and Philological Faculty of the Yakut University. There were made notes of legends, stories and folk tales about shamans (Zhukova, Nikolaeva, Demina, 1989 a,b; Master of the Land, 1994).

Samples of oral folk arts, including texts about shamans, were compiled by young researcher, the Yukaghir from the settlement of Nelemnoye, currently Cand. Sc. (Philology), P. E. Prokopyeva (Zhukova, Prokopyeva, 1991). Review of the shamanic theme in the Yukaghir folklore were finished by treatises of the beginning of the XXI century (Zhukova, Burykin, 2000; Burykin, 2007; Zhukova, 2012).

V. Jochelson wrote that in times past shaman had significant influence in the Yukaghir society, he was the protector of the family with many functions. However in the end of the XIX century shaman’s positions were weakened. “If earlier the Yukaghir shaman served as a priest and a mediator between the hunters and animals’ spirits-protectors, even in this important area of the Yukaghir life for whom hunting is the main source of existence, the role of shaman has lost its meaning” (2005 b: 243). The medical and fortune-telling function of *alme* came forward to the forefront. In this specialization, also in its attributes, clothes and other elements the shamanism of the Yukaghir has many resemblances to the neighboring peoples – Tungus and Yakut (*ibidem*).

The scientist and writer of the Yukaghir, first from the low-numbered peoples of the North Ph.D. in Economics N.I. Spiridonov (Teki Odulok) in 1930 about shamans of his peoples said the following: “The duty of the shaman is to predict the future with help of the guardian-spirits spiritual masters of the land and water, mountains and forests etc., to search for a lighter and more profitable ways of life, protect and save the neighbors and get in touch with all the visible and invisible spirits for this or that purpose.”

In 2000 A.A. Burykin with reference to the materials of V.Jochelson wrote the following about functions of the Odul shaman: "The duty of the shaman was to protect his people against evil spirits, misfortunes and troubles with help of spirits and magical acts, he also served as mediator between dead and alive members of family" (Zhukova, Burykin, 2000:128).

The given article on the basis of analysis of the folklore texts proposes the specification of the main functions of the Odul shaman. Relying on the definition, given by researchers of the Odul culture, we may separate three main functions: 1) shaman-mediator between men and mythical Master of the Land, spiritual masters of the Nature, protectors of the animals, spirits of ancestor; 2) protector against persons of foreign races, visible and invisible evil spirits, intrigues of other shamans, competitor in force with rival shamans; 3) healer, defender against diseases.

First and main function of *alme* was in mediation on behalf of the family to supernatural creatures to provide nourishment to his clan group. Food supply is one of the main human need. Usually have resource to the *alme* in case of entry into deficiency. Using magical practices (description of which is absent in texts) shaman found the cause and pointed the way to change the situation for the better. Most often he served as keeper of traditions with functions of punishment. The cause usually laid in the fact that men have set any violations of hunting traditions and taboos. Apparently, the traditional rules of law could not provide each particular case, and these particular cases "investigated" the shaman. Life of hunting group depended on his solutions and advices.

The most typical example of exit from the critical situation is "Ancient legend" about a girl who looked into the eyes of mined elk and regretting it. Mythical master of elks became known compassionate thoughts of the girl, and he stopped "giving" elks at hunters' shots. Hunting resumed after the girl and two dogs were sacrificed (hanged) upon the advice of the shaman (Jochelson, 2005a: 128-131). The girl was guilty in the fact that without knowing of magic practices of hunters, interposed in affairs of field-men. Hunter's work is search, pursuit and harvesting for life support of his native group, protecting himself and clan against possible "revenge" of spirit of an animal or its protectors. Traditionally, the production of fishers viewed as a gift of an animal Master to the people, what must be accepted with joy, ritual laughter is possible. Mystical beliefs and magical practices do not violating the existing fishing and hunting traditions and not harming nature were not available to the uninitiated. "Ancient legend" demonstrates rigidity of customs of half-primeval hunting group, admitting human sacrifice. Aim of the shaman in such situation is defined by renewal of harmonic relations between men and animals' spiritual protectors.

Here is another example. "Investigation" of this unforeseen situation by shaman, when hunters did not knew cause why elks stopped being hunted, described in "Legend of a hexapod elk", was recorded by me from expert of language, folklore, and traditional culture of odul, resident of the settlement of Nelemnoye V.G. Shalugin (Zhukova and others, 1989b: 3-6). Master of elks is a man small in stature, sitting on a hexapod elk, scared animals away because of men, who scattered on the ground bones of harvested elks. We don't know from the text of the legend, if there was a sacrifice, but tribesmen asked shaman: "Look at our road", and he answered: "I will check it somehow".

Shaman's advice to bury the bones in a proper way contained the following: "Now, if you will get elk, clear and put his skull, bones and hooves on the granary. If you will do it

badly, Master of the elk will not forgive us for the second time. He will bear his elks to the another land, he will move” (ibidem: 5). Shaman’s admonition, prohibiting scattering of the bones of animals, is observed in the present. It is believed that the burial of the elk’s bones in accordance with the tradition is contributing to their magical reincarnation, which is very important to fill the Taiga with new animals and food supply of hunting groups.

Second function as defender against visible and invisible evil spirits, intrigues of another shaman *alme* is competing with them through the therianthropy (he changes into birds, small and big animals), asks for help the masters of the nature, souls of forefathers, help of spiritual helpers (mammoth, dog etc.), magical practices. *Alme* conquer Yakut shaman, who ate souls of children, born in family of his son (Jochelson, 2005a: 193-195). Wanting to destroy the enemy, *alme* may voluntarily leave this life and seek revenge, being in a different physical condition (ibidem: 174-175). His rivals in the folklore texts are usually the foreigner shaman, evil spirits in male hypostasis. Female characters: Large Disease, devil-girl singing on a mountain, Death itself.

In this struggle certainly present spiritual helpers, the number and strength of which decided the outcome of the match. In texts *alme* usually has one to several magic helpers and if he lose them he stops being shaman (Zhukova and others, 1989b: 21-24). That is why for becoming a shaman one or several spirits – some animated substance are necessary. In the arsenal of *alme* there were some magical objects, such as small shaman board (Zhukova, 2012: 358). For the matter of that, the folk tale describes “illegal” acquisition by magical way of tea and tobacco from the stock of a wealthy man, which shaman made for the request of his clan members. As a typological parallel we can bring information about shamans of Anadyr, Chukotka region. In the end of XIX A.E. Dyachkov wrote that shaman instead of an arrow had so-called “enemy stone, which he use to shoot his rival-shaman... Sometimes two shamans, while playing with their enemy force, shoot each other with said stones” (1992: 236).

During summer feast Shakhajibe, dedicated to the main protector of the Yukaghir – the Sun, forest Yukaghir made special contests between shamans to try might of their spiritual protectors (Jochelson, 2005b: 188).

Third function of healing, apparently, in the days before the shamans, was one of the first selected specializations.

V. Jochelson made records of three rites of “kamlaniye” of the Yukaghir shamans related to healing of the ill (2005b: 273-288). Researcher mentioned there the Koryak, the Tungus and the Yakut influence. In one of the noted by him stories *aybi* “shadow/soul” of ill man has gone into the underground world of shadows, and *alme* with assistance of spiritual helpers brought it back (Jochelson, 2005a: 142-143).

Healing of patients by shamans described in many texts of the late 20th century, the plots are different. *Alme* is fighting personalized Death (Zhukova and others, 1989b: 19-21), Big Disease (female image of infectious diseases – smallpox, measles) (ibidem: 27-29), demon who brought a heart of an ill man into the world of forefathers’ shadows (Master of the Land: 42-43).

Shaman is a forecaster, counselor and savior in difficult situations, he performed the function of an oracle had warned about difficulties in a forthcoming road. Shaman predicted first meeting of the Tungus with the Yukaghir, and the Yukaghir with Russians (Jochelson, 2005a: 105-124; 2005b: 289-290). He may manipulate the time, use foresight

and see past times. Most often *alme* used unquestioned authority in matters which come under its competence.

Alme is a wise man, young or middle age, sometimes the old man. I.A. Nikolaeva recorded the story of a shaman's grandson, expert of Odul culture N.M. Likhachev about his grandfather Semen, who "became a shaman after three years he lost his mind" (Zhukova and others, 1989b: 25-27). N.M. Likhachev told that grandfather tested him for shamanic powers, but it did not work out (Zhukova, 2012: 354). The folk tale reveals some manners of shamanic examination neofit.

However, in the late 19th century predictions of a shaman for the relatives no longer strictly required for attention and caution. During the stay of V. Jochelson on Kolyma, "Yukaghir shamans are rarely involved in the prediction of the future, and asking questions themselves are skeptical about this" (2005b: 288). In "Ancient legend" shaman warned his younger relatives: "Friends of mine, do not play, - we will die, the Lamut (which means the Even. - L.Zh.) warriors are here to come". Young men did not listen to him, and many of them were killed by the Lamut, only the shaman and his brother escaped (Jochelson, 2005a: 157-158). Another legend tells of how the shaman gave his stomach to his wife: "This is my belly, keep it as your own eyes," and after saying it he flew away with Siberian Cranes. In his absence, his wife fell in love with another man, and she tore her husband's stomach. Her actions were the cause of death of the shaman, the woman and her lover (ibidem: 242-245).

As a protection *alme* uses supernatural properties of various objects, such as guts of the main sacrificial animal of the Odul – dogs (Zhukova and others, 1989b: 27-29).

To defeat the enemy *alme* often resort to trickery. According to his admonition relatives sewed horns on their hats to avoid death. Seeing horned men, Death took them for its own men (ibidem: 19-21). When Death came for the shaman, the first time he has lulled her with beautiful singing, and then banished, the second time dropped it into the bag of dog bladder, and for the third time, when Seven Deaths came for him, he lured them into three boxes and mured (ibidem).

Speed of reaction, ingenuity, toughness, developed by several thousand years of hunting way of life and the struggles with neighboring tribes left their mark on shamanism of the Yukaghir. Shaman is ruthless and for public and private interests he is able to afford human sacrifice (he sacrificed a girl to the Master of elk; sacrificed his own children, "ate" relatives). He is vindictive and capricious (ibidem: 21-24; 27).

Shaman is lonely or lives with family. But shaman-father never brings happiness to his family, Often, for his own rescue, he brings his own children as sacrifice for the rival-shaman, for example, in texts "Tale about girl of stone" (Jochelson, 2005a: 228-231); "Raven's eggs" (Zhukova and others, 1989a: 48-49). Traveling, competing and fighting, shaman rarely come home. In one of legends *alme* in bird appearance came back home. "He became a man. His wife and children were happy but he said to his wife: "Do not be glad, I will not live long". When they woke up next morning the shaman was dead" (Jochelson, 2005a: 170-173).

In Odul texts shaman usually is a man. Mentions of shaman-women are rare and contained in early writings (ibidem: 189, 230). Negative role of shaman-father is observed in becoming of his shaman-daughter that had unfavorable consequences for her younger sisters (ibidem: 228-236). We can see here evidence of unfavorable shamanic inheritance

on paternal line, for his daughter, at least. The conclusion is that if in some texts of Odul' folklore shaman-woman has a semantic connection with her shaman-father she can be opposed and harmful to the proper range of female images.

It can be explained by the polarization of the male and female origins of Odul. V. Jochelson drew attention to it as following: "Typical for the primitive systems of Yukaghir is an antithesis between men and women as two separate groups. This can be seen in games in which men and women make two hostile parties; in the language, some of the sounds of which women pronounce in different from men's way; and for a woman maternal relations are more important, and for men - relatives on his father's line; and such socialization of activities between the sexes, which has created for each of them distinct and independent sphere of activity" (1898: 259).

In the late 19th - early 20th centuries in the Odul' society still remained age-sex unions. In summer, during the annual feast, which marks the beginning of a new annual cycle, men "organized military alliances against hostile nations... Women and girls are also join alliances of friends and exchange gifts" (Jochelson, 2005b: 188). In modern Odul nation in the religious pagan views observed preference of men to appeal to the mythical Master of the Land, and women appeal to the Earth-Mother; also there are differences by gender in jewelry clothing (Zhukova, 2012: 178).

Positive character of a girl-shaman, who had timbrel, was described in "Tale of foul-mouthed man" (Jochelsonm 2005a: 188-189). While shamanic rite she turned into the Venus star her scampish little brother. Foul-mouthed man is a violator of social norms and hunting traditions. In text described semantic connection of daughter with her died father (text does not show if he was shaman too). Trying to save her mother and herself, shaman-girl hunted elk, taking a bow with a quiver, skis and hunting stick of her died father. Hunting elk is a men's occupation, women usually set traps, snares, loops for birds and small animals.

Feature of some latest legends of shamans is their proximity to the fairy tale, they contained tint of humor, which was not present in the texts of the previous period. It appears, for example, in connection with the inclusion of Christian images. Shaman-healer abandons its functions, closes the hole through which he walked into the earth of shadows of ancestors, limits the scope of his activities and moves to Christianity. Thus, after treatment of his patient, shaman went to see Satan's bath which "even the devils are afraid of." Making sure, he decided to become a saint (Master of the Land, 1994: 42-43). Apparently, cycle of legends and stories about shamans of the forest Yukaghir, which institute of shamanism was lost in the first half of the 20th century over time transformed into a fairy tale.

Such a way, the body of shamanic texts of the forest Yukaghir presented as direct entries of rites and legends of shamans of the late 19th-early 20th centuries, and later retellings (late 20th-early 21th centuries) of the legends, stories, tales of the nowadays lost area of cultural activity, which regulated in the past many aspects of the Odul' society.

V.Jochelson was followed by many researchers whose works were cited in the article, and who wrote about the composite nature of the Odul culture, including shamanism, noting in it the Tungus, the Yakut, the Koryak and Chukchi influences and borrowings.

Certain effect on the presentation of shamans and shamanism has left the Christianization of the peoples of the North.

Presented in the given article results of analysis of folklore texts of the forest Yukaghir-hunters may be useful for future comparative matching of images and functions of shamans in folklore, not only of the Odul' nearest neighbors, but also of the nations of the outlying regions. Such comprehensive studies could allow defining the existence of general and particular worldview attitudes and individual items.

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