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YAKUTIA SPECIAL

HISTORY OF CONTACTS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND YAKUTIA

Andrian Borisov

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SAKHA (YAKUTIA), 1990-2009

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HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

Editor : K. WARIKOO

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HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES is a quarterly Journal published by the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, which is a non-governmental, non-profit research, cultural and development facilitative organisation. The Journal is devoted to the study of various issues pertaining to the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region in South and Central Asia or parts thereof, connected with its environment, resources, history, art and culture, language and literature, demography, social structures, communication, tourism, regional development, governance, human rights, geopolitics etc.

While the principal concern of the Journal is on its focal area, i.e., from Afghanistan to Myanmar including the Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, China, Mongolia, Nepal, Bhutan and the Indian Himalayan States of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and North East states; papers with a broad sweep addressing environmental, social, cultural, economic, geopolitical and human rights issues are also welcomed.

The objective is to make a scientific appraisal of the issues confronting the Himalayan and adjoining region in South and Central Asia or parts thereof, and to make specific policy oriented studies and need based recommendations as the means to promote the human, educational and economic advancement of the peoples of the region besides preserving and enriching their ethno-cultural, literary and historical heritage. Promotion of human rights, social justice, peace, harmony and national integration are the other key areas in which the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation has been active.

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Editor's Page

Comprising half of the Far Eastern Federal District, Yakutia is the largest subnational governing body by area in the world with 3,083,523 square kilometers (1,190,555 sq. miles). It is larger than Argentina in terms of size. Its capital is the city of Yakutsk. The Sakha Republic is one of the ten autonomous Turkic Republics within the Russian Federation. It is also well known for its extreme and severe climate. The republic's main waterway is the Lena River, which links Yakutsk with the rail station of Ust-Kut in Irkutsk Oblast

As per 2010 census, Yakutia has a population of 958,528 consisting mainly of ethnic Yakuts and Russians. Yakuts constitute 49.9% of population (466,492 persons) and Russians are 37.8% (353,649 persons). Others include Evenks (2.2% - 21,080 persons), Ukrainians (2.2 % - 20,341), Tatars (0.9% - 8,122). The population of Russians has declined considerably since 1989, when they numbered 550,263 (50.3%) of the total population. The official languages are both Russian and Sakha, also known as Yakut, which is spoken by approximately 40% of the population. The Yakut language is a member of the Turkic language family.

Before the arrival of the Russian Empire, the majority of the local population believed in Tengrism common to Turkic-language people of Central Asia, or in indigenous shamanism. Under the Russians, the local population was converted to the Russian Orthodox Church, but in practice the people generally continued to follow traditional religions. According to a 2012 survey, 37.8% of the population of Yakutia adheres to the Russian Orthodox Church, 13% of the population adheres to Tengrism or Yakut shamanism and 2% to Islam.

About 40% of Sakha (Yakutia) Republic lies above the Arctic circle and all of it is covered by permafrost which greatly influences the region's ecology and limits forests in the southern region. Arctic and subarctic tundra define the middle region, where lichen and moss grow as great green carpets and are favorite pastures for reindeer. In the southern part of the tundra belt, scattered stands of dwarf Siberian pine and larch grow along the rivers. Below the tundra is the vast taiga forest region. Larch trees dominate in the north and stands of fir and pine begin to appear in

the south. Taiga forests cover about 47% of Sakha and almost 90% of the cover is larch. Yakutia is well endowed with raw materials. The soil contains large reserves of oil, gas, coal, diamonds, gold, silver, tin and tungsten and many others. It produces 99% of all Russian diamonds and over 25% of the diamonds mined in the world.

Yakutia was incorporated into Tsarist Russia in the 17th century, after the defeat of the Khanate of Sibir. In August 1638, the Moscow Government formed a new administrative unit with the administrative center of Lensky Ostrog (Fort Lensky), the future city of Yakutsk, which had been founded by Pyotr Beketov in 1632. The Siberian Governorate was established in 1708. Russian settlers began to form a community in the 18th century, which adopted certain Yakut customs and was often called *Yakutyane* or Lena Early Settlers. However, the influx of later settlers assimilated them into the Russian mainstream by the 20th century. In 1805, Yakutsk Oblast was split from Irkutsk Governorate. Yakutsk Oblast in the early 19th century marked the easternmost territory of the Russian Empire. With the formation of Primorskaya Oblast in 1856, the Russian territories of the Pacific were detached from Yakutia. Industry and transport began to develop at the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the Soviet period. Now began geological exploration, mining, and local lead production.

On 27 April 1922, former Yakutsk Oblast was named as the Yakut ASSR. In 1992, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Yakutia was recognized in Moscow as the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation. Yakutia is historically part of Russian Siberia, but since the formation of the Far Eastern Federal District in 2000, it has been an administrative part of the Russian Far East. The supreme legislative body of state authority in Sakha is a unicameral State Assembly known as the *Il Tumen*. The government of the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic is the executive body of state authority.

This issue of *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* is devoted to Yakutia (Sakha Republic) of Russia, as part of its efforts to shed light on the indigenous ethno-cultural characteristics of the vast resource rich Siberian region of Russian Federation. Earlier the journal has brought out special issues devoted to Buryatia, Siberia, Khakassia, Altai and N.F. Katanov – the great Khakas orientalist.

K. Warikoo

HISTORY OF CONTACTS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND YAKUTIA, 17TH-20TH CENTURIES

ANDRIAN BORISOV

Sakha Republic (Yakutia) having a territory of 3.1 million sq. kms. and with a population of 95,53,000 is located in the northeastern part of Russia and has extensive Arctic Ocean coastlines. The sharp continental climate (an absolute minimum - -72°C and maximum - $+39^{\circ}\text{C}$) is one of the distinctive peculiarities. This is the land of the permafrost, mountains and taiga. The capital Yakutsk, founded by Russian Cossaks in 1632, is situated on the Lena River (4,400 km).

The population is mainly concentrated in Central Yakutia (heavily forested plateaus with valleys on middle Lena River) and in the Western and Southern Yakutia mountain-taiga regions with well developed mining industry. The northern and eastern regions have very little population. Sakha (Yakuts) before 1960s was a large nation in this area. Industrial development led to the intensive migration from Russia. A lot of cities and urban settlements appeared especially on the West, South and North of Yakutia. By 1989, Sakha made up 33.4 percent (36,52,000) of the total population (1.1 million). In 2010, their share increased to 49.9 percent (46,65,000). Number of Russians on the contrary decreased from 55,03,000 (1989) or 50.3 percent to 35,37,000 (2010) or 37.8 percent, due to economic crisis in the mining industry.

The economy of central Yakutia is mainly settled by Sakha based on cattle breeding. In the past few years there has been strong migration to Yakutsk from country-side. Evenks, Evens, Dolgans and Yukagirs are small hunting and reindeer breeding ethnic groups (about 2.2 percent of the total population) on the northern, eastern and southern regions of Yakutia. In spite of the mass Christianization in the eighteenth-nineteenth century, indigenous population retains its traditional culture. That's why since Gorbachev's perestroika led to the democratization of

society in Yakutia, the growth of nationalism found a propitious soil. During the Soviet period (1918-1991) in Yakutia, Russian language was dominant. Because Sakha were majority for a long time and they created their own literature, today Sakha language has prospects for development.

In 1922 the Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was founded within Soviet Russia. Stalin's totalitarian regime restricted political rights of the young republic. In 1990 new government of YASSR declared its sovereignty. Since 1992 the Republic obtained the present title. Numerous national organizations and associations are the result of the growing ethnic consciousness.

Main branches of local industry are the extraction of coal, gas, gold, non ferrous metals, diamonds, wood processing. Great industrial centers (Mirny, Aldan, Nerungry) are concentrated on the western and southern regions. Vast territory (more than 3.1 million square km) influences the transportation network. Mostly aircraft and river fleet provide external communications. A in 1989 railway reached only some southern regions and has now come to Yakutsk. A lot of prospects will be opened when trains begin to go to Central Yakutia.

The ancestors of the indigenous peoples of Yakutia: Yukagir, Yakuts, Evens and Evenki before the arrival of Russians, occupied almost all habitable corners of the vast region. Yukagirs lived not only in the north-east (basins of Kolyma River and Alazeya River), but also in the basins of Indigirka river and Yana river. Traces of their ancestors were found in the Lower Lena river. No wonder the Yakut legends are associated with the countless "Yukagir lights." They settled in river valleys, engaged in fishing and hunting wild deer and geese. Up to the 17th century they used stone tools.

Ancestors of Evens and Evenki - twin reindeer herders settled in the basins of Olenek river, Vilyui river, Olekma river, Aldan river. Besides, reindeer role of hunting moose and fishing in was noticeable their economy. Thanks to the deer they can roam over large distances, entering the watershed Enisey river and Amur river, and some groups of Evens (Lamuts) migrated to the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk (Lam). The first Russian explorers were called the Evenki. Number of Tungus reached 12,000 people. They could confederate tribes led by chiefs - *sonings*.

Ancestors of Yakuts (Sakha) - the northernmost Turkic people lived mainly in the Middle Lena, but also in the basin of the Lower Vilyui, Yana river, and the mouth of Olekma river. By the time of the Russian

arrival, there were no less than 28,000 people. They mainly bred horses, and had year-round grazing. Small barns - *khotons* contained cattle. Income inequality had gone so far that some large livestock owners contained up to 300 head of cattle at the same time, whereas many farms had only a few cows. There were poor people who had no cattle and were forced to live by fishing (*balyksyts*). However, Yakuts retained the division into blood-related groups - *yeah uusa*, led *toyons* (*knyaztsys* on Russian documents). Several geographically close groups formed *ulus*.

Russian state in the 16th-17th centuries experienced a deep inner turmoil caused by the establishment of the state. It was accompanied by social and political conflict, led to Tsar's Ivan the Third terrorist regime - *oprichnina* (1565-1572) and Troubles in early 17th century. In order to deal with political crises and natural disasters, the country's economy was encouraged to continue with the colonization of the Ancient Russia in the east. The surplus population: fugitive peasants, Cossacks, manufacturers moved to the Volga region, the Urals, and then to Siberia. Russian state, which was able to recover from the Troubles, expanded its territory and strengthened its power from the resources of land, lying for "Stone" (so called at the time the Urals). It built forts – Tobolsk, Tomsk, Mangazeya, Yenisei and others, levied a tribute (a tribute of the fur) on the local population, promoted trade (by making a fair), developed agriculture. In Siberia, it faced competition from the Central Asian and Mongolian Khanates - heirs of Golden Horde. In the middle of the 17th century China established the Qing Dynasty, which was actively involved in the Far East and Siberia. Russians were able in a short time (from 1583 to 1630s) to pass from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean. Russian state by its far-sighted policy, which included a moderate tribute – *Yassak* (1 sable as against 5-6 skins pelt per person collected by Qing China), non-interference in internal social and economic life of the local population, tolerance firmly established in most of Siberia and the Far East by the middle of the 17th century.

Yakutia was in 1632 in the Russian state, when the Yenisei *strelets* captain Peter Beketov founded Lensky fort (future Yakutsk) and collected tribute from 35 Yakut *knyazets* of 16 regions (*uluses*) who gave to Moscow Tsar their oath of allegiance. This important event was preceded by the first campaigns of Mangazeya and Yenisei Cossacks and trappers in 1624-1631 (headed by P.Pyanda, M.Vasilev, A.Dobrynsky, I.Galkin etc.). Not everything went smoothly and successfully at first. There were misunderstandings and conflict. Thus, the Cossacks band headed by M.Vasilev and A.Dobrynsky withstood a siege of five Yakut *knyazts*.

Ataman I. Galkin's squad was surrounded by an army of Yakut *knyazets* Tynin (Tygyn) and Boydon and with great difficulty managed to escape. Over time, peace became prevalent. Some *knyazets* (Mymak, Loguy, Eyuk etc.) preferred the voluntary payment of tribute for non-interference in their internal way of life. In those years noticeable role was played by Yakut *knyazets* Tygyn, whom Russia recovered and over the growing influence and power was called "Featured *knyazets*". There are numerous stories about the life of Tygyn, its richness and hikes on Yakut *uluses* and clans. Indeed, he and his clan were able to unite many clans of Khangalassky *ulus* and some other neighboring groups of Yakuts. His authority and power recognized *uluses* on both sides of Lena river. Legends about Tygyn are preserved on the wide territory of even Yakuts of Vilyui, Olekma, Yana and Kolyma. The first time he tried, leaning on his squad of 200 soldiers and militia allied *uluses* to resist Cossacks. But he was very old and soon died (after 1631 his name was not mentioned in sources). Other *uluses* stood for peaceful relations with Russian (Borogon *tojon* Loguy and Nams *tojon* Mymak). Tygyn's sons Otkuray, Bozek and Chelai seized the initiative of *knyazets* inheriting the power of their father, tried to continue father's policy, but their uncle, Tygyn's brother Nika and his son Eyuk, shared position above *tojons*. The situation was exacerbated due to competition between the Cossacks, who came to Yakutia from different forts Mangazeya, Yeniseisky, Tomsky, Krasnoyarsky, etc. In pursuit of profit and tribute, some Cossack chieftains entered into open confrontation with the local population, using the internal strife between different clans and *uluses*. All this triggered Yakut's revolts in 1634 and 1636. News of this abuse reached the government. Therefore, in 1638, to prevent disorder and to strengthen its power Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich issued a decree on the formation of an independent Yakut District with its *voevodas*-governors.

Yakut District foundation and formation of the *Voevodsky* Provincial Administration in Yakutsk was a turning point in the history of the state in Yakutia. The first governors P. Golovin and M. Glebov arrived in Yakutsk in 1641 and conducted a population census and set a new fixed procedure for collecting tribute. Unfortunately, understanding the benefits of establishing Provincial Office and the new system of tribute did not come immediately. In addition, governor P. Golovin was tough and straightforward politician. This resulted in the dramatic events in 1642, when Yakut *tojons* militias led by the sons of Tygyn again surrounded Yakutsk. However, no collision took place and Yakuts departed from the

fort without a fight. Mymak's and Loguy's peace initiatives played a role and M. Glebov offered more flexible methods of *Yassak* policy. However, the new tribute and provincial administration successfully established themselves and formed the list of 40 Yakut *Yassak* (tributaries) regions which did not change for over 80 years.

Russian Cossacks during the 17th century made outstanding geographical discoveries. In 1638 the Cossacks headed by I. Moskvitin took to the Okhotsk Sea. In 1648, S. Dezhnev's squad went to first north-eastern extremity of Asia and discovered the strait that separates it from America. In the 1650s, the expeditions of V. Poyarkov and E. Khabarov reached the Amur river and first described the nature and population of the region. At the end of the century, "Kamchatka's Ermak" Yakut Cossack W. Atlasov moved to Kamchatka Peninsula. All these expeditions were sent on assignment by Yakutsk *voevodas* from Yakutsk. Yakutsk gradually became an outpost for development of the North-East Asia. When relations with Qing China soured, the Yakut governor was given the task of organizing the defense of the eastern borders of the Russian state. One of them M. Krovkov had a General rank and had a great combat experience. It was during the governorship of *voevoda* I. Priklonsk that walls of Yakutsk in 1670-1680s were rebuilt. Two belts of the walls, the powerful 16-meter towers gave menacing look of Yakut Kremlin. At this time, on the border with China, a battle was fought in which Yakut Cossacks participated. Danger passed off in 1689 with the signing of Nerchinsk Peace Treaty.

Events of Yakutia in the Russian state led to a broad migration of Yakut population in the North-East. During the second half of the 17th century, Yakuts settled in the whole basin of Vilyui, Oymyakon, Indigirka, Kolyma. For example, if in the middle of the century Vilyui Yakuts were several hundred people, at the turn of the 17th-18th centuries they were thousands. New ethnic processes were started. Thus, by mixing the Evenki, Samoyed and the Yakut population in the north-west of Yakutia and the Taimyr Peninsula, Dolgan ethnic group began to form.

One of the important consequences of these developments has been the emergence of agriculture. Yakut historian G.P. Basharin describes this as one of the most innovative events of the time. The first experiments were undertaken by governor P. Golovin in the Middle Lena, but they were unsuccessful. Then, almost simultaneously, Russian peasants "sat on the land" in Olekma river and Amga river in 1650s. These were people from Verkholensk peasantry, which got attracted by Yakut governor's benefits for preparing Yakutia local bread. Gradually in the second half

of the 17th century little villages of Olekma and Amga peasants emerged. Interest in agriculture arose among the local population. Originally it were the Yakut poor who hired Russian peasants for work. These peasants passed on agricultural implements to Yakuts who themselves became farmers. So, the first Yakut engaged in agriculture in the 1670s, is Ivashko Ivanov.

Due to the destruction of the sable in the central part of Yakutia, the charges of tribute were dropped till the mid-17th century. Now *Yassak* arrears began to grow, shifting from father to son in inheritance. Unscrupulous builders used the tribute dues of aborigines and indulged in tyranny and violence. Some desperate people sold their last property and even their wives and children in order to pay back taxes. The complaints did not reach the central government because of the huge distance. So it was decided to send a deputation of Yakut *knyazts* to Moscow in order to draw the attention of the royal government to such a situation. There is indirect evidence that even in 1660, the five sons of Nam *tojons* Mymak tried to take a collective petition letter of ten Yakut regions to Moscow. Unfortunately, no documentary evidence is there. Therefore, the first deputation of Yakut *knyazets* N.Nikin, M.Bozekov and T.Orsukaev drove to Moscow in 1676, and was received by Tsar Feodor Alekseevich in 1677. Yakuts requested in their collective petition not to charge tribute from deceased relatives, let Yakut *tojons* to gather tribute, to allow them to hold a court in small claims cases worth up to five rubles, and to secure for them *knyazets* princely titles by a special decree.

Eighteenth century began with Tsar Peter I famous reforms. Tsar-reformer in his far-reaching planed the reconstruction of the country on the Western model and was keenly interested in Siberia and Yakutia. He wanted to use their natural resources. To this end, on his orders were organized academic expeditions headed by D.Messersmidt, V. Bering and I.Chirikov. And so Irkutsk and Okhotsk post roads were founded. After the great fire in Yakutsk in the beginning of the 18th century, the Tsar built in 1706 the first stone buildings of the Provincial Office and Trinity Cathedral. Following the 1708 Provincial Reform, Yakut county entered into the Siberian Province, then in 1719 it went to the newly formed Irkutsk Province. Perhaps under the influence of these reforms, 40 Yakut *Yassak* regions merged into five enlarged *uluses* later.

By the middle of the 18th century in the matter of national importance, collection of tribute again encountered difficulties. It was not only due to the growth of arrears, but with carting obligations when Yakuts made

free state-owned transport goods on Okhotsky and Irkutsky routes. Therefore, it was again decided to send a deputation to the Empress. For a long time it could not be done. In 1766 finally it became possible to do it. The Empress Catherine II announced the convening of Commission on the drafting of the New Code of the Russian Empire. Each class, as well as so-called heterodox peoples had the right to elect their deputies. In Yakutsk in the presence of governor, representatives of five *uluses* gathered. They all were subsequently called *ulus* heads. They unanimously elected the 49-year Khangalass *tojon* Sophron Syranov, who made Yakut "Instructions" and added their "Completion of the Instructions." S.Syranov described in detail the problems that had arisen in the payment of tribute and allocation of duties, and also proposed solutions to these problems. In particular, he proposed to transfer the functions of collecting tribute by Yakuts to their *tojons*. Drawing attention to the hardships of the Yakuts, he asked to transfer state-owned freight transportation contracting. In addition, the Yakut deputy would make proposals for the allocation of "Yakut regional leader" to represent the interests of all people before the Tsarist authorities. He cared about education for Yakuts, and sought to establish a school for the education of Yakut children. As S.Syranov's wishes were not fully satisfied, so in 1789 another Yakut deputy head of Borogonsky *ulus* A.Arzhakov presented to Empress "Plan of Yakuts", which consisted of nine points. In the first two, he described the situation of the Yakuts, and in seven locations offered a way to improve it. He again insisted on the introduction of the post of "Yakut regional leader". Moreover, A.Arzhakov asked for confirmation of the rights of nobility of Yakut *tojons*, who had been assigned these rights by Peter I. Just like S.Syranov, he wanted to introduce Yakut "conscientious judgment" that would be independent of the local Russian judicial authorities. In other words, both the deputies called for the empowerment of the Yakut self-government. There is an interesting point in which he offered to fix the cleared plots of land for those who cleared their first. After S.Syranov and A.Arzhakov at the end of 19th century, other Yakut deputations followed, all aimed at further strengthening the Yakut self-government.

Yakut requests were heard and in 1766 the First Yassak Commission led by former warlord Yakut Miron Cherkashennikov began working in Yakutia. The main objective of the Commission was to increase the collection of tribute by ordering Yassak system, taking into account: 1) the number and quality of the land, 2) hunting, and 3) the state of cattle.

The census was to identify the men who reached the age of tributaries and were not covered in previous censuses. The Commission authorized the judicial authorities that tributaries should receive complaints about "robbery and bribes." The Commission had the right to deport criminals not of an officer rank and also remove a chief officer rank. It was decided to move to the collective imposition of Yassak: each *nasleg* - former Yassak regions should pay total tribute. Tribute layout within societies was to be made by the tributaries by agreement under *knyazets*. Thus was formed Yakut community-*naslegs* which is still existing.

Back in 1735 and in 1741-1745, the Bishop of Irkutsk Innokenty II Nerunovich made two pastoral visits to Yakutia. Fulfilling Tsar's decrees of baptism of infidels in Siberia, he carried the Word of God and was able to draw about two thousand inhabitants during these trips to Orthodoxy. When Catherine II accelerated the Christianization of Siberia, she introduced incentives for the newly baptized: exemption from tribute for up to three years, award of money, clothes, etc. In the 1760s began mass baptism of Yakutia. For a little over half-century, Orthodoxy was embraced by almost all inhabitants of the region. This was an important historical event. The locals were now no longer "infidels" and they began their rapprochement with the Russians and other peoples of Russia. Now inter-ethnic marriages began. Yakut, Evenk, Even and Yukagirs got modern names. The obstacles to bringing them to farming were removed. Through Orthodoxy, Yakuts came in contact with the achievements of world civilization. Monasteries and churches became agents of education. For example, in 1801 at the initiative of I.Shadrin *tojon* from Khangalassky *ulus* a school was founded for Yakut children at Yakutsk Spassky monastery. Since 1812 began translation of religious literature in the Yakut language. The priest D.Khitrov created the first Yakut alphabet based on Cyrillic. Yakuts of the first half of 19th century spread literacy. This is evident by the fact that people were writing letters in the Yakut language.

In the middle of 18th century began scientific study of the region. In the years 1725-1730 and 1733-1743, First and Second Kamchatka Academician expeditions were organized headed by the commander of the Russian Navy, a close associate of Peter I, the Dane Vitus Bering. The scale of its activities was impressive. If the first was limited to sailing in the seas of the Far East along the Pacific Ocean, during the second expedition various units surveyed basins near almost all the major rivers of Siberia (by G.Miller, I.Gmelin, I.Fisher, Ya.Lindenau, etc.). Arctic Ocean

(by brothers Kh. and D.Laptev, V.Pronchishev, etc.). Kamchatka Peninsula, Alaska, islands of the Pacific (by G.Steller, Krasheninnikov, etc.). These expeditions generated huge scientific data on natural resources, history and ethnography. Russian travelers made outstanding discoveries of unknown seas and lands.

In the 1785-1795 the I.Billings expedition carried out a study of the North-East. The expedition included Sea and Land squads. Members of the expedition completed a survey of Chukotka, Kamchatka and the North-West America, which had been initiated by their predecessors. As a result, G.Sarychev in 1802 issued a generalized map of surveyed areas of North-East Asia and Russian America.

By the beginning of 19th century, governance of Siberia began to experience difficulties. So administrative reforms were required to be undertake. An outstanding Russian statesman M.Speranskiy was appointed in 1819 by the Governor General of Siberia for this task. Under his leadership, there was a new administrative-territorial division, the government structure was changed and "Regulations on the administration of non-Russians in Siberia" (1822), were issued. As this vast region was inhabited by numerous people with different lifestyles, it was decided to create a government based on their features. All the people were divided into "settled", "nomad" and "vagrant". First, because they were close to the Russian peasants, were similar to be controlled. Third group engaged in hunting, fishing and reindeer herding and led a nomadic life in the Taiga and Tundra zones, and were divided into "generations" and administered Tribal Administrations led by the elders - *knyazets*. Finally, the second - ranchers were in partial transition to agriculture, for example, Buryats, Khakass, Yakuts had very peculiar management. In addition to the Tribal Administrations they had established Foreign Governments and Steppe *Dumas* (Councils). Thus in Yakutia, Steppe Council was set up in 1827. Although it acted for only 11 years, it left a big mark on history.

The first Chairman of Yakutsk Steppe Council I.Migalkin became the head of Borogonsky *ulus*. From each *ulus* in the Council were presented *ulus's* heads and elected judges. Council's Secretary N.Rykunov was appointed to other government's leader warden from Khangalassky *ulus*. *Duma* worked out tribute and duties, in a row on tracts of population and development of agriculture. In addition, it wanted to perform judicial functions, which was resisted by the local officials. When the *Duma* convened "seven-*uluses* meeting" in 1830, it was decided to organize a

Yakut delegation to welcome the Emperor Nicholas I. However, raising of money in St. Petersburg aroused false accusations. Consequently, the delegation did not take place. In addition, during the land reform, which hosted the Second *Yassak* Commission, the *Duma* also tried to defend their interests. All this gradually became a matter of resistance from local Russian officials, who viewed the establishment of the *Duma* as illegal. Finally, in 1838 the *Duma* was closed. However, its activity played an important role in the development of social and political consciousness of the Yakut people.

By the beginning of the 19th century the impact of market relations was felt. Money began to circulate among the local population. They earned in the supply of products and timber, as well as for carting at Irkutsk and Okhotsk tracts. Since their opening in 1840s, Olekma gold mines trading volumes increased and local merchants began to appear. Some *tojons* amassed huge fortunes. In their possession were hayfields, pastures, fields, and hundreds of head of cattle. Tens and hundreds of *hamnachchits* (laborers) worked for them. They possessed hundreds of thousands of rubles. At the other social pole, were absolutely poor people who were deprived of their land and livestock. Social relations deteriorated. Many crimes against property were committed. *Varnaks*-robbers looted on the road or even attacked houses of wealthy people. The most famous of them was Vasilij Manchaary (1805-1870), but he was no ordinary thief. He was forced to take the path of robbery by his uncle Choocho-baay Slobodchikov, the richest man in the West Kagalassky *ulus*. Family drama resulted in social conflict. Junior Manchaary observed nature, and decried grabbers and rapists. Repeatedly arrested and jailed, he always returned to their homes. He attacked his enemies only to let people know about their vices. Manchaary warned them about his visit, to punish greedy peoples and detractors. He abhorred greed and cruelty. Any violence, much less murder, was considered by him as a great sin. He considered all his actions to have moral and ethical character. The poor and oppressed people began to see him as their protector. The chief of police and investigators who conducted the Manchaary case were shocked at such an unusual case. Even one of them M. Aleksandrov dedicated noble bandit whole poem entitled "Yakut Manchara".

Throughout the century there were major cultural changes. Christianization spread Orthodox traditions and customs in the region. The Yakut language and languages of northern peoples received Russian

words and terms. In the traditional calendar Christian holidays merged, old names of Yakuts, Evens, Evenki and Yukagirs now changed to Orthodox Christian names after the baptism of Yakut family. The worldview of the peoples of traditional religious, mixed with Christian views.

There were changes in traditional costume. For example, the clothing of local residents became more of used tissue. The change in clothes and style was influenced by European fashion. Near the Yakut booths and chums of Northern Peoples were increasingly built Russian log huts. In the few cities in Yakutia: Yakutsk, Olekminsk, Vilyuisk there was improvement, proper planning, roadways, parks etc. Since the beginning of 19th century, there were the first hospitals, and hospital tent encampments and schools (religious and secular, Cossack, private, etc.). Some educated people began to subscribe to newspapers and magazines. In Yakutsk visiting troupes of artists began to come and give their views. On the other hand, the local Russian officials, tradesmen, merchants, peasants began to speak in Yakut and adopted many local customs. So, even city dwellers turned to shamans for serious illness. At this time, mixed marriages became common. So, the Zhigansk police officer and the local Yakut gave birth to A.Uvarovsky – a future author of “Memoirs”, the first work of art in the Yakut language (1848).

Yakutia in its time was given the nickname of “prison without bars”. Remoteness and harsh climate contributed to the use of Yakutia by the government for exile of convicts political, religious, civil and criminal. At first, disgraced courtiers (the Chancellor P.Golovkin, the Vice-President College of Commerce G.von Fick, the Countess A.Bestuzheva, etc.) and members of the peasant uprisings (such as Pugachev’s Uprising in 1773-1775), were exiled to Yakutia. Gradually exile became rampant. For example, in Yakutia were exiled Decembrists – the uprising of December 14, 1825 (A.Bestuzhev-Marlynsky, M.Muravev-Apostol, N.Chizhov and 12 others), members of the Polish uprisings (among them was known later V.Seroshevsky, author of “Yakuts”), Revolutionary Democrats and Populists (N.Chernyshevsky, I.Hudyakov, M.Natanson etc.), religious dissenters-Old Believers, Eunuchs, the Doukhobors. In the following years they raised arable land at Yakutsk, on the banks of Vilyui and Olekma in Yakutia. They also engaged in horticulture and gardening. General history of agriculture in Yakutia is impossible without the work of these hard-working people.

Unfortunately, this region became the scourge of criminal reference

in the middle of the 19th century. Hundreds and thousands of people who had committed various offenses, were ordered by the government to live among the locals, who provided them with all they needed. Not only did criminals live off the *uluses* people, they continued to steal, rob and commit violence, bringing terror to the local population. Infectious diseases spread in the region. The situation became intolerable from year to year. Finally, one of the leading figures of the Yakut government, the head of the Baturussky *ulus* E.Nikolaev, went to the capital and sent a special letter at the highest level to annul criminal exile to Yakutia. Yakuts were partially satisfied, as the reference was not cancelled, but the number of exiles was markedly reduced.

In 1851, Yakutia acquired the status of province and the first governor was appointed being directly subordinate to the Irkutsk region. The new status meant more autonomy in many areas of management. This indicated the importance attached to Yakutia in government circles in Russia. There were many prominent public figures V.Svetlitsky, N.Kolenko, V.Skrypitsyn etc. among a number of Yakut governors who held this high office at various times. Each of them tried to understand the situation in Yakutia and determine ways to improve it. From the period 1893 to 1903, V.Skrypitsyn was the governor. Yakutia was an agricultural country, so he paid much attention to land relations. In an effort to improve the situation of the Yakut population deprived of most of the land, he wanted to put in place the "Instruction on egalitarian distribution of land". Though it met with resistance particularly from prosperous Yakuts, at the time this was an advanced project.

As a natural result of the turn of 20th century emerged national movement, headed by representatives of the intelligentsia Yakut V. Nikiforov, R.Orosin, I.Govorov, G.Ksenofontov, A.Ryazanskin etc. They argued for the cultural autonomy of the Yakuts. They were supported by first Yakut writers A.Kulakovsky, A.Sofronov, E.Neustroev. As underlined by themselves, the emergence of national literature was under the beneficial influence of Russian literature. Prominent role was played by the ideas of political exiles, who were first educated teachers of Yakuts. The first Russian revolution of 1905-1907, was accompanied by the rise of the national movement in different regions of the country, including Yakutia. In January 1906, there was "The Union of the Yakuts," headed by V.Nikiforov. The purpose of the "Union" was a struggle for civil and economic rights of the Yakuts. In particular, they raised the question of representation of the Yakuts in the Russian State Duma and the recognition

of all the land in the possession of the Yakuts as their property. This struggle was quickly suppressed by the authorities. The leaders were arrested and convicted. Despite this Yakutia experienced powerful cultural and economic recovery. In those years, liberal-minded activist I. Kraft (1907-1913) was appointed as governor of Yakutia. He took a number of important measures for economic reconstruction of the region. Unfortunately, many of his initiatives were not continued, due to the First World War (1914-1918). And then again the country entered a period of revolutionary events. Establishment of Soviet power and the new socio-economic system was enshrined in the formation of the YASSR - Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1922). For more than seventy years of Soviet power, relations between Russia and Yakutia took to one of the higher levels of development. YASSR was part of the Russian Federation, but had its own institutions of power. Unprecedented development took place in education, health and culture. Rich mineral resources in Yakutia region were processed with its infrastructure. Modernization processes got local identity. Although local people raised their level of education to the level of high school and professional art, Yakuts and Northern minorities were not only involved in agriculture, but also in the public services, and service sector, and partly in industry. But the overall development of the region had a certain imbalance. The development of rural areas lagged behind the industrial areas. Local people have been involved more in the agricultural sector, and less in the industry. Thus, for three and a half centuries of Russian-Yakut relations, a kind of historical-cultural, socio-political symbiosis took place. Yakutia from distant suburbs became a significant part of Russia with its natural and human potential. Paternalistic model of the relationship between public authorities and regional institutions, on the one hand, and the local clan and *ulus* institutions, on the other hand, gave way to integration in the state system of Russia and, finally, to a federal government. Culturally, the people of Yakutia in the meantime joined the achievements of world civilization through the Russian language, lifestyle and Orthodoxy. They have managed to create their own national literature, professional art and system of national education. At present new ways of development are sought to meet the new requirements of the times.

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ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SAKHA (YAKUTIA), 1990-2009

GAVRILYEVA TUYARA

ASSESSMENT OF THE TERRITORIAL ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

The transition to a market economy has significantly changed the sectoral structure of the Russian economy, and also led to the transformation of the regional economic systems. The problems of economy of the Russian Federation regions, including from the point of view of their level of competitiveness' assessment, the analysis of irregularity and the peculiarities of evolution of the national economic space over the years has been studied by Russian economic scientists. The works of such scholars as A.S. Suspitsyn, E.A. Kolomak, A.S. Novoselov, A.S. Marshalova, G.A. Untura of the Institute of Economics and Industrial Engineering of Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, V.A. Loginov, E.V. Murashov Pacific State University, A.V. Rudnickaya of Tomsk State University of Control Systems and Radioelectronics O.N. Bykov, V.R. Smirnov and others stand out.

Existing territorial structure of Russia was formed mainly under the influence of the principles of centralized economy and the actual practice of management in those conditions. The transition to a market economy is changing the balance of forces affecting the spatial development, comprehensively transforming the reasons behind the movement of goods in the country, investments, material, financial and human resources. In each period of time the Russian regions have been at different levels of socio-economic development, which manifests itself in a different capacity and different opportunities for self-development, and in different degrees of competitiveness in the inter-regional markets

of goods and services.¹

The main objective of these researches is not so much the assessment of current regional disparities as the analysis of trends in the development of macro and micro-regions, as well as the forecasting of transformation of economic space. Many works are devoted to the methodology of rating assessment of the competitiveness of regions and municipalities, which allows through the analysis of statistics to obtain integral assessment of competitiveness, to build profiles of regional attractiveness and to diagnose trends in regional development.

For example, the issues of the methodology of competitiveness assessment (or ranking) were addressed in a series of works of 2008-2011 by V.A. Loginova and E.V. Murashova. In particular, one work can be singled out: "Features of the rating assessment of the territorial economic systems competitiveness (exemplified by the municipalities),"² which presented the structural logic scheme of the rating assessment of the municipalities' competitiveness. Issues of assessment of the competitiveness of regional systems in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) were addressed in the works by E.N. Fedorova, G.A. Ponomareva (identification of 6 economic micro districts of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)), I.E. Egorova (scientific substantiation of forming of Yakutian economic cluster on the basis of the diamond complex) and others.

However, no comprehensive studies with the analysis of statistical data enabling the assessment of the competitiveness of municipalities in its evolution since 1990 have been carried out in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in recent years. One reason for this is the poor quality of municipal statistics, and the fact that the work on assessing the imbalances is mainly carried out at the regional level of the Russian Federation.

"... Operational statistics of the Russian State Statistics Committee has a major advantage - it allows for immediate, comprehensive interregional comparisons of the events that took place and analytical findings, more versatile than traditional comments which usually accompany the published statistics. The very fact of limitedness of the range of operational indicators determines the use in the analysis of the methods of comparison that may seem overly simplistic and not accurate, especially in terms of their use in a wider range of information. However, on their basis it is possible to better investigate the processes of regional development. Development of methods for the analysis of socio-economic status of the Russian regions should go along the line of

systematization of the major problems of inter-regional comparisons, forming a common methodological framework for different approaches to the comparison of regions, improving the traditional techniques and developing the new methods of inter-regional comparisons".³

Building the rating of competitiveness in individual region of the Russian Federation over the period, an analysis of the results, a comparison with the tasks and actual implementation of the actions of the regional management system, development on their basis of the methods for improving the budget, investment, social policy can now be considered as one of the most promising mechanisms of planning system at the sub-national level. In the meanwhile, it is important to take into account that the existing differentiation only increases during the period following that of the planned economy. The rate of development of separate territorial systems (regions of the Russian Federation, cities, metropolitan areas, neighborhoods) varies, which, undoubtedly, determines their future competitiveness. To a large extent, this is predetermined by the goals and objectives of management systems at the subnational level, as well as their compliance with the long-term trends of development of the territorial economic systems.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is a statistical analysis of the levels of territorial economic systems competitiveness in Yakutia and identification on its basis of the main trends of their development.

RATING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SAKHA (YAKUTIA) MUNICIPALITIES

According to the classical scheme of building the rating, it includes several successive stages:

1. Formalization of the task of building the rating. Identification of the group rating' consumers

Ratings of the territorial economic systems usually serve as a tool of managerial decision-making in the field of efficient use of the potential and the search of possible sources of increasing the competitiveness of the territory. In the contemporary context of the international community development the competition between various territorial subsystems (economic, social, political and other) shifts from the national level to the regional and local ones.⁴

The researchers single out the following groups of the rating'

customers: population, investors, entrepreneurs, tourists.⁵ This approach is correct for the analysis of homogeneous territorial economic systems, such as cities with comparable populations. At the same time, the analysis of competitiveness based on the array of statistical information for the individual region of the Russian Federation defines a different task of building the rating. In the first place it is the assessment of existing priorities and mechanisms of subnational authorities regional policy, in this case - the government of Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), and its conformity to the general trends of development of Russia. The main group of the rating' customers in this case is the Republic' system of administration.

2. Selection of the subjects for making the rating assessment.

Building of the territorial economic systems competitiveness rating supposes the localization of the subjects of inquiry. Because the theme of identifying the economic districts is relatively well studied and the expected results are quite evident (the industrialized Western Yakutia will be the leader), the subject of this inquiry will be the municipal districts of the Republic and the urban district of Yakutsk.

3. Formation of the indicators characterizing the group of factors. Substantiation of selected indicators. Statistical assessment of the selected indicators with the use of correlation analysis. Construction of a matrix of original data. Formation of thematic clusters of the system of indicators of the municipalities' competitiveness.

On the basis of statistical analysis, the indicators were selected to rate the competitiveness of municipalities of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in 7 major subsystems: subsystem of the natural environment (3 indicators), city-forming subsystem (10 indicators), subsystem of the food safety (6 indicators), city-serving subsystem (10 indicators), social subsystem (10 indicators), subsystem of workforce (5 indicators) and administration subsystem (3 indicators). Thus, the original data matrix includes 47 indicators. The periods of inquiry were selected the years of 1990, 2000, 2005 and 2009, which provide conclusions about the transformation of the economic space of the Republic over 20 years.

4. Construction of a matrix of normalized indicators and construction of sub-indexes of the territorial economic systems competitiveness.

The selected indicators were normalized using such methods of

statistical analysis as exclusion of the territorial factor in the cost by applying deflator indexes (cost of living for two zones, deflator indexes for capital investments in municipal districts of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)), normalization and ranking.

For the normalization of indicators, as well as for the determination of the sub-index of the competitiveness, it used a relatively simple methodology of A.V. Rudnickaya.⁶ To assess the capacity of the network of the public health services, the regional standards of the amount of the public health services were used (Territorial program of state guarantees of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) for 2012). For example, the high availability of beds in the hospitals does not mean that the system of the public health services is organized efficiently. Given some inertia of the social sphere, the tolerance of 10% of the normative capacity or needs of services' beneficiaries was made. Both the deficit and the excess of the capacity over 10% of the required were seen as negative factors.

Calculation of sub-ratings for the years of 1990, 2000, 2005 and 2009 (according to 6 subsystems, excluding the 7th subsystem of administration for which the data are not available prior to 2005) is shown in the Figs. 1-3. Analysis of data according to three largest sub-ratings (city-forming, city-serving and social subsystems) allows us to formulate the following conclusions:

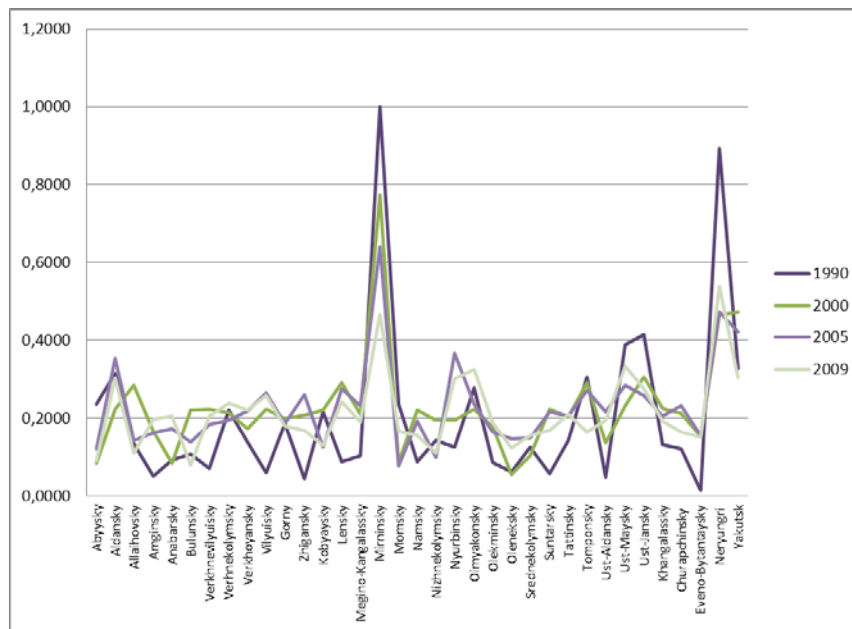


FIG. 1: SUB-INDEX OF CITY-FORMING SUBSYSTEM

In the period under consideration there is a decrease in the amplitude of variations on city-forming subsystem (Figure 1.). In 1990, industrial districts - Mirninskyy and Neryungrinsky - showed a significant excess on this indicator over the other territories, while in 2009 the deviation became substantially narrower. This is due to the presence in the sub-rating of the indicators characterizing the small business development. Thus, the emergence and development of entrepreneurship helps to balance the differentiation in the economic base of the territories. This tendency is especially strong in the traditional agricultural districts of the Republic. Development of agricultural production, to a large extent thanks to the efforts of farmers, provided them with the growth of the sub-index' indicators in this subsystem;

- analysis of the sub-index city-serving (infrastructure) subsystem shows a slightly different trend. Here industrial districts are not leaders. In some Arctic areas there is a “subsidence” in comparison with 1990. At the same time, the absolute growth is demonstrated by the capital of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) - Yakutsk, where such sectors as services, catering, wholesale and retail trade, motor vehicles, etc. developed most actively. The Republic’s population spends money primarily here where the infrastructure of life is developed while in the provincial districts it is usually not available. And it can be considered as a reserve for the development of these territories in the medium term;

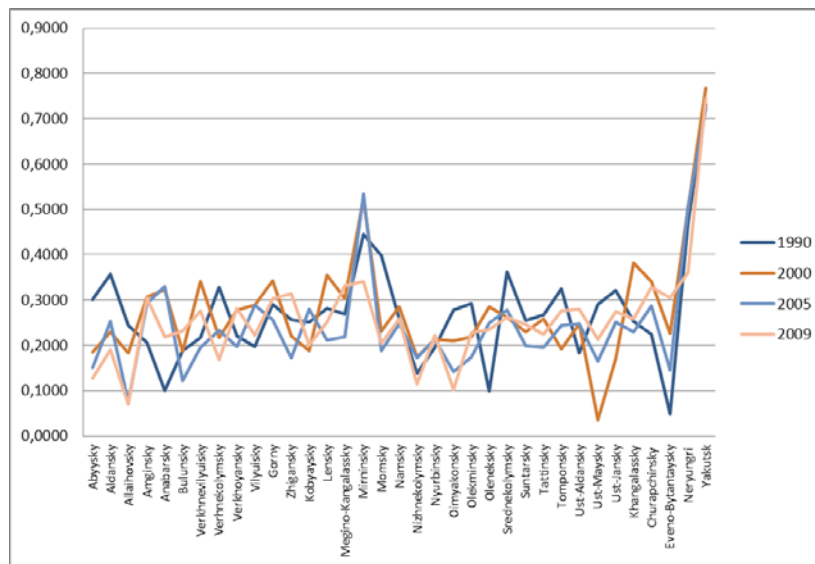


FIG. 2. SUBINDEX OF CITY-SERVING SUBSYSTEM

- analysis of the social subsystem sub-index shows that these issues are particularly acute for the Arctic areas. Despite the dramatic exodus of the population, which leads to a relative decrease in the load on the social infrastructure, almost all indicators show a decrease in the social potential of these territories. Perhaps this is a result of the current system of inter-budget relations in Russia. It limits the ability of the regions of the Russian Federation to finance the current maintenance of the facilities and to invest in their development.

5. Determination of the integral index of competitiveness and building of the rating.

On the basis of the obtained sub-indexes, the integral index of competitiveness of the territorial economic systems - municipal and urban districts of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) - was constructed. For the three major subsystems equal weights of 25% were chosen. Integral rating yielded relatively objective characteristic of the transformation of economic space of the republic over the period of 20 years from 1990 to 2009. (Fig. 4.). The analysis shows that the industrial leaders (Mirninskny and Neryungrinsky districts) and the administrative center - the city of Yakutsk keep relatively high levels of competitiveness. At the same time, the competitiveness of rural districts has increased. In almost all Arctic districts there is a decrease in the level of competitiveness, except the Anabarsky district, where a large industrial project in diamond mining was implemented.

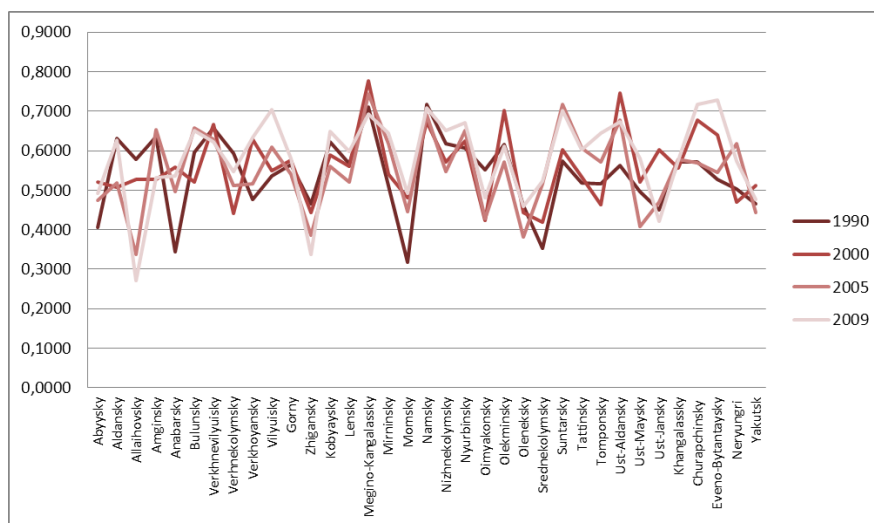


FIG. 3: SUB-INDEX OF SOCIAL SUBSYSTEM

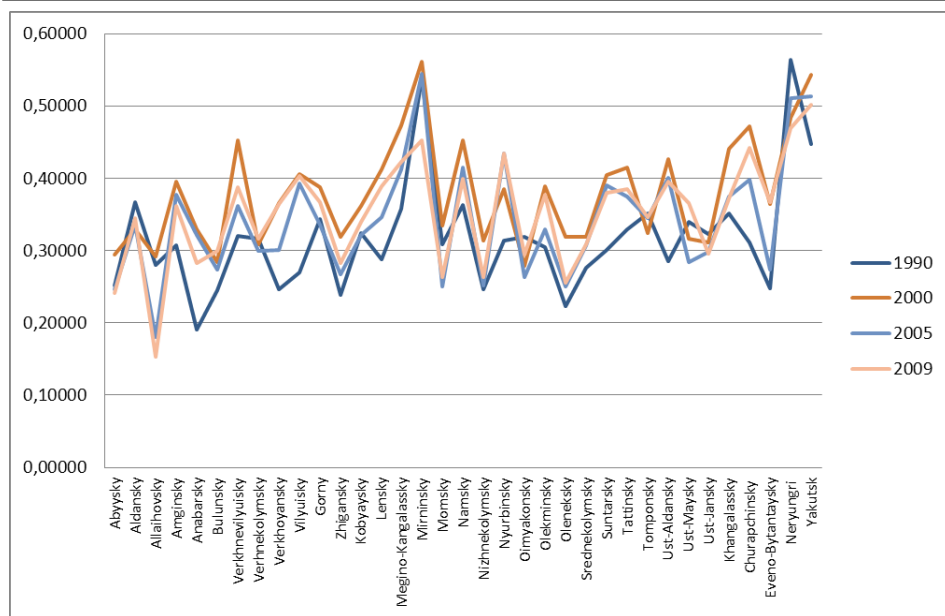


FIG. 4: INTEGRAL INDEX OF COMPETITIVENESS OF DISTRICTS AND CITIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SAKHA (YAKUTIA)

Comparison of the integral ratings of competitiveness for 2005 and 2009

For the years 2005 and 2009, a full list of indicators on seven subsystems was formed. As the data in the Fig. 5. demonstrates, comparison of the integral ratings on the shorter time interval of 5 years gives a slightly different picture.

For example, there is a tendency of reducing the level of competitiveness in 2009 as compared to 2005, which is evident in both the case of the administrative center - the city of Yakutsk and that of the industrial areas, such as Mirninsky and Neryungrinsky districts. Despite the relatively high level of competitiveness these territories demonstrate a decline in a number of significant indicators. For example, Yakutsk has lost a number of positions in the following subsystems:

- city-forming subsystem (agricultural products, the ratio of wages of small business' employees to the payroll, value of fixed assets, investments in fixed assets, share of profitable organizations, turnover of large and medium-sized enterprises);

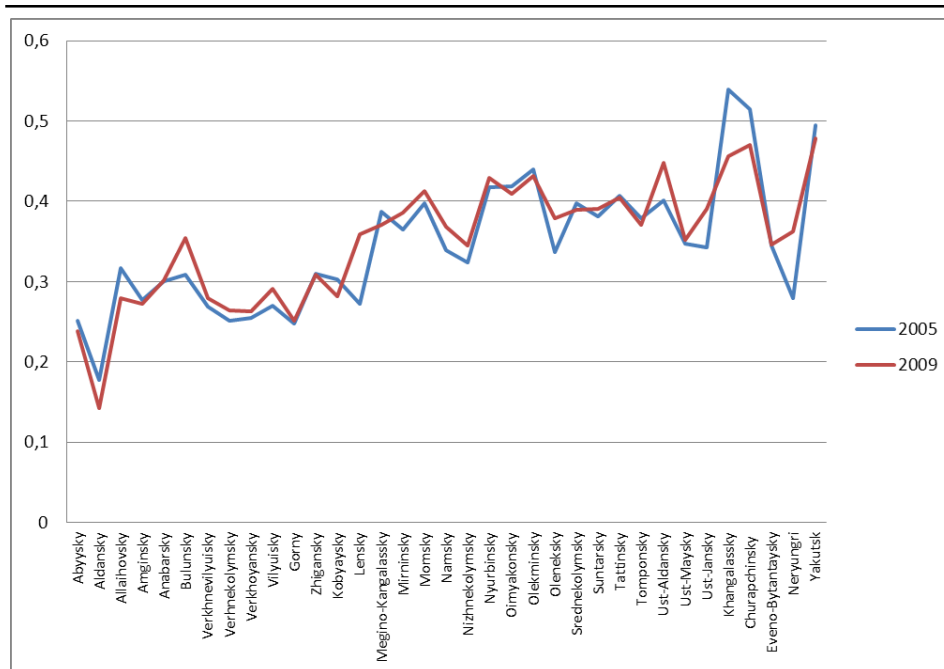


FIG. 5: INTEGRAL INDICES OF COMPETITIVENESS OF THE TERRITORIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SAKHA (YAKUTIA) IN 2005 AND 2009

- subsystem of food security (for all positions);
- city-serving subsystem (amount of subsidies granted for the payment for housing and communal services, commissioning of dwelling houses built by the population at the expense of their own and borrowed funds, the ratio of commissioning of dwelling houses to the total area of the housing stock).

Yakutsk has “grown up” in comparison to 2005 in the following sectors: environment, social infrastructure, human resources and administration. Growth in terms of providing social infrastructure was due to the relatively favorable indicators of public health services, which have emerged due to the active population influx (migration). In most districts, especially the Arctic ones, there has been a significant excess capacity of public health services, which in the last 20 years was developing extensively. At the same time, the active natural growth of the population, along with a positive migration increase caused a significant shortage of Yakutsk in providing nursery schools and institutions of primary, secondary and high education. In other districts the capacity of the educational system is balanced with respect to the population size.

Analysis of the values of the integral rating allows for the identification of trends in the development of individual territories. For example, in the

group of the Arctic districts (in Fig. 1 - from Abyysky to Eveno-Bytantaysky district inclusive) during the 2008-2009 crisis the integral index values of such districts as Verkhoyansky, Zhigansky, Momsky, Nizhnekolymsky, Oymyakonsky, Eveno-Bytantaysky were better than in 2005. The average values of the integral index of the Arctic districts are lower than those of agricultural districts, industrial districts and city of Yakutsk, but its dynamics demonstrates the growth of values, indicating the presence of some internal resources, or on the effectiveness of the measures of state support of these territories. At the same time there is the chronically depressed Allaihovskiy Ulus. Also, special measures are needed in the Arctic districts with low natural increase and active migration outflow of the population; Verkhnekolymsky, Oymyakonsky and Ust-Jansky districts are among them.

Group of districts specializing in agriculture (in the Fig. 1. - starting from Amginsky district and finishing with Churapchinsky district) has a stable dynamics, so all these districts in 2009 have demonstrated an increase in comparison to the values of 2005. The leader in terms of the growth is the Churapchinsky Ulus, it has grown in terms of the indicators of food security, city-serving and social infrastructure, and human resources (workforce). Agricultural districts can be considered as the basic areas of the Republic, it is here where the indigenous population is concentrated, and the traditional economic system is still dominating here; they provide food for many other districts. In contrast to the Arctic and industrial districts, Uluses with agricultural specialization have a relatively high rate of natural population growth.

Industrial districts demonstrate a decrease in the levels of the integral index of competitiveness in 2009 as compared to 2005, which means that they were more affected by the financial crisis that began in 2008. Leader of the industrial production in Yakutia, Mirninsky district, has only the second position in terms of "turnover of large and medium-sized organizations per capita", while the first position in this field in 2005 belonged to Nyurbinsky district, and in 2009 - to the Anabarsky district; in the latter ones the bulk of the production is provided by small scale diamond mining companies.

As for the "Share of profitable organizations" indicator, Neryungrinsky district has considerably "subsided" in 2009 as compared to 2005, despite the implementation in South Yakutia of major projects under the strategic program for the development of Yakutia up to 2020. But this fact was reflected in the growth of the indicator "Investment in

fixed assets of large and medium-sized enterprises per 1,000 inhabitants”: in 2009 its growth was recorded in Neryungrinsky and neighboring Lensky districts. Unfortunately, this trend is not long-term and sustainable: during that period the funds were spent actively within the framework of the construction of the railway “Berkakit-Tommot-Yakutsk” and “Western Siberia - Pacific Ocean” oil pipeline.

The implementation of large-scale production facilities led to the growth in the value of fixed assets. Industrial districts for the period from 2005 to 2009 increased their production capital by 1.68 times. But the data demonstrates that the capital growth in the Arctic districts was even higher - 1.78 times, and in the agricultural districts - 2.73 times. Outsider in the investment activity of large and medium-sized businesses is the city of Yakutsk, where the rate of capital growth was only 1.47 times.

In the structure of investment it is interesting to look at the distribution in groups of designated districts (Fig. 6.). Thus, in 2009, the shares of the districts in the investments of large and medium-sized enterprises were the following: industrial districts - 82.4%, agricultural districts - 2.6%, Arctic districts - 0.7%, Yakutsk - 14.3%.

At the same time, in the structure of these investments one can identify the investments made through the budget, these include: public administration and defense, compulsory social security, education, public health and social services. Here the distribution is different: share of industrial districts is 5.2%, share of agricultural districts - 28.2%, share of Arctic districts - 6.8%, and share of Yakutsk - 59.8%. On the average of the zones in 2009 there were 1,004 rubles of budget investments per person in industrial districts, 4,864 rubles in rural districts, 4199 rubles in Arctic districts, 10,923 rubles in Yakutsk.

This fact may reflect the endeavor of the Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) to compensate the lack of investment in both depressed Arctic territories and the backbone agricultural ones. Capital of the Republic receives the largest amount of public investment, having basically an administrative function. Here public investments are made not only from the budget of the republic, but also from the funds allocated by the federal government, for example, for the construction of administrative buildings. At the same time, the growth of production investment in the traditional industrial districts is not supported by the investment in the social sphere, perhaps, because of both its relatively favorable condition and the excess of its capacity. From 1990 to 2009

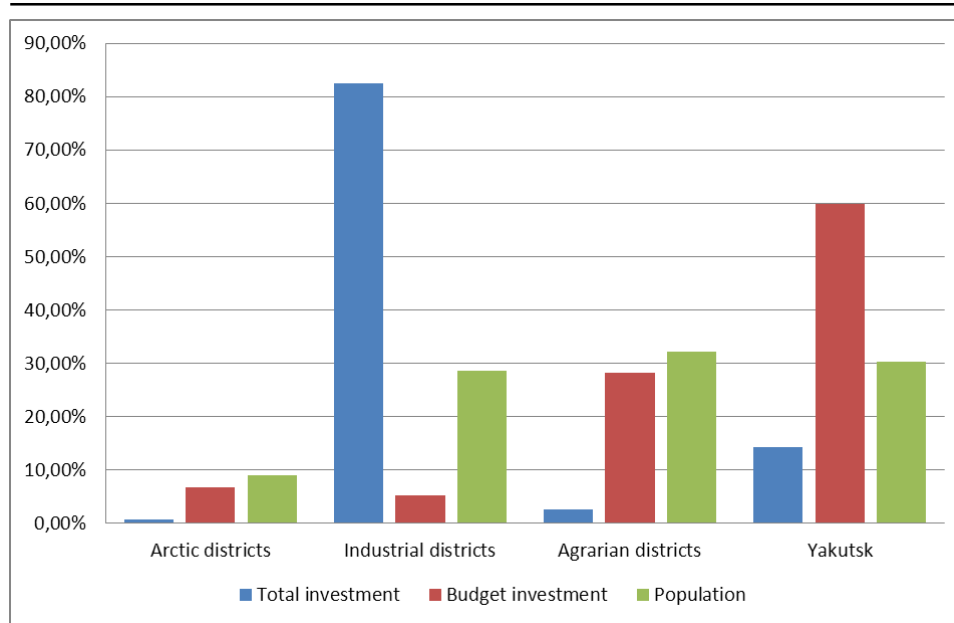


FIG. 6: COMPARISON OF THE INVESTMENT STRUCTURE OF DIFFERENT GROUPS OF DISTRICTS IN 2009

industrial districts lost 28% of the population, agricultural districts - 7%, Arctic districts - 53%. The population of Yakutsk for the same period increased by 27%.

Competitiveness of regional economies in Russia can be viewed through the prism of the attractiveness of certain territories for life. The higher rates of natural increase and migration, the more attractive is a territory, the greater its potential competitiveness and, therefore, it has more reserves for development. During the last 20 years the Arctic regions have been facing the problem of depopulation, due to both the low natural increase, and because of migration outflow of the population. Migration outflow has both internal character, when the population moves to Yakutsk and other districts, which are mostly located around the capital, and external one, when the population goes outside the republic. This trend is typical not only for Yakutia, but also for other regions of the Far Eastern Federal District. As a result, due to the lack of manpower, the potential for economic growth of the entire macro-region is being lost.

The demographic factor is one of the key ones in the formation of long-term trends of development of countries and regions. But they are often under-counted. For example, the government of the republic continues to implement a policy of "solid" development, to a large extent focused on the "consolidation" of the population in the backbone

agricultural districts, while no special measures are taken to encourage people move out of depressed areas to the backbone areas, that is, from the Far North to the center of Republic.

Such conclusions can be made upon the analysis of the statistics of the commissioning of the social infrastructure facilities, which has been done at the expense of budget funds. During the period of 2000-2009 there were practically no investments in the social infrastructure of the Arctic zone. No new objects of preschool and general education and health care were built in Abyysky, Allaihovsky, Bulunsky districts. Only 1 project was implemented in Anabarsky, Zhigansky, Momsky, Oimyakonsky, Eveno-Bytantaysky districts. Agricultural districts were the leaders in terms of commissioning the educational facilities. In Yakutsk modern medical centers were built (Fig. 7.).

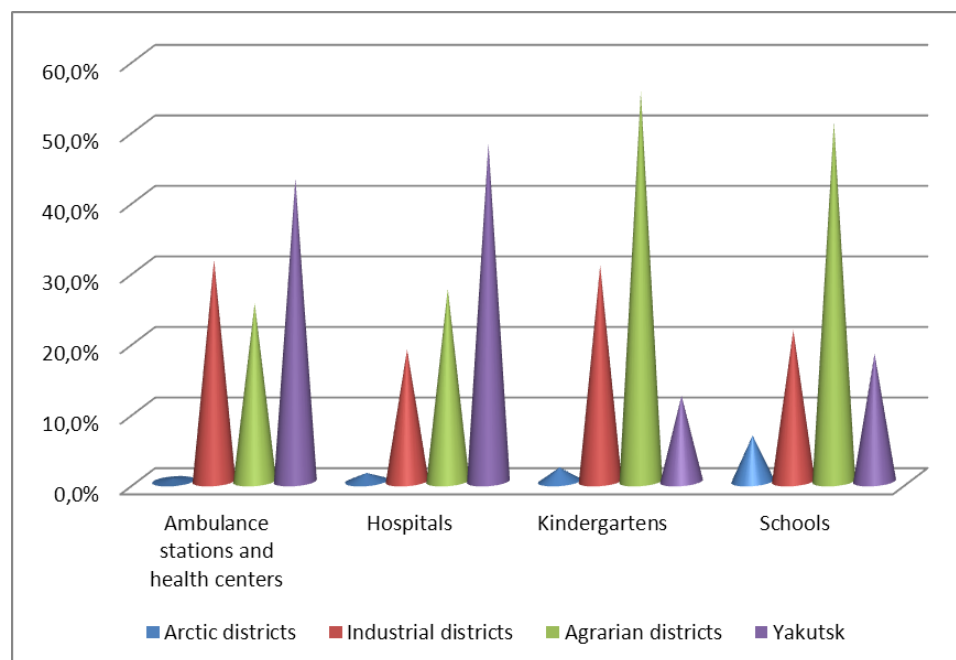


FIG. 7: STRUCTURE OF THE COMMISSIONING OF SOCIAL FACILITIES IN DIFFERENT GROUPS OF DISTRICTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SAKHA (YAKUTIA) IN 2000-2009

Analysis of the major trends of transformation of Yakutia's economic space allows to make several conclusions:

- in contrast to a number of existing approaches to zoning of the territory of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the analysis of the integral index of competitiveness allows to identify four groups of

territorial economic systems of the region: Arctic uluses, industrial districts, agricultural districts, and Yakutsk, which are characterized by similar economic parameters within each group. Diversification, growth, or, inversely, degradation of the local economy results in reaching the border states of the indicators. An example is the Anabarsky district, which in the 1990s, before the implementation of the major project in the field of diamond mining, was exclusively agricultural and depressed. Now it holds the 1st place in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in terms of turnover of large and medium-sized businesses and organizations per capita. A similar situation is in Nyurbinsky district that traditionally belonged to the group of agricultural uluses, but after the implementation of the project on Nakynsky diamond mine it now occupies leading positions in a number of industrial indices;

- In each group of territories, each of its constituent parts has its own vector of development - towards growth or decline. Coordinates of development are defined by multi-component set of factors, which include a system of government incentives (such as investment policy, target programs) and external investors. In some territories of Russia these two economic institutions mean virtually the same. Lack of state funding can be compensated by private investment, and they both have an exogenous origin. But there are objective conditions (climate, access to transportation, natural resources) and subjective factors (quality of human capital, efficiency of local authorities), which, in the end, are decisive. In the future, these local trends will inevitably transform the structure of the entire regional economy;
- During the period of 2005-2009, despite overall economic growth of Russia, territorial economic system in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) continued to demonstrate a heterogeneous economic dynamics. Growth of traditional industrial districts mainly slowed because the situation on foreign markets for gold and precious metals was very unstable, so Mirninsky district lost some of its positions. At the same time, southern districts of Yakutia, where major investments have been initiated in the framework of the strategic plan up to 2020, have received a new impulse, which affected the dynamics of the investment. It should also be noted that the steady growth of the traditional agricultural districts was

due not only to the development of agriculture, but also to the favorable demographic situation. The nature of this growth is long-term;

- against this background stands a very low competitive potential of the Arctic districts of Yakutia. There the level of both production and social (budget) investment is not sufficient. These districts are characterized by the highest migration outflow. With respect to the Arctic districts over the past 20 years, except for a number of point solutions (for example, the closure of unviable settlements), no comprehensive measures in the field of socio-economic development were taken. As a result, social infrastructure is deteriorating, which also affects the quality of human capital - the long-term resource for the development of these areas.

Analysis of the obtained data on six comparable subsystems also shows that over the 20 years period from 1990 to 2009, the differentiation of the economic development of Yakutia has increased. While the ratio of the maximum and minimum values of the integral rating in 1990 was 2.86 times, in 2000 it was 2.01 times, in 2005 - 3.03 times, in 2009 - 3.36 times.

On the one hand, this can be interpreted as the degradation of some areas, but on the other hand, it indicates an increase in the concentration of economic resources in the areas of growth. The reason for the growth of differentiation is a flow of resources from the depressed territories to the territories, showing growth, and also outside the Republic. Therefore, given that the lowest rates are demonstrated by the districts of the Arctic group, it can be concluded that it is necessary to change the overall trend of regional policy not only at the level of the region of the Russian Federation, but also at the federal level.

Extreme conditions of life and the specificity of the economy are the limiting factors for the population size, so the Arctic will always accommodate as many people as necessary. The population size here is directly determined by economic factors and the amount of available external funding. The higher financial investments in the Arctic zone, the more attractive it becomes for living. Revival of the Northern Sea Route could give new impetus to the Arctic districts which belong not only to the Republic, but also to the neighboring Russian regions. But this requires funding from the federal budget, a special program. Experience of the last 20 years has shown that the northern regions of the Russian

Federation cannot fund Arctic to the necessary extent. Consequently, the Arctic must be given a different territorial status. Basically, the unitary rules of inter-budget relations should not be applied to it, and its development requires perhaps a different, non-standard form of administration. Local government in its current form is too expensive and inefficient here. Economic area of the North can absorb as many human resources as needed. In these circumstances, it is impossible to maintain efficiency, going against the prevailing trends, trying to keep the population.

Given the current trends, we can formulate the resulting conclusion that one of the urgent tasks for Yakutia is a change in the concept of population' settlement. Research is needed with respect to the capacity of the Arctic zone. And on the basis of the obtained results decisions should be made about the direction of migration in the Republic, the nature of which is rather determined by the people who have decided to change the place of residence, which is not taken into account by the authorities. Population decline is partly offset by external migrants, but at the same time the quality of human capital suffers: migrants of working age often have low qualification. Because migration flows are almost not regulated, they most accurately reflect the real competitiveness and attractiveness of a territory. Both agricultural districts, showing steady growth, and industrial districts of Western and Southern Yakutia can be the territories which are attractive for life.

In agricultural districts, there is a substantial reserve for increasing agricultural production, they will continue to develop steadily, thanks to the good demographics. Here, the quality of the social infrastructure will remain the priority, it will be necessary to develop it not extensively, through the new construction of social facilities, but intensively, introducing new technologies in both education and healthcare. It will also be necessary to gradually increase the level of city-serving infrastructure to the level of industrial districts.

The analysis has also shown that the preconditions are already formed for the creation of the Yakut metropolitan area. Here and in nearby municipal districts - Megino-Kangalassky, Namsky, Khangalassky due to natural growth and migration growth of population, the social and city-serving infrastructure is developing rapidly. At the same time, the potential for growth of Yakutsk as the administrative center is practically exhausted. Shortage and poor quality of social infrastructure also indicates that demographic pressure exceeds the calculated capacity. Therefore, the

development of the Republic capital and its neighboring districts as the northern metropolitan area is one of the urgent tasks in the coming years. Development of the city, given its high scientific and educational potential, should be based on innovation and, consequently, on the highest quality of human capital.

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THE YAKUT HEROIC EPIC

V.N. IVANOV

Olonkho is the general genre term of heroic epic, which belongs to the Yakut people (self-designation – Sakha), the northernmost Turkic people, inhabiting the basin of one of the greatest rivers – the Lena river since 18th century. The Yakut people are known as the northernmost cattle-breeders in the world – they bred cattle and horses. They also knew blacksmithing well. They led a sedentary life. In the 18th century they entered Russia. At the present time the Yakut live in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), which is part of the Russian Federation. According to the census of 2010, their population was about 470,000 people.

Olonkho is the greatest epic genre of the Yakut folklore. It tells about heroic deeds of epical *booturs* (heroes), which they did to protect their motherland, friends, for the peaceful life on earth, happy future of their children and grandchildren. Usually the heroes fight with the evil heroes – *abaahy* tribes. In the specialists' opinion, *Olonkho* is also a genre of the oral lore.

The term *Olonkho* also stands for separate folk tales (stories), which are the wealth of epic heritage. The performers are called *olonkhusut*, they have special abilities of improvisation, phenomenal memory and different world-view. *Olonkhusut* is the master of the native language, it is his rich and colorful language which makes *Olonkho* the art. The energy of his language is so incredible, that it wakes a poet in each Yakut man.

One of the founders of the Yakut literature and *Olonkho* expert Alexey Kulakovsky described the atmosphere of perception created by the *olonkhusut* singing: "Imagine the Yakut family, listening to the storyteller (*olonkhusut*) during the long winter night. Everybody – old and young – is sitting around him like hungry children around their mother. Here comes the old man, who enjoys most having rest on his bed. Nothing, except his favorite story, could make him leave the warm

bed. Here comes the father of the family, the middle-aged man with a practical world-view, who is not interested in such fun as *ostuorua* (fairytales), who is tired after hard work and wants to have rest. Here sits their mother with her sewing, tired of work and everyday troubles. She wants to sleep too, she wakes up first and goes to bed at the last. She is the one who works the hardest. Here come the children, who sit still, here are the teenagers, who do not understand the language of poetry well, but enjoyed the plot and imagination of the story. Here is the guest, who has to wake up early and set out for a long way."

They listen to the story from the early evening till the "predawn sleep", which takes 13-14 hours. (Sometimes rich people asked *olonkhosut* to tell stories for three days and three nights with breaks for sleep and meals). Everybody listens breathlessly, fascinated with it, trying not to breathe a word. Despite the fact, that the Yakuts are rather apathetic people with cold temper, caused by the cold weather... "Everybody has forgotten about their problems, their grief and entered the magic and wonderful world of enchanting dreams... The story-teller, as the real poet, is fascinated most of all: his eyes are closed, so he could cast aside the sinful earth with its everyday troubles and prose; he sticks finger on the ear, so his singing could sound louder; his body moves in time to the singing. He forgets about sleep, rest, about everything in the world... The story-teller completely changes in the eyes of the listeners: he is not the man they used to know, he is some supernatural beautiful creature with a mysterious halo".

Kulakovsky explains why *olonkhosut* makes such an impression on listeners. He says: "They all have the same plot (*Olonkho*): the one from the good spirits – "the warrior of light" – fights with the one from the evil spirits – "the warrior of the dark" – for the beautiful girl and after all he overcomes obstacles and wins. The fantasy of the story is boundless: it leaves behind even the imagination of the *Arabian Nights*. But these benefits fade in front of the language of fairy-tales: this language is poetic, colorful and full of challenging comparisons and repetitions, pleasant to the Yakuts, it is figurative and contains a lot of words, which is peculiar only to fairy-tales and songs". I would add for myself: the language of *Olonkho* borders with the generally accepted principles of belles-lettres.

I have made such a long quotation only because its author so realistically described that unique impression, which *olonkhosut* makes on people: they become affected by his imagination and the power of his art. The professional performance of *Olonkho* always excites general

admiration, it makes *olonkhosut* a great man in the eyes of his listeners, people adore and respect him. Apparently, this may be due to the fact that *Olonkho* is performed by the one man from the beginning till the end, so this man acts all the roles and creates the theater of one man!

It is well-known that every *olonkhosut* has several *Olonkho* in his repertoire – from couple to dozens. For example, in the 1920's it was recorded that Petr Kolosov from the West Kangalassky *ulus* knew 46 *Olonkho*. It is a phenomenon, if we take into consideration different sizes. *Olonkho* of D.M. Govorov *Erbekhteı Bergen* (Erbekhteı the Keen) has about 20,000 verse lines, the main epic of the Yakut people *Nurgun Botur the Swift* has more than 36,000 verse lines, and *Olonkho* of R.P. Alexeev *Alaatyyr Ala Tuıgun* contains 49,203 verse lines! There were cases when *olonkhosuts* competed with each other. According to the famous Polish leader, ethnographer V.L. Seroshevsky, who was exiled to the Yakut region in the 1880's, the story-teller Manchary, who lived in Verlhoyansky *ulus*, knew *Olonkho*, which was performed for the whole month.

None of the experts could count how many *Olonkho* were there during his lifetime, it was impossible to find out. We mean that there were countless numbers, each administrative district used to have several *olonkhosuts*, with their own *Olonkho*. We should bear in mind that the story-telling has been transferred from father to son for generations. Only during the Soviet period, it lost its popularity. One more thing that caused it was that: *Olonkho* was the masterpiece of non-literate people, so the belles-lettres changed the life environment of *Olonkho*, reduced the number of its followers. Moreover it caused the danger of its extinction! By the end of the 20th century there were only two practicing *olonkhosuts* in the huge territory of the Republic. Compare it with the situation in 1941 and 1946, when during the expedition the Language, Literature and History Research Institute had found 83 *olonkhosuts* and 396 *Olonkho* in 13 regions of the Republic.

During the last two decades due to democratization, people became interested in their own ethnic history and mentality, i.e. the people's psychology, way of thinking, traditional beliefs, customs etc. The national revival results in realization of the fact that the epic has potential power to revive the intellectual culture. The creators of *Olonkho* put in it their dreams of happy life on the earth. This bright idea matches the intentions of our time, it will bring us new thoughts, more substantive and mature. Moreover it will help us to live in peace with other people and... with ourselves. All the charm and benefits of *Olonkho* "work for" the Human.

The realization of this fact became the moment that saved the future of the epic heritage. Both the scientists and society took a second look at the use of fundamental benefits of the native epic. The preservation, development and use of *Olonkho* became common concern. First of all, we looked for the real story-tellers who somehow managed to save their art. Theorists of epic had found about a dozen *olonkhosuts*, who still could compose and perform the epic. There is a reason to say that we still have connection with our tradition. Our work goes on and perhaps we will find something else.

This work touches another problem – the problem of copying the preserved manuscripts of *Olonkho*. Usually folk researchers find such manuscripts in family archives. In most cases the owners of manuscripts present it to the researchers. So for two years the Olonkho Research Institute of the NEFU has found the manuscripts of such previously unknown *Olonkho* as *Khangalas Botur*, *Khabytta Bergen*, *Khorula Botur*, *Odun Chuuraa*. The records conform the rules of traditional *Olonkho*, although we can notice some modern influence, especially in its language.

The preservation of the epic heritage is connected with the studies of archival recordings. The archive of the Yakut National Centre of the Siberian Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences contains the early manuscripts of *Olonkho*, recorded in 1930-40's by the expedition participants. There are 150 full records of *Olonkho* and about 80 extracts and breviaries. It is an incredibly rich collection of the Yakut heroic epic masterpieces. Due to this collection our experts carry out scientific research of the Yakut epic heritage. It makes the ground for traditional works of epic theorists I.V. Pukhov–*The Yakut Heroic Epic Olonkho: The main images* (Moscow, 1962), N.V. Emelyanov–*The plots of the Yakut olonkho* (Moscow, 1980), *The plots of the early Yakut Olonkho* (Moscow, 1983) and *The plots of Olonkho about the ancestors* (Moscow, 1990). This collection is the basis for the publication of 12 volumes of epic *Sakha Boturs*. They are: *Alaatyyr Ala Tuigun* of R.N. Alexeev, *Toyon Nurgun* of S.N. Karataev, *Dyyrai Bergen* of U.G. Nokhsorov, *Uol Duolan the Warrior* of M.Z. Martynov, *Kyys Juuraya* of G.V. Duyakov, *Uluu Daaryn the Warrior* of M.T. Sharaborin-Kumaarov, etc.

We should note that these publications carry on the tradition, established in the beginning of the 20th century by E.K. Pekarsky's *The Samples of the Yakut national literature* in three volumes and eight editions (1907-1918) of S.V. Yastremsky's *The samples of the Yakut national literature* (1929) and other works, published in the 1930-40's. A special place among

the publications of the masterpieces of epic heritage belongs to the *Olonkho Nurgun Botur the Swift* – one of the best and most popular *Yakut Olonkho*. One of the variants of this epic recorded by K.G. Orosin was published in 1907 by E.K. Pekarsky, then it was republished in 1947 by G.U. Ergis; the other variant of P.A. Oiunsky was published in 1962 in the 4-6 volumes of his collected edition, and in 2003 the full text in the Yakut language was published. In 1975 this outstanding epic was translated into Russian by V.V. Derzhavin – the best translator of epic of the peoples of the East. This translation was an achievement, as it helped the Russian readers to get the whole view of such masterpiece of the Yakut epic heritage. He preserved the atmosphere of the *Olonkho* original text and its color. The Russian translation of *Olonkho Kulun Kullustur the Obstinate*, published in 1985, is of exceptional interest too (translators are A.A. Popov, I.V. Pukhov). There are other translations too. These help Russian readers to know and understand the masterpieces of the Yakut epic heritage, as the richest masterpiece of oral folk arts, which has origins in Turkic-Mongolian peoples.

It is sure enough that the publications save the epic masterpieces for the future generations. Moreover, these are the source of knowledge for epic studies. Actually the new generation of epic theorists (V.V. Illarionov, P.N. Dmitriev, V.M. Nikiforov, T.V. Illarionova, A.N. Dmitrieva and others) study the unique features of ideological and imaginative content and poetic system of oral arts. Generally, the scientific study of *Olonkho* as the special genre of the Yakut folklore has a lot of new achievements. First of all, the understanding of *Olonkho*, as the unique history about human beings from the creation of the universe and settlement of “the Middle World”, has widened. It is the main plot of *Olonkho*, which describes the life and fights of the first human being on the earth. The human being is in the centre of all that. He performs exploits for justice and truth of life. The fight of the main character is represented as the picture of the fate of human beings, the future of their nation. He has all features of a hero. These features are the example for everybody else and also make a high standard of spiritual potential of *Olonkho*. It should be used by the society. This is the main result of the epic theorists’ work, which revived the heritage of illiterate Yakut *olonkhosuts*, the authors of outstanding epic masterpieces of universal importance. Unfortunately, there were times when communist ideologues considered *Olonkho* to be useless and archaic.

Of course, there are more problems which are to be solved and

investigated. One of these problems is the problem of the time and place of the Yakut heroic epic creation. This is important because the epic is historically firm reality with its own connections and traditions, so it is the core of epic culture, the reflection of national mind, the data for the studies of history, material and spiritual life in space and time. It is clear that we do not have to specify the exact time, even if it is recorded in written source. The reason is that the epic could not be created in one moment, its roots are hidden in the national mind, in its oral folk arts. Moreover, *Olonkho* is the masterpiece of illiterate people. We only know that it has southern origin, i.e. it was created before the ancient Yakut people came to the Lena river. However, the experts cannot find out when exactly the ancestors of the Yakuts came there. It is like endless circle.

The folklore specialist G.U. Ergis tried to answer this question. He supposes that the Yakuts have brought only “the rudiment” of *Olonkho*, so *Olonkho* has developed as the epic genre, when they settled here. Another author, the epic theorist I.V Pukhov tried to “find out the approximate time of creation of *Olonkho*”. He said that the similarity between *Olonkho* and the epic of Turkic-Mongolian people had appeared through the direct contact between them. In his opinion, *Olonkho* has the connection with the ancient Turkic people, dating back to the end of the first millennium, i.e. in 8th-9th centuries. The specification of time is a step forward in finding the date of *Olonkho* creation. Nowadays history has up-to-date and comparatively full information about the origin of the Turkic-Mongolian people in South Siberia. This information can form a basis for the dating of the Yakut epic creation.

As for the separation of the Yakut *Olonkho* from Turkic-Mongolian epic, the author of this article supposes that it could have happened in the middle of the 8th century and is connected with the year 745 AD, when Turkic Khagante broke up and the Uyghurs defeated the Eastern Khaganate. The ancestors of the Yakut people came to the present territory of Yakutia and lost its ties with the past. So the Yakut epic developed independently.

As we can see, the problem of *Olonkho* origin is not solved yet. One thing that we are sure of is that *Olonkho* has southern origins and is connected with Turkic-Mongolian people. Only complex studies with the use of historic and comparative analysis can answer this question.

On November 25, 2005, UNESCO proclaimed Yakut heroic epic *Olonkho* a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. It

proves the highest cultural value of this monument of oral folk arts and contribution of Yakut people to the world culture. This historical decision of UNESCO supposes the publication of the Yakut epic in the official languages of the world organization. So the main Yakut epic *Nurgun Botur the Swift* has been translated into English. It was published in 2013. Other masterpieces are also being translated into French, German, Korean and Japanese. *Olonkho* is a unique epic heritage of Yakut people, finally, it becomes the heritage of Humanity. Then the world will see that the volume, main point and unique character of *Olonkho* is equal to the such widely-known epics as ancient Sumerian epic of *Gilgamesh*, Indian *Ramayana*, Greek *Iliad* and *Odysseus*, Germanic *The Song of the Nibelungs*, Finnish *Kalevala*, Indian *The song of Hiawatha*, Kyrgyz epic *Manas*, Kalmyk epic *Jangar*.

THEATER MOVEMENT IN YAKUTIA

T.V. PAVLOVA-BORISOVA

At the beginning of the last century it was hard to imagine that on icy northern land with white fog and biting cold, there would blossom distinctive theater, which will be known far beyond the region. Meteoric rise and success of the Sakha Theater is essential part of the Yakut culture trends for the theatrical. The rich folklore of the Yakut people gradually permeated the theater thinking. This is a great skill of *olonkhosuts*- narrators whose detailed hours of epic essentially a "one man show" with him performing as a reincarnation of some characters. The unique Yakut shaman rituals in which they apply to different deities and spirits, skillfully demonstrate them in their rites. The variety of rituals, songs, games, dance culture of the Yakut people, and tongue twisters - *chabyrgahs* reflect life and real world. Obviously, this is explained by the fact that the theater in Yakutia was successfully developed earlier than other forms of art. It occurred as an organic union of traditional and professional forms of culture, incarnate in the late twentieth century phenomenon of original theater in Yakutia.

At present, the republic has ten professional theaters of different genre - stylistic direction, which in itself is remarkable for the country with a population of just over a million. And it does not count the activities of many amateur theater groups, most of which are in rural areas of Yakutia, spread over a huge territory which is equal to the area of several countries such as France, England, Spain and Germany combined.

Socio-economic conditions of post-perestroika years created favorable conditions for the reorganization of the professional theaters in the republic, giving them a new status. So, Yakut and Russian theaters have received the status of Academic and Musical Theatre - the status of the State Opera and Ballet Theatre of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

State Dance Ensemble of Yakutia was reorganized into the National Dance Theatre of Sakha (Yakutia), Yakut Philharmonic - the State Theater stage (Yakutia). Theater pop miniatures *Naarah suohtaar* rose to the State Theatre of humor and satire (Yakutia). It later changed their target audience - became Theatre of Young Spectator of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia). Neryungri Puppet Theater in South Yakutia became Neryungri Theater of Actor and Dolls (Yakutia), etc. Activation of theater movement in Yakutia is also due to demand of the times - the need for revival of traditional spiritual guidance and moral values of the Yakut people, the development of national culture in the new social realities.

State Academic Russian Drama Theatre named after A.S.Pushkin is the oldest theater of the republic. Founded on the basis of amateur theater and music in 1920, it played the role of the parent tree, which was later spun off from Yakut dramaturgy, and then musical theater. In the depths of the Russian theater in Yakutia mature professional art direction such as opera, ballet, pop art, instrumental music, etc. emerged. For more than eight decades, this theatre is an outpost of Russian culture in the country.

In 1920, the decision of the Revolutionary Committee of the Yakutsk district community theater was transferred to the Department of Education and has acquired the National status. Its first season was opened on September 15, 1920 by Gorky play *The Lower Depths*. Russian and world classics took the leading position in the theater during 1920's-30's. At various times, the plays by Leo Tolstoy, Ostrovsky, Dostoevsky, Shakespeare, Schiller, Jean-B.Moler, Lope de Vega, and others were played. A new repertoire policy reflecting the needs of the young Soviet state saw the plays *The collapse* by B. Lavrenev, *Intervention* by L.Slavin, *Spring Love* by K. Trenev, *Good Life* by S.Amaglobeli etc.

During the Great Patriotic War, performances centred on heroic patriotic themes - *The Russian people* and *Wait for Me* by Konstantin Simonov, *Invasion* by Leonov, *Officer of the Navy* A.Crone, *Polkovodets Suvorov* by I. Bahterev and A.Razumovski, *Front* by N.Korneychuk, *Once upon a time* by A. Gladkov were made.

Ideological and aesthetic traditions of the theater were laid by such famous artists as V.Saprygin, D.Hadkov, P.Urbanovich, V. Baturlin, A.Krupnova, V.Stalsky, A.Kramova, V.Batashov, M.Vladimirova, K. Anufriev.

Performances of *Mutiny* by D. Furmanov, *Kremlin Chimes*, *The Young Guard* by Fadeev, *Wings* by A. Korneychuk, *Eve storm* by P. Malyarevski,

Listen fellow descendants! by M. Musienko, *Uncle Vanya* by Chekhov, *Spring Love* by K. Trenev, *Enemies* by Gorky *Gloom-river* by V. Shishkov, *The Storm* by Alexander Ostrovsky, *Family* by I. Popov, received great response from the public.

Large number of creative achievements were made in the period 1970-1980's under the leadership of the director, Honored Art V.Kelle-Pellet. Milestone for the theater performances were *Streetcar Desire* by Tennessee Williams, *We the undersigned* by A. Gelman, *And in the morning they woke up* by V. Shukshin, *Provincial jokes* by V. Vampilov, *Children of the Arbat* by Rybakov, *There was ... no ... was not involved ...* by Yu.Makarov, *John and Madonna* by Alexey Kudryavtsev, *Medea* by Euripides. At the initiative of the creative team was established Prize V. Kelle-Pella in the categories *Best Actress*, *Best Actor*, which has been for many years judged to be the best performers on the International Theatre Day. In 1980, the Russian Drama Theatre was awarded the *Badge of Honor*.

From 1990 began the collaboration between the artistic director of Sakha Academic Theater named after P.A. Ojanskii, and director A. Borisov. They delivered *Three Conversations* on work of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, *Odyssey Yakut monk* by V. Fedorov. The play *The Odyssey Yakut monk* was awarded the P.A.Ojanskii State Prize of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). In 2005, Borisov directed the play of Russian Theatre production *And love is still alive continuation, continuation ...* by Karpov, devoted to the pioneers of diamond industry.

In 1992, the theater was a branch of the School of Moscow Art Theatre under the patronage of Tabakov. Two issues of the Studio School joined to form the group of young creative forces. In 1998, the theater was awarded the status of "academic", and since 2000 with the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin award. Leading artists of the Russian Drama Theatre are people's artists of Russia and Yakutia N. Konstantinov and Vladimir Antonov, people's artist of the Russian Federation and Honored Artist of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) N.Kuznetsov, honored artist of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) E. Kupshis and others.

The theater toured 80 towns and districts of the country - including BAM, Khabarovsk, Chita, Magadan, Minsk and Bobruisk (Belarus), Ust-Kamenogorsk, Leninsk (Kazakhstan), Yoshkar-Ola (Republic of Mari El), Blagoveshchensk.

Sakha Academic Theater named after P.A. Ojanskii is the proud and brilliant exponent of national beginning in Yakut art. Happy Birthday

of Sakha Academic Theater is considered to be October 17, 1925, when the Yakut national folk theater troupe played a comedy *Evil spirit* by one of the writers of classic Yakut literature N. Neustroev. In 1926, at the request of the People's Commissar of Education and Health of the Yakut Republic Council of People's Commissars was established the Yakut National Theatre. Its first director was a poet and playwright, one of the founders of Yakut literature A. Sofronov-Alampa. D. Bolshev, director from Viluisk was invited to work in the theater. The repertoire of the young theater those years included *The Game of Life* by the dramaist A. Sofronov, *Those years* by A. Kyunde, *Bolshevik Basil*, *Red Shaman* by P. Ojunskaa, as well as translations into Yakut plays *The Lower Depths* by Gorky, *Zakharov's death* by A. Neverov, *Red eagle* by M. Zadonski. Professional development of first Yakut actors took place in the biennial Theatre Workshop under the direction of Russian theater I. Saprygin (1928), as well as in the studio, organized by the professional theater director A. Glebov, who previously worked in the Moscow Theater for young workers. In 1931 was staged *Armored Train 14-69* on the Civil War in the Far East. In 1932, the first set was made in the studio acting department Yakut GITIS. In 1930 the first professional work of Yakut directors people's artists of RSFSR and YASSR S. Grigor'ev, people's artist of USSR V. Mestnikov, K. Gogolev, N. Sleptsov and honored artist of YASSR and RSFSR people's artist G. Turalysov was enacted. In 1934, the theater was named after the founder of the Yakut Soviet literature, a public figure P. Ojunskaa. Since 1942, the theater has served music and drama. In the period from 1930 to 1960 performances of *Brothers* by S. Yefremov, *Tsar's decree*, *Someone wanted child*, *Kuo Tuyaaryma* by P. Ojunskaa, *Inspector* by N. Gogol, *The Smith Kyukyur*, *Saysaary* by Suorun Omolloon, *Tricks of Scapin* by Moliere *Bride, Forest, Talents and Admirers* by Ostrovsky, *Intrigue and Love* by Schiller *Othello, Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare, *Vasily Manchaary* by V. Protodjakonov, *Lookut and Nurgusun* by T. Smetanin and others were delivered.

From 1961 to 1983 honored artist of RSFSR and YASSR F. Potapov worked as a chief director in the Drama Theatre Yakutsk, making a number of interesting productions included in the basic repertoire of those years. It played *Mother's Field* by Aitmatov, *Gadfly* by E. Voynich, *On the night of the lunar eclipse* by M. Karim, *Naarah Suoh*, *Morning Lena*, *Northern legend* by I. Gogolev etc.

In 1971, there was a division of musical and dramatic theater troupes into two separate collectives - Yakut Musical Theater and Yakutsk State Drama Theatre named after P. A. Ojunskaa.

The impressive success of the Sakha Theater in the last two decades is inextricably linked with the name of its permanent artistic director, honored artist of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), winner of the State Prize of the USSR and Russia, laureate of P.A.Oiunskii and A.E. Kulakovski State Prizes of Sakha (Yakutia) - Andrei Borisov. Each new setting has been a significant event in the cultural life of the country evoking a genuine interest in the Russian and foreign audiences. Since his arrival in 1983 as the main director, and since 1990 as the artistic director of the Sakha Academic Theater began a new stage in the history of the Yakut Drama Theatre. Graduation performance by a young director, *My Beloved Blue Coast* directed by A. Borisov, the story by Chingiz Aitmatov *Spotted Dog running the edge of the sea* became a major artistic discovery of Yakut Russian theater. In 1986, A. Borisov, art director G. Sotnikov, starring E. Stepanov, S. Fedotov, Mr. Vasiliev was awarded the State Prize of the USSR.

Repertoire was enriched with new bright, extraordinary productions - *Songs left me, Kudangsa Great, Nikolay Dorogunov, Children of Men*, based on the works of P.A.Ojunskii *Stumbled* by A. Sofronov, *The Good Person of Szechwan* by Brecht and *Haniduo Halerhaa* by S. Kurilova etc. Sakha Theater has also performed abroad - in Finland, Germany, Norway, Poland, Mexico, America, Switzerland, Turkey, France and Japan.

In his work, a talented director seeks to show great artistic opportunity given to it by the creative team, to prove the viability of traditional ideals and national aesthetics of the Yakut people, update Yakut theater based on the achievements of modern art. In his discussion of the Sakha Theater and about its origins, Borisov writes: "I used to come to the realization that the basis of the nature of the foundations are *Olonkho* theatrics and shamanic mysteries. In them I discover East Asian theater. And now it is important to try to dig a tunnel between these parallel spaces of European and Asian theater, to achieve fusion. Our theater was lucky in this respect as anyone else. We, through its northern world can join the Russian-European theater with the East Asian."

The leading place in the repertoire is Russian and world classics - plays by Leo Tolstoy, Gogol, Ostrovsky, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, A. Tolstoy, Shakespeare, Schiller, Moliere, Lope de Vega, the works of Russian authors - Shukshin Rybakov, A. Dudarev, A. Kudryavtsev, A. Gelman, A. Galin. The theater operated the subsidiary of Moscow Art Theatre School under the patronage of Oleg Tabakov, who prepared several editions of Young Artists of the Russian Theatre. In an active touring

band - 85 settlements of the republic, Russia, CIS countries - among them - most of their major creative actions took place in Khabarovsk, Chita, Magadan, Blagoveshchensk, in Yoshkar-Ola, Mari El Republic, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan and Lenin in Minsk and Bobruisk in Belarus, etc.

In 1995, Yakutsk Drama Theatre received the status of "academic" for its great creative achievements. It became known as Sakha Academic Theater named after P.A. Ojunskaa.

In 1999, the play *King Lear* by William Shakespeare was awarded the State Prize of Russia. In 2000, Theater for the first time in its long history found its own building, the first production which played *Kys Debeliye*, manifesting a distinctive aesthetics developing *Olonkho* Theatre. In 2002, it gained wide recognition of the Russian public, and was awarded the National Prize "Golden Mask" in "Drama Critics Award". In 2005, the performance of the young director S.Potapov *Macbeth* by E. Ionescu also became one of the best Russian performances. It received special jury prize of the National Award "Golden Mask" - for vivid artistry, the combination of folk traditions with the poetics of European avant-garde."

Several generations of Yakut artists belonging to M.S. Shchepkin Higher Theater School (1955, 1966, 1974, 1985, 2002), - the famous School of the Maly Theater, made their performances. Acknowledged master of Yakut scenes, D. Khodulov became people's artist of USSR, people's artist of RSFSR and YASSR M. Sleptsovs, P. Reshetnikov, A.Petrov, honored artists of the RSFSR, people's artists of YASSR W. Sawin, A. Ivanov, A. Kuzmin, G. Kolesov, M. Gogolev, became honored artists of Russia and people's artist of Republic Sakha (Yakutia) S.Borisova, honored artists of Russian Federation and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) S. Fedotov, E.Stepanov, A. Nikolaev etc.

The traditional Republican Theatre Festival "Desire Beach", organised by Union of theater arts of Yakutia based on the Sakha Academic Theater, has acquired an international status. The First International Theatre Festival nomadic "Desire Beach": Faces of Genghis Khan was held in 2005 in Ulan-Ude, which united their Eurasian theater festival program of Siberia and the Far East.

State Opera and Ballet Theatre of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) named after D.K. Sivtsev-Suorun Omolloon is one of the leading musical theater in north-eastern Russia. It is the northernmost opera house in the world and the largest theater group in Yakutia. It employs about 400 people: artists and managing staff, opera and ballet companies, orchestra,

choir, industrial workshops, technical and support staff. State Opera and Ballet Theatre (Yakutia) was founded in 1940s, when in the depths of the national drama theater began to form the first forms of musical theater. In 1936, the first Yakut composer M.Zhirkov organized a choir in the Yakut drama theater, which in 1940 was reorganized into a musical-vocal group - a three-year studio where young national cadres were trained in the field of professional arts. In 1947 Zhirkov together with the Moscow composer G.Litinskim processed drum-*olonkho* "Nyurgun Bootur Impetuous" in the opera, the first and a classic example of the genre in Yakutia. Formulation of a new show was dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the Yakut ASSR. The same authors composed and performed for the anniversary of the republic, concert version second national opera "Sygy Kyrynaastyyr" and the first yakut ballet "Field Flower". In 1948, the musical theater studio was re-merged with a drama troupe.

Until 1971, drama actors, chorus, ballet, singers worked in one Yakutsk Music and Drama Theatre. Conductors M. Benedictov, G. Krivoshapko, pianists P.Rozinskaya, S. Dzhangvaladze, choirmaster W.Popov, vocalists A.Kleshcheva, violinist A. Zimmel, choreographers S. Vladimirov-Klimov and I. Karenin, teacher and vocalist A.Kostin and others have been the leaders of musical-theatrical business in Yakutia.

In 1957, the first Yakut opera "Nyurgun Bootur Swift" by M. Zhirkov and H. Litinsky was shown with great success during the Days of Yakut Literature and Art in Moscow. Yakut artists were praised by the all-union audience.

In the 1960s, the classical works: the opera *Eugene Onegin* by Tchaikovsky, *La Traviata*, *Rigoletto* by Verdi, *Pagliacci* by R. Leoncavallo's *Barber of Seville* by Rossini, *Giselle* by Adam, *Romeo and Juliet* by Tchaikovsky, *The Blue Danube* by Johann Strauss, *Lady and the Hooligan* by D. Shostakovich, were shown. Updated national repertoire works - opera *Lookut and Nurgusun*, operetta *The Flower of the North*, the ballet *The stone of happiness* by G. Grigoryan, the opera *Red shaman* by G. Litinsky, *The Song of Manchaary* by G. Komrakov and E. Alekseev, ballet *Churumchuku* by J. Batuev were also performed.

In 1971, the musical troupe withdrew from the Yakut Theatre and formed an independent musical theater. The classical repertoire has been enriched by operas *Cio-Cio-San* by Puccini, *Carmen* by Georges Bizet, *The Tsar's Bride* by Rimsky-Korsakov, *Prince Igor* by Borodin, *Mermaid* by Dargomyzhsky, *Porgy and Bess* by G. Gershwin. Opera director L.

Vinokurov staged the operetta *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* by R. Hajiyev, *Interceptor* by Basner, *The Flawless Flame* by N. Berestov. Yakut viewers enjoyed the ballet *Les Sylphides*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, fragments of performances of *Swan Lake* by Tchaikovsky, *Don Quixote* by Minkus. Ballet company was headed by one of the first Yakut choreographers, the honored artist of Yakutia ASSR A. Popov. His performances of *Romeo and Juliet* by Tchaikovsky, *Walpurgis Night* by Gounod, *Cinderella* by S. Prokofiev *The Creation* by A. Petrov, *Feat* by G. Komrakova aroused great interest among the public.

In 1981, the musical theater found the building where Popov works to this day, Where he staged *Iolanthe*, *Queen of Spades* by Tchaikovsky, *Dorothea* by T. Khrennikov, *Optimistic Tragedy* by A. Holminov, *May Night* by Rimsky-Korsakov, *Mother Courage* by S. Kortess etc. In 1991 the Musical Theater was given the status of the State Opera and Ballet.

Pride and glory of opera Yakutia are its leading soloists – E. Zakharova, honored artist of RSFSR, people's artist of YASSR, the first opera director in Yakutia A. Egorova, honored artists of RSFSR, honored artists of YASSR A. Lytkina, N. Shepeleva, honored artist of YASSR N. Bhaskarov, people's artist of the RSFSR and YASSR M. Lobanov, honored artists of RSFSR, people's artists of YASSR A. Yakovleva, A. Samsonov, people's artist of USSR A. Ilyina, people's artist of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) M. Nikolaeva, people's artist of Russia S. Okonishnikov, people's artist of Russian Federation and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) I. Stepanov, honored artists of Russian Federation, people's artist of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) A. Adamova, N. Chigirev and A. Borisova, honored artist of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) M. Silina etc.

The audience accepted and loved several generations of famous soloists of Yakut ballet – honored artists of Russia, people's artists of the Republic Sakha (Yakutia) E. Stepanova, K. and N. Poselskys, honored artists of Russian Federation K. Ivanova and A. Ulturgashev, honored artist of Russian Federations N. Khristoforova, O. Abramova, honored artist of the Republic Sakha (Yakutia) I. Pudova, A. Yagodkin, I. Borisov, G. Baishev, D. Dmitriev etc.

Performing arts of Yakut singers are recognized not only in Russia but abroad as well. Ilyina is the winner of the International Vocal Competition held in Prague and Munich N. Chigireva is the winner of the All-Union Competition of Vocalists named after M.I. Glinka. I. Stepanov won the first prize of the F. Shalyapin's contest bass Russia. A. Adamova won international competitions in Spain, Italy, the competition singing

competitions of VIII Sobinov Festival and Ist premium of Tchaikovsky XII International Competition of Vocalists, etc.

Large musical theater such as the ballet company in Moscow, China, Ballet Festival *North Divertissement* and *Siberian Crane*, Verdi and Tchaikovsky Opera Festivals, *Aria of the North*, "Irina Arkhipova and Vladislav Piavko represent...", "Festival of Mozart in the Arctic Circle, and the collaborative projects with well-known conductors, choreographers and directors from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Perm, Novosibirsk, Buryatia, Mongolia, Japan, Korea, etc. received great attention in and outside the country. The premiere of Tchaikovsky's ballet *Swan Lake* and *Romeo and Juliet* by Prokofiev staged by people's artist of the USSR Yuri Grigorovich, the opera *Boris Godunov* by Mussorgsky (director A. Borisov) on the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre, Russia in the framework of the Festival of Arts Olonkho land, which were dedicated to 370th anniversary of Yakutia in the Russian state, etc. became big cultural events in the modern theater movement.

National Dance Theatre of Sakha (Yakutia) is developing an original dance culture of Yakutia. The team of artists led by its founder, honored artist of Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Yakutsk Ballet soloist Gennadi Baishev is working to preserve the traditional choreographic heritage, its refractive index in the theater genre. Thus, the stage bears interesting syncretic plays, whereas in folk art are fused together music, dance, ritual action, the poetic word, singing, colorful costumes and scenery. In recent years, Dance Theatre had fruitful cooperation with the Yakut Union of Composers, with renowned scientists and ethnographers, experts in the field of popular culture. As a result of their creative collaboration, there were created the shows *Bohsuruyuu (The expulsion of the evil spirit)* to music by Vladimir Ksenofontov - on the difficult path of becoming a young shaman rituals of initiation and its antagonism to evil spirits of the Underworld, *Uruu (Earth kinship)* by Arcadii Samoilov - which involved a unique, previously rising stratum of ancient Yakut wedding ceremonies, *Atyyr Munch (Big game fishing)* to music honored art of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), winner of the State Prize of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) Nicholai Berestov - local action on traditional Yakut ice fishing, *Yarhadaana* to the music of honored artist of Russian Federation and Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) Zahar Stepanov - production based on archaic mythological plots of Yukagirs, one of the oldest nations of Northeast Asia. Theatre is not confined to purely national framework. It is evident from such extraordinary performances as the shooter rock *Dao*, a rock-dance

The Anatomy of Revolution, plastic action *Green Sun* based on Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita*. Performances of Dance Theatre are accompanied by a live band playing traditional instruments, conducted by Nikolai Petrov.

Theatre for Young People of Republic Sakha (Yakutia) – TUZ from 1992 to 1999 was called by the State National Theatre of variety miniatures *Naarah suohtar*. In 2000 it was transformed into the State House of Humor and Satire of Republic Sakha (Yakutia). Since 2008, based on it was a theater-oriented for children. Initiator and inspirer of the theater is its artistic director, laureate of the All-Union competition of performers (1989), honored art worker of Russia, people's artist of Republic Sakha (Yakutia) Alexei Pavlov. At the beginning of his artistic career, he developed a distinctive comic theater culture of the Yakut people, based on the folk game action. The theater was designed for *One Day*, to reflect the problem of Yakut society. It refers to the Russian classics, interprets it from the point of Yakut game culture, the national outlook. The children's studio *Naarah suohchannar* is working by theater and is of great interest to the audience. The Theatre organized the Children's Festival of Humor and Satire *Dibe, debe ogolor*. The Theatre holds an annual awards ceremony for theatres of the Republic - *Diamonds laughter* for achievements in the field of humor and satire. In 2002, the State Theatre of Humor and Satire was awarded the International Theatre Festival of Turkic peoples *Nauruz* in Kazan. Theatre is a member of the All-Union Festival of Humour and Satire, Parody, Laughter "in Moscow and" Yumorina -90 "in Kiev. In recent years, the primary mission of Theatre of Young Spectator (Yakutia) is the development of theater for children and put vivid original performances in Russian and Yakut languages. TUZ is systematically working with children and young audiences and helps the younger generation develop artistic taste. Children can realize their inherent creativity in the children's theater drama school, organized by TUZ. The theater is the recipient of the national theater festival "Desire Beach" in the category "Best Production for Children and Youth", the international festival "Slavic theater meetings."

Neryungri Actor and Dolls Theater (NTAiK) was founded on May 19, 1985. It is the only theater in South Yakutia and has an important educational function of familiarizing the population of the region to a professional art. The basic structure of his company consisted of graduates of the Sverdlovsk Theatre School, headed by E. Ereemeev. Their first performance was *What was told by the wizards* based on the story by

B. Korostylev. In 1992, the team was given the status of Actor and Dolls Theatre, which greatly expanded the range of performances genre and a contingent of viewers. The main focus of Theatre is to work with children and young audience, production of shows for family viewing. This is evidenced by the theater's repertoire, which seamlessly combines drama, puppet shows, plastic action. In recent years an increasing number of productions have addressed the audience of the older generation. Theatre's distinguishing feature is the presence of two equal troupes - Russian and Yakut. Yakut troupe included Schepkinsky college graduates founded by honored artist of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), director F.Potapov on November 13, 1985, the premiere of the Yakut puppet shows *Night Tales* by I.Gogolev was held. It staged joint performances with actors of the two troupes: *The last mammoth* by I. Gogolev, *Scaffold* by Chingiz Aitmatov (directed by I.Utkin), *I caught a lit* (directed by F. Potapov), *Mowgli* by R. Kipling (directed by I.Utkin), *hell* (directed by Yuri Makarov).

For almost twenty years of its existence, the Theater toured almost all regions of the republic. It performed to the audience of Magadan, Sakhalin, Vladivostok, Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk. NTAiK has participated in many Russian and international festivals. In 1994, the team received a special prize of the International Theatre Festival native *Nevisky Pierrot* in St. Petersburg, in 1997, went on a festival of solo performances in Perm in 1998, performed at the national festival "Sata-98" in Yakutsk, won the award for Best Actress. It participated in 2000 at the Third International Festival "Lambushka" in Petrozavodsk. Neryungri theater was awarded the prize for best actor, director and set designer. In December 2002, at the inter-regional festival "Christmas Parade" in St. Petersburg NTAiK received the Grand Prize for the best performance. In March 2003, the national festival "Desire Beach" in Yakutsk theater was awarded the "Best children's performance," and directed by P. Scriabin - the category "Best Director". In June 2003 they held diploma International Puppet Festival in Abakan (Khakassia).

Nyurba State Drama Theatre Mobile was founded in August 1966. Its creative composition was formed by graduates of the Shchepkin Theater School. The first production of young theater performances were *Virgin Soil Upturned* by Sholokhov, *Banya* by Mayakovsky, *Crafty Love* by Lope de Vega, *Poplar in my red scarf* by Aitmatov. Today, the theater has three Yakut graduate studios of Shchepkin Theater School, Far East Institute of the Arts, Sverdlovsk Institute of Theatrical and Institute of

culture. During its over thirty-year history, the theater stage over a hundred performances on the stage. Nyurba Theater was awarded in 1971 Yakut Komsomol Laureate title for its achievements in the development of theatrical art of the republic. In 1972 the theater participated in the Festival of national drama of the USSR.

New advances of troupe are associated with the arrival of the talented creative director honored art of Republic Sakha (Yakutia) Y. Makarov. They put up the shows *Wat Dzhulustan* by V. Gavrilyev, *Red shaman* by P.Ojunski, *Godforsaken land*, *Tuohu* by S. Ermolaev, etc. In 1994, the theater participated in international festivals in Sevastopol and Lvov (Ukraine). In 1996, the theater participated in the International theater festival *Contact 96* in Torun (Poland). In 1997 the theater successfully participated in the Festival *Passage* in Nancy, and went on tour to France. In 1999 Festival *Baltic House*, Nyurba theater was awarded the nomination "For peculiar artistic design performance." Nyurba Drama Theatre is the initiator of the National theater festival "Sata", which was first held in 1993 in Nyurba, the second time in 1995 in Yakutsk, the third time in 1997 in Neryungri. In 2002 the theater held Nyurba National Theatre Festival small form "2002", with the participation of professional and folk theater groups of Yakutia theater critic of the central cities of Russia. In 2006 - the Festival "Sata" was again held in Nyurba.

The theater has acknowledged masters of Yakut scene – honored artists of Republic Sakha (Yakutia) P. and V.Nikolaevs, A. Krivogornitsyn, O. Grigoriev, P. Andreev, V.Semenov, D. Ivanov, B. Borisov, M. Tikhonov, etc. Currently Nyurba State Drama Theatre is one of the original theater companies of the Republic, the center of theatrical life in Vilui group of regions in Yakutia.

State Variety Theater of the Republic Sakha (Yakutia) works on modern pop culture. It is a youth Theatre, in its development stage. The formation of the artistic repertoire, State Theater Stage of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) has its origins in the 1970s, when a number of graduates of the All-Russian pop stage art studio dancer D. Neustroev, singers N.Trapeznikova and Y.Platonov in 1968 formed a Pop Concert Office, which formed the basis of Yakutsk State Philharmonic established in 1979. In 1992, the Yakut State Philharmonic was transformed into the State concert-commercial association *Sakhakontsert*, which led to the formation of such well known institutions of culture and art of Republic as the National Dance Theatre, the State Circus, the State Theatre pop miniatures *Naarah suohtar*. In 1998, *Sakhakontsert* got the status of State

Variety Theatre Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

The priority tasks of the State Variety Theatre are to develop popular music of the Yakut, methodical preparation of a new generation of young artists, to establish contacts with leading theater and variety art institutions in the country, raising an executive level of the artistic composition. As part of the theater along with the honored artists of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) - the winner of X-World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin N. Trapeznikova, P. Pestryakov, V. Zabolotsky, E. and A. Egorovs, winners of international festivals - competitions K. and G. Hatylaevs, A. Burnashov operate a new generation of Yakut pop artists - V. Amanatova, V. Romanova-Chyskyray, V. Burnashova-Sahaya, M. Egorov, V. Maksimov, P. Semenov and others. As part of the theater are the musical group "Iehey-Chuohay" (artistic director V. Tatarinov), jazz "Paraphrase-Band" (art director A. Alekseev). State Variety Theatre together with the North-East Federal University named after M.K. Ammosov which organized Republican creative workshop of pop art under the leadership of honored artist of the Russian Federation and the people's artist of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) Y. Platonov, whose graduates work on the professional stage as artists of spoken and vocal genres.

In 2008, by decree of the President of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) Vyacheslav Shtyrov founded the Mirny theater. After several years its repertoire theater already has fifteen performances of Russian classical and modern drama, five of which are addressed to an audience of children. There are 18 actors in the troupe, mostly graduates of the Yakut Branch of Moscow Art Theatre School and Arctic State Arts and Culture Institute. The leading actors are honored artists of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) V. Zamankov, T. Mamleeva, X. Zyкова, O. Fedoseyeva, S. Egorov, R. Kvashnin, V. Rassokhin, S. Sidorov.

Among their favorite spectator performances are the play by Gogol *Players*, production of *The Bear* and *The Proposal* by Chekhov. At the national festival "Desire Beach-2011" was presented the play by A. Dudarev *Do not leave me*.

National Forum on "New Theatrical Realities" staged five performances at the site of the theater center "The Passionate" theater. Among its achievements is a performance of *Lonely* based on the Yakut heroic epics *Ereydeeh Buruydah Er Sogotoh* (director C. Serguchev), first raised in the framework of the Republican *Ysyakh*.

Back in the early 20th century attempts for *Olonkho* productions on

stage were made and in the 1920-1930s was born the idea of *Olonkho* theater creation. Large role performance of the first musical drama “Nyurgun Bootur Impetuous” was made in 1940 and then the first opera based on it was staged in 1957. In subsequent years, *Olonkho* stories interested folk theaters.

At the turn of the 1990-2000s a performance in Sakha theater on *Olonkho Kyys Debiliye* subjects by Andrei Borisov and the musical drama *Tuyaaryma Kuo*, and finally, the recognition of the Yakut heroic epos *Olonkho* Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2005, logically led to the Decree of the President of the Republic Sakha (Yakutia) and the Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) No. 91 of 19 March 2008 on the foundation of State cultural institutions of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) “Theatre *Olonkho*.” *Olonkho* Theatre at the invitation of the Japanese side staged traditional *Noh* theater, which reflected the international recognition.

The conception of the theater, provides the creation of three types of productions:

- a) one-man plays, based on the traditional chamber music performance—“one man show”;
- b) performances—*Olonkho* based on collective performance and having a rich tradition in the repertoire of modern public theaters;
- c) varied synthetic performances of many types of professional theatrical and other forms of art, which have been reflected in many modern performances (opera, dance, puppetry, music drama, show presentations, video games, feature films, television series, cartoons etc.).

Each of the professional theaters in Yakutia is original and unique. Each of them has its own vector of development, which are woven into a bright, colorful pattern on a modern map of the Russian theater. Yakutia rightly bears the title Theatre of the Republic in recent years, taking the leading position in a theater world ranking of our country, impressing the intensity of the stage life, bold creative ideas, and original implementation of tasks.

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IMAGES OF SIBERIA IN POST-SOVIET WRITINGS

SINDHU JANARDHAN

This paper reviews post-Soviet and contemporary representations of Siberia in three different genres: cultural histories, nature writing and travel writing. Of the many works that record the history of Siberia, two recent ethno-histories are particularly significant: the Siberian writer Valentin Rasputin's *Siberia, Siberia* (English translation published in 1996) and the Australian author A. J. Haywood's *Siberia: A Cultural History* (published in 2010). Both these works take into account the major milestones of Siberian history—from the origins of Siberia (as a place inhabited by indigenous peoples) to the present day, with the question of Siberia's future existence in a globalized world made more problematic in the post-Soviet era.

For a country whose identity has been riddled with the contradictions inherent in its seesawing image over the years, Siberia's complex history presents a formidable challenge to any historian. Yuri Slezkine's essay *Siberia as History* attempts to briefly trace Siberia's past from roughly the 11th century (when early Russians first came to the Urals) to 1991, the year that marked the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Slezkine emphasizes the fact that Siberia was represented, from the very beginning, as a land of extreme contrasts and contradictions, "as both the frightening heart of darkness and a fabulous land of plenty". This image was true in the experience of exiles, as well as those who went there seeking fresh mercantile opportunities; it persisted till the 18th century, which brought with it the tools of science, along with Peter the Great's programme of Westernization.

Even as Russia was well on its way to becoming one amongst the then great European powers, Siberia's position as Russia's Asiatic Other became crystallized. The colonial attitude, fostered by the exile system which used Siberia as a penal colony, was further bolstered by the

economic opportunities afforded by Siberia's vast natural wealth. Even as the influence of 19th century Romanticism tinged the commonly-held perceptions of 'wild' Siberia with a rosy glow, the unbridled exploitation of Siberia's riches went on.

In the latter years of the 19th century, Siberia became "the ultimate symbol of both independence and exploitation"; fugitive serfs and peasants seeking freedom and prosperity poured into this land, that supplied its 'colonizer' Russia with furs ("soft gold"), mineral ores, timber and other raw materials, while being used simultaneously as a dump for the refuse of Russian society.¹ The Bolshevik Revolution did much to address this schism in Siberia's image. The country's backwardness in terms of industrialization was aggressively tackled by the Soviet government.

Communist rule brought about the collectivization of agriculture, the ruthless exploitation of Siberia's natural resources; industrialization replaced the older, more primitive ways of life on an enormous scale. In the Soviet scheme of things, Siberia was the ultimate ground on which Communist ideology was to be played out to the full: Siberian nature was construed as a set of hostile elements to be overcome and tamed once and for all. The Stalinist regime went a long way towards obliterating Siberia's natural past and replacing it with a timeless future.

The discourse of Socialist Realism constructed Siberia as part of the Soviet Union, a land that had been lifted out of the morass of primitivism and backwardness by Communism. During the Communist phase of Russian (and Siberian) history, the individual identity of Siberia as a separate entity was done away with; instead, Siberia merely presented fresh ground for the apparent success of Communist ideology to experiment with. The ecological disasters that have been a direct consequence of the scientific experiments of the Communist years, which upheld a credo of advancement and progress, are as much a part of Siberia's present, as any of its other immediate concerns in the post-Soviet phase of its ongoing history.

Several scholars have commented on the degradation of Siberia's natural wealth; Kalpana Sahni's *Crucifying the Orient* and Ryszard Kapóscłnski's *Imperium* are two notable examples. The breakdown of a rural way of life and the onslaughts of the Soviet ideological machinery were themes that were creatively addressed in the village prose movement of the 1960s; Valentin Rasputin was one of its most prominent writers. In *Siberia, Siberia*, Rasputin brings his creative abilities to the

realm of historiography.²

Valentin Rasputin's location as one of Siberia's foremost native writers makes him particularly qualified to construct Siberia's history from a present-day perspective. Siberia's rich cultural and ethnic past, which had been paid mere lip service to in the Soviet era,³ is revived and recorded in Rasputin's work, woven together with his current concerns — ecological issues directly connected with what remains of Siberia's natural wealth, and its role in the country's future in a globalized context. *Siberia, Siberia* is Rasputin's longest work of nonfiction; it is the first volume of his long-term project of producing a personalized ethno history of Siberia from the late 16th century to present times.

The six central chapters cover the history of places located in the four corners of the enormous landmass of Siberia: the western edge (Tobolsk), the south-central border (the Gorno-Altay region), the northeastern shore (Russkoe Ustye) and the southeast heartland (Lake Baikal, Irkutsk and Kyakhta). Each of these regions, as Rasputin's translators have pointed out in their introduction to his *History*, exemplifies a particular set of geographic and climatic conditions, and a specific mixture of population and pattern of historical development.⁴

Each of these regions played its own special role in the larger context of the country's history as a whole ; this is perhaps also a reason why, apart from Siberia's unwieldy geographical proportions, Rasputin's *History*, like Haywood's work, is organized region-wise. The opening and closing chapters deal with Siberia as a whole, from Yermak's Cossack conquest, to present-day concerns and issues.

Aside from Rasputin's privileged position as a native writer, he also made many trips to the places that he wrote about in *Siberia, Siberia*. The translators of his work are of the opinion that this history is special because of Rasputin's voluminous research into Siberian history, and his judicious reference to the work of Russia's most illustrious explorers, chroniclers, writers and ethnographers.⁵

A native of Atalanka, a village in the Irkutsk province, Rasputin's response to the tragic relocation of his "little homeland" to higher ground above the floodwaters of the Angara river, is truly moving:

"(He has) broadened the definition of his 'little homeland' to include other parts of Siberia – Irkutsk, where he has lived with only occasional interruptions since 1954; Lake Baikal, near which he has done much of his writing and whose survival he has been striving for continuously in his main role as an

environmentalist; and more distant parts of Siberia in the north, west, and south".⁶

In a newspaper interview⁷ in which Rasputin explained the aims of his historical work, he uses the term "little homeland" to refer to not only his birthplace but to Siberia as a whole: "My purpose... was to show reverence for this powerful land, for my little homeland of more than seventy million square kilometers, to say a good word about its gatherers, builders, and caretakers... and to appeal to my countrymen to come to the defense of Siberia against its despoliation... by foreign and domestic speculators".⁸ The passionate, even fierce, love for Siberia that Rasputin's History shows is individual to the author and simultaneously part of a larger context, that of a distinctive Siberian historiography.

Rasputin's translators mention the 19th century scholar Gerhard Friedrich Müller⁹ (the father of Siberian history), as having founded an important regionalist tradition, which found its place in Russian historiography. The scholars, who were part of this regionalist tradition such as Yadrintsev and Shchapov, were sometimes referred to as "the federal school",¹⁰ which gave importance to the idea of difference in identifying each nationality or ethnicity that make up the fabric of Russian society. Their belief that a federal decentralized government was the only way to administer the huge Russian empire predictably met with opposition from the Soviet monolithic structure, which emphasized centralization, supranationality and other forms of state control.

But with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the idea of a separate national identity for Siberia (as for other regions like the Ukraine and Belarus) came up again for discussion, in the new liberalized atmosphere. Rasputin's patriotism, which follows this regionalist view, has special relevance when it comes to the questions concerning Siberia's future today, questions that trouble him deeply.¹¹

Chapter I of Rasputin's History, titled "Siberia without the Romance", sounds the major themes that have made up the four-hundred-year experience of Siberia as a whole. Rasputin discusses the possible origins of the word 'Sibir' itself, along with its associations, some of which were pure fantasy, while others were to some extent historically justified. What emerges from Rasputin's initial chapter is that those who have lived in Siberia permanently perceive their country quite differently from outsiders, i.e. either foreigners or from other parts of Russia.¹² These outsiders' perceptions viewed 18th century Siberia as "our Mexico and our Peru" for its mineral wealth and territory; in the 19th century, as

“our United States”, a vast frontier land that had only to be settled and cultivated; and in the 20th century, they saw it as “a source of colossal energy” and “a land of unlimited opportunities”.¹³

This acquisitive and exploitative attitude to Siberia contrasted directly with native perceptions: regardless of ethnic background, natives of Siberia regard it as their homeland, “a homeland that, like every other, needs love and protection, perhaps even more protection than any other places because it still has something left to protect”.¹⁴ The peasants who followed the 16th century Cossacks and explorers of Siberia are, according to Rasputin, very important to the development of Siberia, since their settling and cultivation activities made this “land of hardship... accessible and fit to live in”.¹⁵ It is interesting to note that a native writer of such patriotic fervour, someone whose very flesh and blood have sprung from the land, does not at any point in his *History*, advocate separatism. He sympathises with fellow-Siberians who have regionalist views, but believes, like his older contemporary Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, that “the center of Russian civilization will someday be located in Siberia”.¹⁶

The only observation which can be seen as a concession to the claim of a special native identity is with regard to his concept of character development. Rasputin attributes the peculiar character of Siberian Russians to “the genetics of the land”, or what Winchell and Mikkelson refer to as “a kind of geographical determinism”.¹⁷ “Thus a Siberian is not only a thick skin accustomed to inconveniences and freezing cold and not only stubbornness and persistence in achieving goals (qualities that the local conditions produced), but also a certain fatedness, a deep and solid rootedness in this land, a compatibility between the human soul and the spirit of nature”.¹⁸

In reviewing past perceptions of Siberia by outsiders (he mentions Chekhov and Goncharov), Rasputin’s overall argument seems to be that the dominant image of Siberia as a land of cold, despair, darkness and hardship was, by and large, deliberately constructed by those who exploited and plundered the land and left it bereft of its natural riches. In his first chapter, Rasputin reviews the general effect of Siberia on the human psyche over the centuries and states as his objective his wish to construct Siberia as a country shaped by Nature, and as a part of the world community.¹⁹ Despite his claim of objectivity in this construction of Siberia, one can sense his deep love and rootedness in the land, which impel him to counter the bleakness of the stereotypical image of Siberia that has built up over the centuries. Each part of Siberia, he argues, played

its own role in the country's history; for this reason there is a need, Rasputin feels, for acknowledgement of the fact, as well as careful preservation of each individual region's historical relics, in view of their role in Siberia's future as well.

The second chapter deals with Tobolsk, "the father of Siberian cities"²⁰ and the first capital of Siberia until 1839; the colonization of Siberia by Russia; the lacunae in Siberia's early recorded history; Archbishop Kiprian as the first teacher and chronicler of Russian Siberians; Tobolsk as the birthplace of Gavriil Batenkov (the only participant in the Decembrist Revolt of 1825 originally from Siberia); Pyotr Yershov (author of the well-known verse tale *The Little Humpbacked Horse*, 1834), the late-nineteenth century patriot-regionalist writers Potanin and Yadrintsev; and Tobolsk in its present paradoxical state, as being simultaneously an example of Russian neglect of their own historical heritage, and of a strong campaign for its restoration. Rasputin lashes out at present-day politicians who are at the helm of Siberian administration but turn a deaf ear to its urgent ecological issues.

The third chapter, titled "Lake Baikal", focuses on the Baikal-Lena region, with a combination of personal experience and excerpts from travellers' diaries and other sources. His observations on minute details of Nature are reminiscent of Paul Nazaroff's²¹ descriptions of Russian Central Asia's flora and fauna: Rasputin's powers of observation are born of a consuming love for his country and a sense of oneness with its Nature. Rasputin focuses on the sacredness of Lake Baikal to all the peoples who have lived near it; its pristine beauty and endemic species of fauna, such as the nerpa (freshwater seal) and golomianka (oil fish); the local mythology surrounding the natural phenomena of the region; the negative impact of human activity on the delicate ecological balance of Lake Baikal. Rasputin himself has been part of a thirty-year struggle to save Lake Baikal from industrial pollution. Though no new industrial plants have come up on its shores since the 1980s, the pulp and cellulose conglomerates at the south end of the lake and on the Selenga river continue to pollute the water with effluents. Rasputin is convinced that writers must devote their energies to creating more awareness on this issue to save Lake Baikal, even if it means suspending their artistic careers for a while. His own experiences in the uphill struggle for environmental protection have also led him to believe that mere awareness is not enough to overcome the apathy of the government in this matter.

Chapter IV is devoted to Irkutsk, Rasputin's main home in his adult

life. While acknowledging the historical importance of the Russian American Company that engendered the progressive merchant class of Irkutsk, Rasputin emphasizes the universal need for a sense of home from which one derives a sense of identity. A sense of history and rootedness is also equally vital to an individual's identity. This is the reason Rasputin urges the necessity of preserving the historical monuments of Irkutsk: "...when visiting foreign lands, no matter how much we admire their manmade and non-man-made beauty, no matter how much amazement their degree of development and their historical memory evoke, we always remain in our homeland at heart; we measure everything only against our native land, fit in only there, and base our reading of everything only on it".²²

Chapter V, titled "The Gorno-Altay Region", addresses the ever-present ecological issues threatening the natural beauties of this region: the ethereally beautiful Altay mountains, Lake Teletskoe and the Katun river. In this section also Rasputin brings together his abiding concern for the future of this region's delicate ecology and his sense of cultural roots, which bind him to the land in a unified and holistic sensibility.

The historical town of Kyakhta is the focus of Chapter VI; this town attained importance as a trade centre to Imperial Russia because of its location on the border with China. Apart from supplying tea to all of Russia, it was a melting-pot of diverse religions and cultures and served as Siberia's "window on the East".²³ The Trans-Siberian Railway spelt the end of Kyakhta's pre-eminence as a commercial and cultural hub. The utter disregard shown by Soviet authorities to the value of Kyakhta's cultural monuments was to be seen in the conversion of a historical cemetery to a soccer stadium, where "present-day youths chase a ball on the bones of their grandmothers and grandfathers".²⁴ Rasputin's anguish over this callous indifference finds an echo in the Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov. In his novel *The Day Lasts Longer than a Hundred Years*, the traditional Kazakh burial-ground Ana-Beiit becomes out of bounds to the local people because of the construction of a cosmodrome. Those whose last wish was to be buried in their ancestral cemetery are denied this sacred wish. "What can be more cheerless and sad than an instructive memorial created on instructions, and what can be more sacrilegious and destructive of the people's morality than an entertainment facility on a burial site?!" Rasputin asks.²⁵

Chapter VII titled "Russkoe Ustye", is devoted to the people of this region and their ancestors; a unique and remarkably hardy ethnic group

that lives in the tundra of northeastern Siberia, cut off from the rest of the country and thus still able to preserve their native ways, customs, language, etc. Rasputin calls their culture “the last echo of Russia’s ancient language and way of life”.²⁶ In speaking of Russkoe Ustye, Rasputin draws our attention to the homogenizing effect inevitable to the forces of modernization, which even this remote part of the world has faced to some extent in recent times. His representation of the native culture of Russkoe Ustye rests on a binary between the so-called modern scientific temperament and native epistemologies. He pleads for an understanding of these traditional ways of life as natural adaptations to the delicate Arctic ecosystem. He laments the fact that both the tundra and its peoples are under threat of the forces of globalization: “... what if one more of our senses were to die out? ...Let’s listen to the Russians of Russkoe Ustye some more, before they fall silent”.²⁷

Chapter VIII titled “Your Siberia and Mine” is partly based on Rasputin’s 1984 article with the eponymous title but the focus is somewhat different.²⁸ Here he discusses the future course of Siberia if she is in any way to fulfil the hopes and expectations of her illustrious patriot-regionalists, such as Yadrintsev or Shchapov. He also establishes that the relationship between Russia and Siberia is still of a colonial nature, despite the abolition of the criminal exile system and the creation of universities and scientific research centres in the Soviet period. Siberia’s natural resources which have been exploited mercilessly and ravaged over the centuries by Russians and foreigners alike, are now, more than ever since the breakup of the Soviet Union, key to Siberia’s future survival in the globalized world of today.

What was pursued in Tsarist times as “appropriation” has today, according to Rasputin, simply assumed the form of “development”, equally short-sighted and harmful to the country’s ecological future.²⁹ The negative aspects of globalization are to be seen more clearly in Siberia than anywhere else, because the country is commonly misunderstood as being outside these influences:

“Today, Siberia gets grain from Canada and Argentina, meat from France, poultry from Hungary and Australia, butter from Finland and Denmark, potatoes ... from China, red currants ... from Poland, and so forth. During just a few decades Siberia changed from a land of rich agriculture ... into a land of risky, bankrupt agriculture, a parasite, a spendthrift that squandered its own share of nature’s legacy with unprecedented ease and now steals what belongs to its grandchildren and great-grandchildren”.³⁰

His views on the flora and fauna of Siberia are in consonance with the ideology of deep ecologists: that Nature should be protected and valued wherever possible, for its own sake. He envisages a future for Siberia in which the actions of its people will be informed by a sense of what the country means, and has meant, to them – along with an ecologically responsible attitude which will help to preserve that image.

While Rasputin's vision may appear naive and idealistic, the urgent necessity of heeding his plea is demonstrated by objective studies of Siberia's natural resources, for example, John Massey Stewart's *The Nature of Russia*.³¹ A naturalist specialized in Russia and Siberia, Stewart is the compiler of *Lake Baikal: On the brink?*, a report for the International Union for the Council of Nature (1991). He has made several scientific expeditions to Siberia and in his book *The Nature of Russia* he echoes many of Rasputin's concerns.

Illustrated with splendid photographs of the land, its peoples and flora and fauna, this remarkable book was written in 1991, at a time when the Soviet Union, a seemingly invincible edifice, had just been officially dismantled. Stewart, in his author's note, clarifies his use of the out-dated term 'Soviet' in the wake of the disintegration of the USSR. Since no suitable terms have replaced 'USSR' and 'Soviet Union', he has used them for convenience rather than from a political standpoint.

In surveying the nature of Russia, the largest country in the world, Stewart has taken into account the impact of the Soviet phase on the land and the complex issues created after the collapse of the Union. Both have produced permanent and profound changes in the ecosystems of Russia. The richness and diversity of Russia's biospheres have enormous implications in the country's economic future. Unfortunately the future is rendered uncertain and precarious after the change in the political structure of the country.

Stewart views each constituent part of Russia's biospheres in the context of this interface which characterizes his narrative. Especially in the Siberian landmass, the depredations of man and the machinations caused by the vagaries of political ideology have had an enormous impact on the flora and fauna of this region. The future looks bleak for many species of plant and animal life, all of which have been hunted and exploited almost to extinction. There is almost no plant, bird or animal which has escaped man's greed.

The Arctic ecosystems of Siberia are, according to Stewart, some of the most fragile in the world. In speaking of the Siberian tundra and taiga

regions, Stewart's massive research extends to the native peoples as well. The Komi, Nentsy, Nganasany, Dolgany, Yakuts, Eveny, Chukchi, Koryaks and Eskimos (to mention a few) have lived in harmony with Nature, despite their almost-total dependence on a particular species for sustenance, such as the reindeer or salmon. Modern man has much to learn about living within one's means, he seems to suggest, from these older ways of life. These too are fast disappearing because they are under threat from 'mainstream' forces, such as globalization.

Stewart, while scrupulously documenting the deplorable effects of collectivization, industrialization and modernization on Russia's wildlife, nevertheless tends to avoid the 'doomsday' call of deep ecologists. He adopts a more optimistic outlook, which is not entirely unsupported by facts. The narrative which would otherwise be an unmitigated bleak account of loss and extinction also accommodates the occasional success story of conservation and prompt government action, which saved and helped a particular species to re-establish itself. Examples include the elusive Caucasian maral deer and the Kurilsk salmon.

Stewart's work also clearly exposes the fact that legislation against hunting does not always protect a particular species from man. Too often, threatened forms of life which have found a temporary haven in a nature reserve face an additional threat in the form of poaching. He takes a firm stand against the heinous practice of hunting for sport. Elsewhere, while speaking out against the Western use of animal fur (such as ermine, mink, marten) for fashion's sake, he also notes that in the regions native to fur-bearing animals, the locals use fur as a necessity, not as a luxury or fashion statement.³² Stewart's optimistic outlook and faith in Nature's own regenerative capabilities are akin to Rasputin's impassioned history of Siberia. Both writers share common ground in their intelligent love of Nature and their recognition of the dire need for an attitudinal change in modern man's approach to Siberia's natural resources.

Rasputin's history of Siberia derives its main focal point in an objective examination of the historical changes that came about in the Soviet era and after. The question of whether any particular historical change can be viewed as progress depends, according to R.G. Collingwood (author of *The Idea of History*, 2004), on whether this change has brought about any improvement.³³ This consideration also carries with it the question of who identifies and assesses the improvement as such.

The much-vaunted idea of 'progress' and 'advancement' on which

the Soviet model rested is re-examined by Rasputin against the background of Siberia's forgotten native history. "The idea of historical progress ... refers to the coming into existence not merely of new actions or thoughts or situations belonging to the same specific type, but of new specific types. It therefore ... consists in the conception of these as improvements".³⁴ We can understand Rasputin's views on Siberian history and the making of it when we see that he too, in his own way, asks Collingwood's question: "But from whose point of view is it an improvement?".³⁵ This question is crucial to Rasputin's historicizing of Siberia—time and again he draws our attention to the generation gap that inevitably conflicts over the idea of what constitutes progress.

This aspect of Siberian life today has, in all probability, exacerbated the bitter debates over the efficacy of the Soviet model. At a personal as well as political level, Rasputin deplores the values of the younger generation, and the way in which traditional ways of life have been irremediably eroded or lost, in the post-Soviet world. According to Collingwood, "nothing is harder than for a given generation in a changing society, which is living in a new way of its own, to enter sympathetically into the life of the last".³⁶ In his plea for the preservation of the remnants of Siberia's past, Rasputin is not, even implicitly, suggesting that there be a return to an older, simpler way of life; firstly because this is not possible, and secondly because it would not be an answer to present-day Siberia's problems.

Collingwood theorizes that historical changes are often made "in a blind impulse to destroy what it does not comprehend, as bad, and substitute something else as good".³⁷ This is certainly true of the Soviet era's scientific and technological onslaught on Siberia's natural resources. The impositions and reconfigurations that took place in the Soviet era were largely based on this definition of progress. Rasputin's criticism of Soviet methods is privileged by his knowledge of what the older traditional ways of life were like, their meaning and impact on the environment.

Advocates of the Soviet idea of progress emphasized only the fact that "ten fish (were) caught where five were caught before",³⁸ in the context of Siberia's industrial, and other, production. But for one to be able to assess whether an increase in production is the sole criterion of progress, Collingwood asserts, one needs to consider the conditions and consequences of the historical change brought about by that progress.³⁹ Rasputin's method of historicizing Siberia is largely based on this ability:

he asks “what was done with the additional fish or the additional leisure”⁴⁰ that this apparent ‘progress’ led to.

It is this ability that prompts Rasputin to declare that the public sphere (*publitsistika*) “is not a parochial activity but the duty of every writer who is not indifferent to his homeland. The times themselves demand *publitsistika*”.⁴¹ Rasputin’s enduring belief throughout his historical work is that past, present and future are inextricably linked:

“A proper understanding of how our ancestors lived, why they treated the land and each other the way they did, what they believed, and how their beliefs were put into action – “this is how we properly define who we are, how we are to behave, and how we can leave the planet conducive to an abundant life for our children and grandchildren”.⁴²

Despite his ambivalent views on Russians as a people and his fierce love for all things Siberian, Rasputin’s position as a public figure transcends the age-old conflicting debates around Siberian identity; his work and sensibility enable him to fit in seamlessly with the glorious 19th century literary tradition of Russia, as well as taking his place amongst the best writers of Siberia in the 20th century.

In *Sakhalin* Anton Chekhov had sounded several of the chords so plangently taken up in Rasputin’s writing. Chekhov had taken note of the plight of the vanishing population of natives (the Golyaks and the Ainus), as well as the mismanagement of salmon-fishing leading to their depletion and destruction. This kind of scientific interest was not frequently encountered in Russian literature of the nineteenth century. Rasputin’s writing is, in a way, a meeting point of the two traditions, the humanitarian and the scientifically oriented.

Simon Karlinsky in his essay “Nabokov and Chekhov: the lesser Russian Tradition” distinguishes two different trajectories in the ideological orientation noticeable in the Russian literary tradition of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He places the work of Nabokov and Chekhov (the two authors who are the focal point of his essay) on the trajectory initiated by Pushkin, arguing that their chosen art form functions “quite independently of what ideological ends it may serve”. The other trajectory was characterized by literature that was ideologically linked to “some educational, proselytizing, religious, civic or some other extra-literary goal”.⁴³ Gogol, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Blok, Mayakovsky and Solzhenitsyn are writers identified by Karlinsky as belonging to this tradition: their work linked literature inextricably to the social sciences. Rasputin’s convictions about the present-day writer’s

role in *publitsistika* help us to place him in this latter tradition. His art too has consistently reflected his passionate concern and involvement in the impact of Russia's political machinations on Siberia.

The other contemporary historical perspective on Siberia considered in this study emerges from the Australian A.J. Haywood's work, titled *Siberia: A Cultural History*.⁴⁴ Haywood first went to Siberia in 1998 on work connected with a guidebook for an international publisher. His next visit was a decade later, to collect material for his cultural history of Siberia. The Preface affords valuable insights into present-day Siberia, derived from his immediate experience, and helps one to relate to the historicity of Siberia from a vantage-point. The "twilight zone" Siberia of 1998 had evolved into a 21st century Siberia, with its cities choked with traffic, advertisements, hotels and with less evidence of extreme poverty.

As he crosses large parts of the Siberian landscape in trains, communal taxis, buses and boats, Haywood's descriptions of large important Siberian cities such as Novosibirsk, Omsk or Krasnoyarsk "offer scenes of the familiar and everyday urban world". "Siberians go shopping", he says, "pause for a break at a café, sit on benches on wide grassy strips beneath lime trees, or watch their children play in parks". Haywood aptly observes that such scenes of normalcy are not surprising in themselves, but become so, because one does not associate them with Siberia.⁴⁵ The idea of Siberia as hell on earth has come to be so ingrained in the literary consciousness, that it remains to be seen whether the country will actually emerge fully from that stereotypical image. Referring to the various perceptions of Siberia (in *Between Heaven and Hell*) over the centuries, Haywood realizes that the country has "come to be portrayed as anything but normal".⁴⁶ Siberia's size, remoteness, inaccessibility, and still relatively unknown terrain lent it a certain mystery, which has stayed; over the years, its image has constantly swung back and forth between two extremes, of heaven and hell, of "the humdrum and the bizarre".⁴⁷

Haywood devotes his first chapter to a brief history of Siberia's ancient civilizations from the Bronze Age culture up to the time of the Cossack Yermak's conquest in the late 16th century, which heralded the Russian colonization of Siberia soon after. His own journey follows the west-to-east route; from the Urals, Yekaterinburg, Tyumen, Tobolsk, Berezovo and Salekhand, Omsk and the Baraba Steppe, the Northern Sea Route, Novosibirsk, the Altai region, the Yenisei river and steppe regions

of Khakassia, Irkutsk, Lake Baikal, and lastly Magadan and the Gulags of the Northeast. While painstakingly reconstructing the history of each Siberian region he visits, Haywood also takes into account the perceptions of outsiders (mainly Western travellers) of Siberia at various different phases of its history. Amongst these, some unusual viewpoints emerge, from sources not often mentioned in the history of travel to Siberia. At the turn of the 20th century, Soviet enterprise in Siberia led to a revision of its hitherto commonly-held image as a frozen wasteland. Though Soviet developmental policy initially concentrated on Siberia's agrarian economy (it proved to be an ecological disaster and loss in the end), it rapidly shifted to the industrialization of Siberia, exploiting its immense oil, mineral ore, and natural gas resources. For those who visited Siberia in the early Soviet years, their view could not help being coloured by the initial euphoria of Communist enterprise. An example of this is the perception of the British traveller and writer John Foster Fraser, who travelled through Siberia in 1901 "on a mission of curiosity".⁴⁸ Omsk was the place, Haywood says, where Fraser began to see in Siberia much more than "'a frigid desert'" and "a frozen heart of darkness".⁴⁹ Comparing Omsk to a West American town, Fraser voices his change of perception thus:

"It was while at Omsk that I awoke to the fact that my previous idea about Siberia was marvellously wrong. It was, of course, the popular idea, which is more dramatic than "the actual condition. Siberia, to that useful but ill-informed individual, 'the man in the street', is a horrible stretch of frigid desert, dotted with gaunt prison houses, and the tracks over the steppes are marked with the bones of exiles who have died beneath the weight of chains, starvation, and the inhospitable treatment of savage Russian soldiers. I had not, however, been long in Siberia before I realized that the desire on the part of writers to give the public something dramatic to read about had led them to exaggerate one feature of Siberian life and to practically neglect the real Siberia, full of interest but lacking sensation. So let me try to wipe from the public mind the fallacy that Siberia is a Gehenna-like region".

Fraser met others in Omsk, who were there on business, and they averred that "Siberia (was) going to be another America".⁵⁰

Haywood mentions the incidence of foreign visitors to Irkutsk, which perhaps was in part responsible for the city's "Paris of Siberia" image. (The unlikely moniker, we learn from Haywood's history, was given by the 19th century publicist Nikolay Shelgunov, who asserted that "not to see Irkutsk was not to see Siberia".⁵¹ Haywood himself is of the opinion that it is one of the most relaxed cities in Siberia, and due to its proximity to Lake Baikal, one of the most oft-visited places in the country.⁵²

Speaking briefly of the misadventures of the American John Ledyard, who was arrested and deported from Siberia in 1788 on charges of espionage, Haywood moves on to the more interesting case of the blind British traveller James Holman. While he too was arrested and deported on suspicion of being a spy, his perception of Siberia would have been unique if he had not, unfortunately, written like one who could see. Haywood aptly remarks that Holman therefore missed a opportunity to be the only Siberian traveller to describe the subcontinent from the perspective of its smells, sounds, tastes and touch.⁵³ Travelling through the Baraba Steppe in the early 1820s, Holman “sniffed and touched his way across it”⁵⁴ but records his experience as being in Hades:

“... the insalubrious quality of its atmosphere, loaded with malaria, or miasmatic impregnation, is not only abundantly productive of typhus and intermittent fevers, but gives rise to a disease peculiar to this horrid steppe. This is a tumour, that commencing on some part of the head, but more commonly on the cheek, continues to enlarge until it bursts and frequently proves fatal.

This district gives birth also, to immense swarms of poisonous flies, like other insects, that almost literally overwhelm the unfortunate subject exposed to their attack; they penetrate into the mouth, ears, eyes, or any other part that is not carefully guarded against them; the irritation of their bites is so great that the face of the traveller requires to be covered with gauze, to protect him from serious injury”.⁵⁵

Holman largely relied on visual accounts given by other people. Thus his narrative characterizes Siberia, by and large, as ‘hell’. His contemporary Siberia traveller John Dundas Cochrane debunked Holman’s representations of Siberia on these grounds; also that Holman could not speak Russian, and largely relied on hearsay to construct his account of Siberia. Building on the happenstance of Holman’s blindness, Cochrane’s observation reveals yet another dimension of Siberia’s controversial image: “Who will then say that Siberia is a wild, inhospitable country, when even the blind can traverse it with safety?”⁵⁶

It is yet another of the paradoxes that make up the history of Siberia that the country should have been perceived as “a place of seemingly endless optimism” just at the time when the major powers of the world were on the brink of World War I.⁵⁷ The sea and river routes (discovered by explorers like Fridtjof Nansen) facilitated both travel and commercial enterprise in Siberia, and greatly augmented its early 20th century image as a land of opportunity. Of the many who made use of this phase, there were a few women (ornithologists, anthropologists, artists) who were

adventurous enough to overcome the general ‘inhospitable’ image of Siberia and made their way to the country. Haywood records some of their impressions, in the form of excerpts from their travel-writings (Helen Peel’s *Polar Gleams* {1894}; Maud Haviland’s *A Summer on the Yenisei* {1915}; Marya Antonina Czaplicka’s *My Siberian Year* {1916}). Most of these writings reflect a revision of the stereotypical image of Siberia as ‘hell’ and express personal experiences of the land which clearly partake of the ‘heaven’ image. A few lines from Czaplicka serve to illustrate this trend:

“When, as a child, I heard the word “Siberia”, it meant but one thing to me: dire peril to the bodies, sore torture for the souls, of the bravest, cleverest, and most independently-minded of our people... It was only as I grew older that I came to know of another aspect which more recently Siberia has assumed for the Poles, as a place in which to seek opportunities for the development of their abilities — opportunities denied them at home”.⁵⁸

The demonizing of Siberia had slowly been replaced, at least partially, by the idea that it was a land of possibilities, especially for those who came there from politically turbulent countries in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

In chapter nine, Haywood reviews the history of Siberia’s changing images down the centuries, both from the point of view of its ‘insiders’, as well as those of outsiders. From this review, it is clear that almost at no point in Siberia’s history was the country free of paradoxical perceptions, with inherent contradictions. Whether it was ‘hell’ for condemned exiles, or ‘heaven’ for fugitive serfs and peasants, or a combination of the exotic and the oppressive (as it was for the Decembrists), one particular image appears to have endured through all of Siberia’s history. This image is that of Siberia as a morally pure, ‘truly Russian’ land, innocent of the corrupt influences of the West, that Russia has for the most part succumbed to. This image had had its beginnings in the 19th century Romantic phase of Russian history: poets such as Nekrasov, who idealized the common people as upholders of moral purity, saw in Siberia a wealth of intellectual possibilities. It was seen as “a place where Russia might be reborn”.⁵⁹

In the immediate years after the Soviet Union disintegrated in the 1990s, “new life seemed to have been breathed back into the metaphor”.⁶⁰ Starvation, isolation, job-layoffs, and wages paid in the form of coffins, match-boxes and toilet paper were some of the immediately felt consequences. Modern-day Siberians who had been part of Soviet life were now suddenly adrift, cut off from the ideological moorings that had sought

to justify the sweeping changes in their world. But with its slow return to a capitalistic society and to 'normal' life, especially in the metropolises, Haywood observes a certain amount of deeply-felt resentment at the 'colonial' attitude displayed by European Russians towards Siberians.⁶¹ Haywood regards Valentin Rasputin's history *Siberia, Siberia* as a work that voices this resentment and also rejects the notion of the cultural 'superiority' self-attributed by European Russians. Thus Rasputin's history can be said to uphold the image of Siberia as a morally uncorrupted land; it is an image that seems particularly significant to Siberia's cultural identity in the context of today's global influences.

Haywood's construction of Siberia is less subjective and passionate in tone when read in relation to Rasputin's work. But Rasputin's somewhat defensive and strident approach is entirely understandable when one realizes that it is the voice of a person whose very life-breath springs from his native Siberian soil. From Haywood's own experience of Siberia, it is clear that many Siberians today endorse Rasputin's defence of his country: "... modern Siberians take offence at the idea that they are somehow more debauched than their counterparts in European Russia. They also tend to see themselves as a better people, exposed to corruption that comes mostly from outside the subcontinent".⁶²

In Haywood's history, the idea of Siberian 'purity' is most concentrated in the chapter on the Altai region. Despite its industrial heritage and the "urban archaeology"⁶³ of Soviet times, Haywood still finds enough evidence in the region and its culture to refer to it as a "spiritual landscape".⁶⁴ The mountain and steppe region of the Altai is pervaded by shamanism and Buddhism, both of which are characterized by a deep respect for other forms of life, as well as nature at large, which is central to both faiths. The practice of these faiths has been construed by visitors as a form of mysticism special to the Altai region. In more everyday terms, the Altai people have encoded ecologically sensitive and responsible ways into their religious practices and made the protection of nature a central part of their lives. That such a value-system and way of life are thought to be sustainable by a people in today's profit-driven global culture is in itself remarkable. After the disintegration of the Soviet system, the Altai people developed a cosmology in which their nation "has a celestial character".⁶⁵ Although Haywood offers no comment on this, it is to be hoped that such an epistemology will go far in preserving Siberia's natural beauty and wealth.

Moving on to an examination of travel writing on Siberia of the 20th

century, it becomes evident that the hitherto monolithic image of Soviet Russia in Western representations made way for the possibility of other aspects of the region being revealed. The flexibility and inclusiveness of travel-writing as a genre made it possible to look at Siberia in new ways. The incidence of travel to, and in, Siberia is generally traced to as far back as the eleventh century, when trade in furs, gold and silver brought European and western Siberian tribesmen in contact with one another. Reilly's article "Siberia" in the third volume of the *Encyclopedia of Literature of Travel and Exploration* offers very useful insights on the nature and history of travel writing on Siberia. In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, Reilly observes, the rise of Mongol power in the shape of Genghis Khan and his Golden Horde effected the reversal of the west-to-east pattern of European incursion into Siberia. Russian domination of Siberia, usually dated in the sixteenth century, led to west-to-east travel (from the Urals to Lake Baikal) that followed the Sibirsky Trakt, from Yekaterinburg to Tobolsk, Omsk, Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk.⁶⁶

To the east of Irkutsk, travellers of the 17th and 18th centuries often cut across Manchuria to Vladivostok, but later border disputes made them skirt the Amur river to the north until it reached Khabarovsk and then move south to Vladivostok on the coast of the Sea of Japan. The Sibirsky Trakt and this north-Amur route formed the main trajectory of the Trans-Siberian Railway. According to Reilly, many 18th and early 19th century travel writers followed this route "with startling regularity and predictability, and as they often note(d) the same towns, rivers, and sights, they produce(d) narratives that often differ much more in style than in content".⁶⁷

The other kind of early west-to-east travel was occasioned by the search for a viable sea-route along the Northeast Passage of Siberia. These attempts, by and large rendered futile due to the ships becoming ice-bound, are traced back to the mid-to-late 16th century by Fridtjof Nansen (himself one of the most intrepid of Arctic explorers) in his writing. It was perhaps because of these failures, observes Reilly, that north-western Siberia, especially the places adjacent to the Ob and Yenisei rivers, came to be explored. Nansen's 1913 sea-voyage is an example of this: after his ship became ice-bound north of the Gulf of Obi, he moved in a smaller vessel up the Yenisei river in a southward direction, until he reached Krasnoyarsk, and eventually Vladivostok.⁶⁸

Early records of travel and exploration in eastern Siberia, Reilly

notes, almost always begin with a sea-voyage. The 18th and 19th century narratives of Bonham Bax, Maurice Benyowsky (1746-1786), John D'Wolf (1779-1872), Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), Jean-Baptiste-BarthÉlemy Lesseps (1776-1834), Grigorii Shelikov (c. 1730-1795) and Ferdinand Wrangel (1796-1870) all include descriptions of the coast, and coastal islands of Siberia such as Kamchatka, Sakhalin, Okhotsk and Vladivostok. The disappearance of the American ship *Jeanette* in sea ice north of eastern Siberia in 1879, and the subsequent miraculous reappearance of her crew in various Siberian towns, led to "a flurry of popular narratives about their adventures". Their accounts of remote regions of eastern Siberia led to the generation of a great deal of interest in this part of the world. Very little has been written, according to Reilly, about vast areas of Siberia, particularly the northern regions between the Yenesei and Lena rivers and the interior northeast of Yakutsk.⁶⁹

So much for sea-travel narratives of Siberia. Another mode of travel, the train, made a tremendous impact on late 19th century travel and writing thereof. Symbolizing industrial modernization and civilization, the train conveys its passengers through regions that have already been "explored" in other ways and by other means.⁷⁰ One of the most important turning-points in the history of Siberia is associated with the construction (and completion) of the Trans-Siberian Railway, proposed in 1857 as a feasible plan by the American Perry McDonough Collins, begun in 1891 and completed in 1916. Chapter Eight of Haywood's cultural history of Siberia meticulously documents the details of the railway's construction, its routes, and the possibilities that it opened up for Siberia and its people: apart from facilitating commercial enterprise, the Trans-Siberian Railway also attracted new settlers, and connected Siberia with Western Europe. As Haywood puts it, "it... changed the way the outside world saw Siberia".⁷¹ He was of course speaking of the emergence of Siberia as an economic force in the world market, one of the most immediate advantages of the connectivity through the Trans-Siberian Railway.

In a lighter vein, he also records the various impressions formed by early travellers on the famous train, such as those of the US writer and politician Lindon Wallace Bates Jr. (1883-1915), Harry de Windt (1901), Mrs. John Clarence Lee (*Across Siberia Alone: "An American Woman's Adventures"*, 1914). Bates' narrative (*The Russian Road to China*, 1910) reflects the initial euphoria of travel on a train, which symbolized the ushering in of the modern industrialized era of the 20th century, "the

poetry of train travel" that affords a unique contrast between the inner atmosphere of the train and the outside world that it whisks one across.⁷² Mrs. Lee's account of Siberia was coloured by exaggeration of her adventures, and was dismissed, as Haywood records, by the *New York Times* in July 1914 as "a pleasing bit of fiction".⁷³ NYT also drew attention to the much-misunderstood position of Siberia in the world at large: "Siberia, indeed, has been greatly maligned in the past, and it is time that she should win her rightful place among countries where life is not always a distortion from moral standards".⁷⁴

Such expectations, raised by the building of the Trans-Siberian Railway (and the consequent recognition of Siberia as a market force to be reckoned with) were further bolstered by the rapid industrialization and technological advancement that were the hallmark of the Soviet era. Once the glamour and novelty of trains wore off, the focus of train-travel narratives of the early and mid- 20th century on Siberia shifted to the country itself; as the critic Simon Ward puts it, "The trip on the Trans-Siberian Railway often provides a forum for consideration of the country being passed through as well as the journey".⁷⁵ Peter Fleming's *One's Company* (1934) and Mrs. Alec-Tweedie's scathingly anti-Communist travel account *An Adventurous Journey: Russia-Siberia-China* (1928) are instances of this trend.

With the advent of mass travel by air, Simon Ward observes, the destination of the journey recedes in importance, and the decision to travel by train becomes an aesthetic choice.⁷⁶ This in turn has led to a new genre of travel-writing that focuses "less (on) the land to which the train takes the traveller, or even the landscape outside the train window, but rather the trains themselves, and in particular, their passengers".⁷⁷ Paul Theroux is associated with such train-travel writing; his first railway odyssey was narrated in *The Great Railway Bazaar: By Train through Asia* (1975) and was followed up by a sequel account *Ghost Train to the Eastern Star* in 2008.

Both narratives contain chapters devoted to travel on the Trans-Siberian Railway; but an important distinction is to be noted between them in terms of time and sensibility. *The Great Railway Bazaar* came in the heyday of the Soviet era, when writings about the Trans-Siberian Railway had become a sub-genre of sorts in the USSR. Ward identifies certain conventions that characterize such writings: the "inevitable bureaucratic difficulties over visas and itineraries, the interventions of the Intourist hosts, and the difficulty of reaching Vladivostok at the end of

the line, since it (was) a closed naval base".⁷⁸

The last chapter of *The Great Railway Bazaar* is devoted to travel through the USSR on the Trans-Siberian Express; the section also reflects some of the conventions of travel-writing that Ward drew attention to. At the time Theroux wrote this book, his clever use of a near-outmoded method of travel, to get to a remote place like Siberia (which had been more or less cut off from the rest of the world's consciousness by the Iron Curtain), made for an enthusiastic readership that hailed his 'achievement' as unique. Peter Hulme, in his essay "Travelling to write (1940-2000)" speaks admiringly of Theroux's "invention of an American persona which combined the rough edges of the hard-bitten traveller with the learning and literariness of his European counterparts"⁷⁹ as an innovation that infused fresh life into 20th century travel writing. Read today, however, it is difficult to summon up any enthusiasm for Theroux's writing, especially if the reader's cultural location and sensibilities are oriented toward the postcolonial ethos.

Theroux's journey starts off from the easternmost point of the Trans-Siberian route near Vladivostok through Khabarovsk, Irkutsk, Marinsk, Chita, the Baikal region, the Siberian taiga, Novosibirsk, Sverdlovsk, Perm and finally to Yaroslavl. Theroux's initial statement ("I sought trains; I found passengers"⁸⁰) might lead us to expect the humanistic writing of the latter-day train-travel that Simon Ward had associated with writers like Theroux. But even a cursory reading of the Trans-Siberian section (indeed, the entire book for that matter) would reflect a culturally insensitive, colossally egotistical and even racist mindset, that seems to delight in dwelling on superficialities. The regions that he passes through in Siberia have rich histories of their own, about which he appears to have no knowledge; his sensibilities seem fully taken up by the exigencies (perceived by him as such) of the present.

The postcolonial critic Mary Louise Pratt, in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, points to Theroux's writing as an example of what she calls "the white man's lament" in contemporary travel writing. She identifies three strategies that characterize travelogues of this order, namely estheticization, density of meaning and domination, by which modern-day Theroux claim authoritativeness for their vision of unfamiliar territory.⁸¹

Density of meaning, Pratt suggests, is created "through the plentiful use of adjectives, and a general proliferation of concrete, material referents introduced either literally or as metaphors".⁸² A few lines from *The Great*

Railway Bazaar should suffice to illustrate this: "... the Soviet coast... was brown, flat, and treeless, the grimmest landscape I had ever laid eyes on, like an immense beach of frozen dirt washed by an oily black sea. The Russian passengers, who until then had sloped around the ship in old clothes and felt slippers, put on wrinkled shirts and fur hats for the arrival, ...".⁸³

As for aestheticization, Theroux found (as he did in *The Old Patagonian Express*) "ugliness, incongruity, disorder, and triviality",⁸⁴ all along the Trans-Siberian journey — in the form of drunk quarrelsome co-passengers, their slovenly habits, unpalatable food, insomnia, the monotony and boredom, the inefficient staff, the poor infrastructure. But what makes Theroux's work particularly offensive, not to mention limited, is that "No sense of limitation on (his) interpretive powers is suggested", and "what (he) see(s) is what there is". His writing appears to follow the "impulse of ... postcolonial metropolitan writers... (who) condemn what they see, trivialize it, and dissociate themselves utterly from it".⁸⁵

Some consciousness of this impulse is to be seen reflected in Theroux's 2008 travel-account *Ghost Train to the Eastern Star* (hereafter *GTES*), a follow-up companion to *The Great Railway Bazaar* of 1975. In the 2008 journey, Theroux displays a sensibility somewhat mellowed by age and experience, as also some awareness of the limitations of travel-writing itself, in inscribing the realities of human experience. Travellers, he says, "are always inventing the country they're passing through".⁸⁶

Where formerly he had been able to see only ugliness and dreariness, grounded in the immediate present, Theroux now shows evidence of a more open mind, willing to admit ideas beyond the here and now. Passing through Chusovskoy Oblast, covered by snowy pine forest, he is at once struck by its "beautiful and terrifying ... starkness", as also the chilling facts of its history: "Everything that made this place lovely for me, for a prisoner only meant death".⁸⁷ This perception echoes the heaven < > hell binary that has beset Siberia's image throughout its history.

His visit to the infamous gulag prison Perm 36, with its notorious history of slave labour, tortured prisoners, untold suffering and death, leaves him with a chilled sense of horror and depression that pervades the entire narrative on Siberia. Even at the outset of his journey in Vladivostok, Theroux had (perhaps intentionally) evoked the deathly atmosphere of the fearsome mining camps of Kolyma and Magadan, to describe the grimness that he perceives in the 'new' Russia. All in all,

Theroux's account of his second visit to a changed Russia on the Trans-Siberian Express reflects a greater ability toward acceptance and tolerance, facilitated by a more involved engagement with the histories of the places that he visits.

A contemporary of Theroux's, Colin Thubron travelled across Siberia in 1999 and wrote an account of his travel-experiences titled *In Siberia*. Thubron's journey was conceived on a larger scale and differs from Theroux's in the sense that the mode of travel recedes in importance, and it is the places and people that he encounters which form the fabric of his travel-narrative. Thubron is compelled, by a casual turn of conversation with an acquaintance, into contemplating the purpose of his journey across Siberia. "What was I doing?" he introspects.⁸⁸ And this is what he finds to be his intent: "I was trying to find a core to Siberia, where there seemed none; or at least for a moment to witness its passage through the wreckage of Communism — to glimpse that old, unappeasable desire to believe, as it fractured into confused channels, flowed under other names. Because I could not imagine a Russia without faith".

Thubron's post-modern sensibilities had served him well in his 1994 journey to the former Soviet Central Asia, when his own sense of disorientation and fragmentation had helped to form some perspective on this part of the world that had seen so much change, and yet remained seemingly unchanged. But now, in a Siberia that actively fed the chaos of his impressions with its contradictions, paradoxes and inconsistencies, Thubron shows in his self-deprecatory style that it is more than ever difficult to arrive at easy conclusions.

In the first chapter (titled "Hauntings") Thubron evokes the Siberia of the imagination through conventional metonyms—a man in chains, a herd of reindeer, emptiness, ice-fields, snow — and the real Siberia that he glimpses through the train window seems to go a long way in supporting this image. Like most other Western travellers before him, Thubron is at once confronted by two of Siberia's most characteristic features: its enormous dimensions, together with its 'forbidden' image, and the contradictions inherent in its identity. Of the latter, the most perceptible contradiction is perhaps the increasing tendency to regard Siberia "as a haven of primitive innocence" (Hulme 95) and purity, the land that holds true Russianness, while the rest of Russia surrenders to the global influences of the West. It is important to note that this contradiction is not a new one; regional Siberian literature had revived

the idea of Siberia as 'Belovod'e' (in the early and middle decades of the 20th century) to counter the bleak image that the country held in mainstream Russian culture and the world at large.

At Yekaterinburg, which is his first stop in Siberia, Thubron has his first taste of conflicting images: the sleepy atmosphere of the town belies its terrible epoch-making history.⁸⁹ He finds that the old Communist order has been completely overshadowed by the new-found liberty, and only vestiges survive, in the form of place/street names. The ideological apparatus that had served for seventy-odd years had given way to a future filled with uncertainties. In the canonization of Nicholas II and the other members of the royal family, Thubron finds an almost palpable return to the old ways, and a complete rejection of the Communist ethos.

Although Thubron's journey to Siberia is characterized by the critic Peter Hulme as yet "another trip into a heart of darkness", he also draws our attention to Thubron's spare literary style, unusual in this genre and age.⁹⁰ While sharing his impressions, Thubron steers clear of the pitfalls that beset the modern-day Western traveller writing about a little-known region; for instance, he speaks to all sorts of people in Siberia and quotes them extensively, rather than inscribing their world with an intrusive and judgemental First World perspective. A somewhat humorous example of this open-mindedness is to be seen in his encounter with a drunken tramp, who avers that he fared better in Stalinist times than now.

One of the reasons for Siberia's unique identity, according to Thubron, was the admixture in Siberian society—natives, migrant tradespeople, religious dissenters, vagabonds, escaped serfs and exiled intellectuals, petty criminals, and so on. Thus, over the centuries, Siberia became "Russia's Wild East ... born out of optimism and dissent".⁹¹ These are not necessarily conflicting forces, because the image of Siberia as the Promised Land grew out of the former feeling, while dissenters found in Siberia a haven of freedom in which to express themselves. It is on the economic plane in today's Siberia that the contradictions inherent in its identity are to be seen at their starkest: the country is home to the world's richest oil-fields, together with the apparently undisturbed no-man's-land image.

Thubron's depiction of Tyumen, his next stop, is coloured mainly by the profile of the German naturalist Steller, one of the many prodigies nurtured by Siberia, and his contribution to knowledge of the natural world of this region. In Pokrovskoe, the birthplace of the infamous

Grigory Rasputin, he has the uncanny experience of meeting Viktor, a lookalike of the notorious monk-peasant, who claims to be the great-grandson of Rasputin's maidservant. This unlikely individual (even dressed like Rasputin) takes him all over the village to see the sights and sounds; but it becomes evident to Thubron that Viktor is disliked and distrusted by his fellow-villagers. From the old woman who puts Thubron up for the night, he learns of the unbridled crime that has crept up in post-Soviet Siberia, Tobolsk (the erstwhile capital) being the worst affected. Thubron finds the city of Tobolsk to be a rotting and deserted ruin, with remnants of its pervading atmosphere of decay. Myth and legend had been freely blended with historical facts in the creation of Tobolsk, one of Siberia's oldest, if not the oldest, cities. But with the Trans-Siberian Railway bypassing it altogether, the city receded in cultural and economic importance.

Thubron next visits Vorkuta, the coal-mining town, its factories manned by innocent convicts over the years: "an evil jewel in the Gulag Crown", as he calls it.⁹² He finds that vestigial reminders of the Communist era remain; Vorkuta's death-camp image has remained unchanged from Stalinist times, with miners still working there despite pending arrears of pay. The ultimate purpose in inflicting inhuman conditions on the workers (in Stalinist times, at any rate) was to bring about mass deaths, and it continued unabated even after Stalin's death in 1953. Amidst the recollection of this ghastly history, Thubron manages to talk to an aged woman, a Vorkuta survivor, whose Party ideals have, remarkably, outlived her terrible sufferings in the camp.⁹³

The almost unbelievable freedom to travel (within Siberia) exhilarates Thubron: it had been unthinkable in the context of Russia's xenophobic history. In Omsk, he finds that insidious influences from the outside world have crept in, to counter the death-trap image that had blanketed the city in the view of outsiders like himself. Religion has reentered Omsk, as it has elsewhere in Siberia; but Thubron finds that only the old are able to derive any comfort from a return to faith, not the younger generation. He represents Omsk as "half-healed" by religious influence.⁹⁴

Novosibirsk is his next stop; as always, Thubron's travel-narrative is informed by the history of each place that he visits. Describing the city variously as Siberia's industrial giant and as "a claustrophobe's dream",⁹⁵ Thubron tries to convey the sense of the vast, endless space that is synonymous with Siberia as a land. Twenty miles south of this city, he visits Akademgorodok, the erstwhile Soviet science centre (which in its

heyday had become a symbol of Russia's leap into the future through a fusion of science and technology). He finds that the government has not sanctioned funds for any science projects and the entire political apparatus is run by mafia dynamics.

In his conversation with the Academician of the science centre, Thubron discovers that Siberia has been posited by one Russian scientist as the place of the origin of the human race and earliest civilization, as opposed to the classic theory based on Africa. This theory, incidentally, lends scientific support to the Siberia-as-Paradise notion, that had gained such currency in the country's regionalist movement of the 1960s and which has still not quite died out yet. Part of the reason for this view of Siberia could be rooted in the questions of racial as well as national identity, which are still ongoing debates for Russians and Siberians alike. It is in Gorno-Altai (the very name is an indicator of Siberia's melting into Asian soil), that Thubron finds the Pazyryk graves, which are relics of Siberia's prehistoric past. Specifically, it is the Ice-Princess's mummy (of the Pazyryk tribe) that becomes the motif around which the debates on racial identity are centred.

In conversation with a schoolmistress (named Svetlana) from Krasnoyarsk, Thubron learns that the hopes of Siberian nationalists for independence had been aborted after the Revolution; he also realizes that the disillusion with Communism had begun, ironically, at the grass roots level; Svetlana's personal history is one instance that bears testimony to this irony. In Shushenskoe village (Lenin's place of exile in his youth, for political rebellion), Thubron finds it possible to walk through the entire village without once being reminded of Lenin, or even of Communism.

As he travels through Tuva (the meeting-place of Mongolian and Siberian cultures), the Entsy village of Potalovo, Severobaikalsk in the Buryatia region, the Lake Baikal region, Irkutsk, Ivolginsk, Ulan Ude, Serpentinka, Kolyma and Albazin (the last Soviet outpost before China), Thubron's experiences and observations focus on the impact and long-term effects of Communism on Siberia's varied cultures and on its ecology. In Tuva, he finds a museum which documents the repression and breakup of shamanism, one of Siberia's oldest faiths. In his fascinating talk with a Buddhist shaman named Kunga-Boo, it is evident that shamanism as a way of life has long since been dead, and the few who remain, have managed to survive by reinventing themselves: they had "mutated out of recognition".⁹⁶

Not all of Thubron's findings are connected with loss and destruction, however. At the Ivolginsk monastery, he comes to know that its Buddhist culture had cohabited with Communism and survived the Soviet era up to the present day. Thubron observes that there are quite a few Russians (fresh from the enforced atheism of Soviet ideology) turning to Buddhism, as they find their lives getting more complicated with the advent of capitalism. In Buryatia, Buddhism is a growing religious culture. But for those natives (Buryats) who were born to a Buddhist cultural heritage, but were taught to anathematize their native culture under Soviet ethos, there is a double loss, of both faiths and worlds. Thubron speaks to a Buryat woman who voices this peculiar predicament.⁹⁷

Of the Old Believers (a sect created of the 17th century schism which split the Russian Church), Thubron now finds very little evidence. What he does encounter is bewildering: in the formation of the various sub-sects that have now survived in the name of the Old Believers' faith, Thubron finds that the larger cultural divide between Russia and Europe is further accentuated. In a Siberia that is presently awash with immigrants, Thubron meets Sergei and Galina, survivors of the Old Believers' sect, and they seem to him to be remnants of a "half-mythic" Siberia, "... belong(ing) to Russian folk-tale".⁹⁸ In the Old Believers' interpretation of Siberia's history as imminently apocalyptic, and their present view of Siberia as Hell, an important distinction emerges from Thubron's talk with Sergei – that their world-view is not so much based on obscurantism as a clear-eyed perspective of the impact of human activity on nature.

In stark contrast to what remains of Siberia's still-pristine natural beauty, is its dark history of ecological depredations, brought about through ignorance and corruption. Hunting, poaching, and mining have brutalized Siberian ecology into a fragility that threatens to disappear altogether. And ironically, it is on these vestigial natural resources that the future of Siberia stands predicated. At the Entsy village of Potalovo, the ecological disasters (consequent upon the unbridled 'development' during the Stalinist phase, and the further exploitation of oil and mineral resources by global forces in the post-Soviet era) are foregrounded by Thubron as the sole characteristic feature of the village. He finds that the original condition of the village had given way to an aggressive Soviet collectivized prosperity, which has now crumbled to desultory fishing and ignorant callousness about the environment. Vodka appears to have replaced the reindeer herding of traditional times and the red fox farming

of the collectivization days.⁹⁹ Speaking to an Entsy herdsman, Thubron refers to the impact of Soviet collectivization on reindeer-herding as “a tragedy which ignored native knowledge”.¹⁰⁰ Thubron’s bleak impressions of Potalovo merge with the Entsy old-world ritualistic faith: that if life on earth is a living hell, then it will surely be Paradise in the afterlife.¹⁰¹ It is almost as if such faith-based consolation were the only answer to Siberia’s ecological problems.

In speaking of Lake Baikal’s ecological history and of its present problems, Thubron takes into account the passionate involvement and concern shown by native Siberians (such as Valentin Rasputin) towards the preservation of the lake: “Baikal became more than itself. As the Soviet empire crumbled, it transformed into the mystic heart of a beleaguered Russia”. This “primordial frailty of sea”¹⁰² became the locus of representation in the valiant struggle posed by those who love their native land for its own sake; it remains to be seen if their opposition will stand up to the formidable global forces that threaten the well-being of the lake.

Passing through Irkutsk, Thubron examines the image-change that the city seems to have undergone (from “the Paris of Siberia” to the “jewel of Siberia”) in the light of its history. Having come into being “in a mood of rough enterprise”, the city bloomed, after a disastrous fire in 1879 “into a proud paradox”. It was at once “old-fashioned, pretentious, opulent, squalid, cultivated”. Looking at it now, in the post-Soviet phase, Thubron finds that the paradox continues: “Splendour and rusticity still mingle in the street...”.¹⁰³

As he travels on, he realizes that it is the immensity of Siberia’s space, so disorienting to him, which is projected in history as morally therapeutic to Russia’s social, economic and political ills. In his Arctic Circle crossing, Thubron’s expectations of what he might see over the top of the world merge with his consciousness of all that Siberia has been in the human imagination; these highly evocative passages are worth quoting in full:

“I think: this is that primal Siberia – elusive, endless – which lingered like a geographic unconscious behind the eyes of early travellers. Its seeming void was a clean slate to write upon. For centuries it courted hearsay and legend, conjured the ideal, elicited fear. Even its name – a mystical conflation of the Mongolian *siber*, ‘beautiful’, ‘pure’, and the Tartar *sibir*, ‘sleeping land’ – suggested somewhere virgin and waiting. Hegel placed it outside the pale of history altogether, too cold and hostile to nurture meaningful life.

It spreads around us an illusion of vacancy. Yet as early as Herodotus there were tales of habitation. His account of a bald, flat-nosed race, and of a tribe which slept for half the year, seem to be rumours of Mongol and Arctic peoples. And as the Russians probed the Urals, they had painted in their demons beyond. God had confined the natives in this wilderness because they ate their dead. "There was a people who died every winter when water spilt from their noses and froze them to the ground. ... These people, it seems, had been here for ever. For in the unknown, time stops.

"But later a pagan beauty crept in. Siberia, exempt from religious surveillance, harboured magic cities. Surrounded by clamour, they could be reached only underground; but once inside their walls an unearthly silence fell. In its snowbound purity, its farness, Siberia became the repository of an imagined innocence.

Yet by the nineteenth century other, countervailing images had long been in place: Siberia as a storehouse to be plundered by officials and hunted bare by Cossacks; and above all, long before the Gulag, as a limbo that could receive all the viral waste of the empire — criminal, vagabond, dissident. Through Siberia, Russia would purge herself. Its vastness could quarantine evil.

The pendulum swung back years ago. As Moscow appears to sink deeper into the embrace of the West, so Siberia becomes enshrined in the Slavic imagination as the Russia that was lost, the citadel of the spirit. The mystique of a chaste, self-reliant Siberia rises again. Siberia is more Russian than Russia is, people say, as if it were a quintessential Russia, or the imagined country which Russia would like to be".¹⁰⁴

And yet, this optimistic prognosis for Siberia's future is belied both by his impressions in the rest of the narrative, as well as the exigencies of travel. In Severobaikalsk, for instance, he has a disturbing experience in the happenstance of the police demanding his registration in that area, and scrutiny of his documents. The entire bureaucratic structure, Thubron finds, down to its arbitrariness, is a chilling, if impotent echo of Stalinist times.

At a ruined mica-mine Gulag, he wonders why there is so little anger or rebellion from Russians against the atrocities that had been committed here, as elsewhere; he is haunted by unease at this national 'lack' of guilt. Whether it is the coal-mining Vorkuta, or the gold-mining of Kolyma, or even the torture-and-execution centre Serpentinka, the horrors of the labour camps stamped Siberia as the place of punishment forever in the human mind. The sections on the horrific history of Kolyma and Magadan, its capital, are very moving in their evocation of those times.

The narrative ends on a chilling note; he seems to reiterate the image of Siberia as a land without hope, and with only uncertainty as its future, since the old ideologies are gone. Thubron is of the opinion that the “land of the future” image of a century ago does not really fit Siberia any more.¹⁰⁵ Siberia’s harsh climate, its inaccessibility and its half-baked return to an uncertain notion of ‘freedom’, together with its Communist legacy, make it a recalcitrant entity.

CONCLUSION

The paper has reviewed selected works in relation to the development of Siberia’s varying images in history. An examination of these works shows that while the heaven< >hell binary predominantly characterized the image of Siberia for the most part, recent works (such as those by Rasputin, Haywood and Thubron) reveal the existence of spaces in Siberia’s cultural identity which cannot be accommodated within the heaven< >hell binary. For a socially committed writer like Rasputin, the image of Siberia that emerges from his history is that of a country that has sustained deep wrongs from the larger world, but still retains enough that is worth preserving, culturally and ecologically. For outsiders such as Thubron or Haywood, Siberia’s image is multi-dimensional and bewildering in its complexities and nuances. The heaven< >hell binary becomes historicized in their works, associated with particular periods of Siberia’s past; it does not really operate in Siberia’s present, however tempted they might be to use it in place of their own incomprehension of Siberia’s realities today.

The decades after the disintegration of the Soviet Union have witnessed a plethora of ideological confusions, mingled with a sense of disillusionment. This in turn has led to further complexities in Siberia’s cultural identity. The turmoil has shown itself up particularly in the sphere of religious faith. Perhaps this is not surprising, given the country’s rich history of different faith-systems coexisting simultaneously. But what is remarkable in post-Soviet Siberia is the way in which the uncertain return to faith has manifested itself.

A recent newspaper article¹⁰⁶ draws attention to the revival of faith in modern Siberia, in the form of ‘new-age’ mystical sects which have their own following. Of these, two sects are particularly astonishing in their claims: one revolves around the figure of a Sergei Torop, who calls himself Jesus of Siberia. A forty-one-year old former traffic cop and factory worker from Krasnodar in southern Russia, he moved to Siberia

as a youth, experiencing a religious 'awakening' in the early 1990s. Called variously by his numerous followers (they run to thousands) as the Messiah of Siberia, Vissarion Christ and the Teacher, he has brought into being arcane rituals, laws, symbols, prayers, hymns and a new calendar, along with a strict code of conduct in which no vices are allowed. He also dresses the part: velvet crimson robe, long brown hair, beatific smile.

The other religious formation is even more unlikely: a cult has evolved around Russian President Vladimir Putin, as the reincarnation of the Apostle Paul. The cult is based near Nizhny Novgorod; Putin's portrait is together with Orthodox Church icons, and its followers believe that the former KGB official was born to redeem wrong-doers. Not even the 'personality cult' of Stalin, with its terror-stricken followers, came anywhere near the enjoyment of such 'faith'. A review of these recent happenings in Siberia leads us to adhere, more than ever, to the notion that this is a strange land in which anything is possible. One could even go to the extent of mythicizing present-day Siberia, after the manner of 11th century Novgorodians, who exoticized what they found beyond the Urals.

For their part, today's Siberians, generally speaking, show an eagerness to belong, to be a recognizable part of the larger world community, and to leave their troubled past behind. In the words of a contemporary Siberian, "Siberia is *usual*... just like any other place".¹⁰⁷

For those looking at Siberia from the outside, however, this attitude may seem like a newer manifestation of the old binary: 'usualness' is the one quality that we have been taught by history *not* to associate with Siberia. For a country whose "past had been reorganised for ever, (and its) ... future preordained" by a political superstructure that "was meant to last through all imaginable time",¹⁰⁸ Siberia has more challenges before it than any ideologies can hope to address.

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7. *Sel'skaia zhizn' Country Life*, January 27, 1992, p.3
8. M. Winchell and G. Mikkelson, *op.cit.*, p. 20.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
13. V. Rasputin, *op.cit.*, p. 33.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
16. Winchell and Mikkelson, *op.cit.*, p. 20.
17. *Ibid.*
18. V. Rasputin, *op.cit.*, p. 52.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
21. Paul Nazaroff was a native of Tashkent who was targeted by the Cheka (forerunners of the later K.G.B.) for his counter-Revolutionary sympathies; a gifted naturalist, he recorded his studies and observations of Central Asia's nature even when on the run from the Bolsheviks. His book *Hunted Through Central Asia* (O.U.P., 1993) is a remarkable example of his erudition.
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24. V. Rasputin, *op.cit.*, p. 276.
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INTERPRETATION OF THE 31ST GATHA OF YASNAIN “AVESTA”

RANO T. URAZOVA

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the contents of the 4-song of Ahkunaṇvati Gathas in the Avesta, the holy book of the ancient religion of the Mazda Yasna, created by the prophet Zarathustra. It defines the essence of some stanzas in Gatha, which affirms the role of Zarathustra as the Head (Ratu, i.e. “judge”) in the choice of the people of the right way. In the face of opposition of the parties interested in preserving the old pagan customs of multi-religion, it highlights some difficulties in establishing the foundations of monotheistic religion of Ahura Mazda by Zarathustra.

KEYWORDS: Gatha, Avesta, Yasna, Zoroastrianism, Zarathustra, Right, Lie, righteous, infidels, good, evil, dauzhhishte, dauzh wahoo.

Zoroastrianism as a religious-philosophical phenomenon came into existence in Central Asia within the process of migration of Aryan tribes through Central Asia toward Indian sub continent and the Iranian plateau. Owing to general syncretization of Aryan nomadic and Central Asian settled agricultural life in bronze age and an early epoch of the iron age, Zoroastrianism acted as ideological, moral and philosophical basis in the time of class division in the society, which was marked by its pecuniary hierarchy, allocation of social, politicized, military-administrative and hierarchic layers that were opposed to the ordinary people.

According to several well-known Avestologists, Zoroastrianism arose in Central Asia and subsequently spread in southern and southwest direction. Thus, in the epoch of late bronze and early iron age, that is, between II and I millenia B.C., Zoroastrianism, which was the religion of Good against any manifestations of Evil, got into hearts and minds of the people of Central Asia.

Zoroastrian ideology (religion honoring single god Ahura Mazda,

god of all Good) conformed to the requirements of centralization of public and political relations in the society. This level of organization of public relations differed from tribal life of ancient Indian Vedic society¹. As such the world of Zoroastrianism as a whole is younger in comparison with the Vedic one as Zoroastrianism is the religion of early stages of the state relations in the territory of Central Asia and Middle East.

Ideas underlying Zoroastrianism are embodied in the sacred religious code of this religion. *Avesta*, consisted of thirty books in its initial version. This version of *Avesta* is considered to have been partially lost during Alexander the Great's conquest². Last version of *Avesta* recovered from memories of priests, consisted of twenty one books. The Arab invasion and dissemination of Islam had led to loss of most part of this version as well. Only one fifth of *Avesta*, which is about 83,000 words, has been preserved till our time.

The most archaic part of *Avesta* in terms of language and stylistics is called Gatha, the authorship of which is attributed to prophet Zaratushtra who got revelation from god Ahura Mazda via the angel of Good thought Vakhu Mana. Thus, Zaratushtra addresses the people with the sermon "I speak to you through the words that have not been heard by you before". Specialists interpreted this phrase in different ways. Nevertheless, it specifies radical reformatory activity of Zaratushtra rejecting the whole set of primitive beliefs. This cultural-historical and moral-philosophical turn in the life of ancient society gave the opportunity to perceive material being and spirituality as the creation of Ahura Mazda with absolute Good thoughts. Evil represented by Anghra Manja, in all its manifestations can be destroyed by good intention, good words and good deeds of the righteous. Thus, Zoroastrianism puts every individual in the first place, the individual who is responsible for unity and harmony of society and universe as a whole. In this regard, Gathas of *Avesta* proclaim high significance of an individual in the society for the first time in the history of mankind.³

THE 31ST GATHA OF YASNA

Gathas included in the body of Yasna, the holy *Avesta*, are the most archaic part of this book. It consists of five parts: *Akhunavadgathas*, *Ushtavadgathas*, *Ispanmandgathas*, *Wakhuv Khshtargathas* and *Wakhysh Vayshtgathas*. Of great significance among them are considered to be *Akunavadgathas*.

Some Gathas that have been preserved among prophetic sermons are relatively simple in content and represent basic dual relationship between good and evil as a philosophical category. These ideas render the main setting of Zoroastrianism that expresses absolute goodness of Ahura Mazda, and implacable evil represented by Ahriman with his endless variety of manifestations. Following the previous 30th verse stanzas of Yasna, 31st song of the Prophet gives a more detailed picture of the so called dual beginnings (good and evil) which determine the fate of the Soul in the afterworld.

Thus, the fourth song of the sacred *Ahunavad Gatha* of *Avesta*, that is, Yasna 31, can be regarded as Zarathustra's claim for the approval of his authority as a prophet of the religious teachings of the Mazda Yasna. It was generated by him rejecting the traditional tribal pagan ideas that existed prior to Zoroastrianism. Analysis of the text of the Gathas shows that in some cases Zarathustra was forced to turn to Ahura Mazda so that the latter would inspire the infidels to regard Zarathustra as the Judge, the Leader who knows the laws of the true religion, as a believer in a single creator of good life, following the path of his Right, as well as rejecting Lie that was the base of all and every evil. At the same time, opposition of the Right and Lie generalizes dual contrast of good and evil beginnings in two spheres, those of spiritual and material ones.

The song of Yasna under consideration, as has been stated above, is characterized by the content aimed at explaining the prophetic mission of Zarathustra, the Judge and the Leader of the Path that people choose, that of Right or the Lie. Valid interpretation of the essence of this song would be a convincing answer to endless questions, such as who Zoroaster was and what was his historical contribution to the development of the spiritual world of mankind etc.

31st song is known in Avestalogy as the "Gatha of Second Choice". It also refers to the content of the 30th song which embodies the essence of Mazda Yasna religion represented as a Choice between good and evil or right and lie for each person. Moreover, anything sensible, useful or able to sustain true happy balance of all living beings is considered as Good. On the contrary all harmful, destructive and unreasonable things belong to Evil respectively.⁴

The notion of Choice in the *Avesta* is considered as a phenomenon originally pledged in the creativity of Ahura Mazda embodying absolute Right and creating only the good foundations of objective reality. As a

result, the Choice takes place between life and death subsequently expanding to the functions of deities created by Ahura Mazda himself. On the opposite side of Choice there are demonic forces which influence ruinously the spiritual and material world of human beings. Finally, Choice reaches its completion in the eschatological end of the world turning in retribution or reward for the faith or unbelief, for the Right and lie which the man had followed in his life. At the same time, the human being, from every individual to society, is the determinant factor whose position affects the fate of the whole objective reality. It is this position of the human being that determines whether to finally go to the blissful *wahoo hishte* (Paradise), or *todayuzh wahoo* (Hell).

There is a subtext in Yasna 31 that highlights the necessity to choose the right way with the help of the Prophet who is the Leader, Judge (in Avesta it is *Ratu* or *Rad*). Also, it contains the promise of salvation at the end of the world from the torments of hell for those who followed the Prophet, and, on the contrary, those who had not followed Zoroaster are foreshadowed inevitable, endless torments in *dauzhvahu* (Hell). The highest reward of the right Choice is only known to Ahura Mazda who knows everything, as he is omnipresent, omniscient, hearing everything, most fair etc.

Yasna-31 proclaimed Zarathustra as the Prophet of the true God, Ahura Mazda. However, the thing that attracts attention here is Zoroaster's plea to Ahura Mazda for help to convert the infidels in the true religion of the Mazda Yasna and persistent rebellion against the adherents of false teachings. Referring to the text reverting Gatha, the Prophet used the expression "inaudible speech" in its first stanza. Regarding this occasion, I.M. Steblin-Kamensky wrote: "inaudible speech can be understood in different ways such as "unheard (so far) word", "inaudible".⁵ Perhaps we should have in mind the speech which is not heard or understood and incomprehensible to unrightful people (that is, unrighteous), but the one that is distinct and pleasant to the righteous). This interpretation, as we believe, does not accurately render the meaning of the expression. Here it means to say that divine revelations are not available to all. They are inaudible to the infidels. It was only Zarathustra who was awarded such an honor by Ahura Mazda. Likewise, Ahura Mazda makes these inaudible speeches available to those who follow the prophet. Meanwhile, the unrighteous will remain in the grip of Lie and continue to kill the world of Right. The best speeches are prescribed for those who are devoted to Mazda. The Prophet states that he

remembers Ahura Mazda's dictates and tries to bring them to people's minds.

Next, as a Prophet, Zarathustra assures that true but invisible way of Right is best of all. To understand the meaning of invisible is the essence of the problem human being faces. The man following the Prophet must recognize the Right by himself. Then, as Zarathustra claims "he (the Prophet) as the Leader, perceiving the Right, knowing of Ahura Mazda and the meaning of both the fates will come to a human standing in front of a Choice. Avestan abstract concept of "both fates" is explained by I.M. Steblin-Kamenskiy as "two sides of life, the good and evil, Right and lie; the two fates of soul, that of a reward or retribution in the other world ...⁶ Avestologists explain this verse differently. For example, a prominent Iranian scholar Ibrokhim Purdovud translated it as "advent" of Ahura Mazda. Thus, the basic idea of the 31st Gatha, which was meant to approve Zarathustra's role as the head of Mazda Yasna's community, was lost. Uzbek translation of this verse follows Persian translation and literally sounds as "... I am, Mazda who has prepared a reward or punishment for both the groups - will come to you"⁷. As can be seen, this interpretation wipes off the basic idea of the 31st Gatha aimed at establishing the status of the Prophet as the Head of the Zoroastrian community.

Further, through the expression "with your language" that is, "the words of thy mouth" Zarathustra addresses Ahura Mazda and asks for a simple explanation of the meaning of the fate for two categories of people - the righteous and the liar. Thus, if the strong power was given to him, he would aim to "call upon the Right of Ahura Mazda and look for Doom Sanity by using Best Thought" with the help of which he could destroy Ahriman's Lie.⁸ I.M. Steblin-Kamenskiy drew attention to the grammatical plural word Ahura when commenting on this verse, and translated it in brackets as "Lords" referring to the frequently used concept in *Avesta* that means "all lords, Heads of all spheres of life".

Of particular significance is the word Fate in this verse which was explained by I.M. Steblin-Kamenskiy as "reward, achievement, reward for his piety or merits"⁹. By using the word Fate, Zarathustra meant goddess Asha (Avestian Artie or Yrti), which was considered the goddess of well-being and happiness.

Several stanzas of the 31st Yasna beginning from 31.7 are dedicated to the question of the right Choice, of free Choice, between good and evil. However, a man can make a mistake because of the lack of knowledge. But if a man truly wants to select the right way by heart,

thought, and spirit in harmony, Vahuman comes to him for help, which is the first of the six Ahura Mazda's functions, that is to say, his emanations. Meanwhile, Zoroaster calls Ahura Mazda as "the father" of Good Thought, creator of the Right, the Lord of the objective reality created by the mind and "clearly the first and the last". Consequently, Ahura Mazda was the one who first saw the world and will be the last one to see the world end.

Further, the idea of choice appears to be more specific. So, in stanza 31.9 we can read: "Your sanity and wise Creator of cattle, Your spirit Ahura, it gave him way, oh, Mazda, should he go to the pastor to know who is not a pastor?"¹⁰ In this case, the figurative terms mean what path people will choose in this life. Pastor means the right way, the way of Good Thought, not the pastor the wrong way. The word "cattle" has a figurative meaning "human" standing before the Choice. I.M. Steblin-Kamenskiy comments on this verse literally: "Like man, the cattle, too, will have the choice between a shepherd and not shepherd, and he chooses the caring (feeding, grazing) shepherd. Figurative meaning of cattle and shepherd is revealed in the following verse where it comes as a man's will before Choice, "When, Oh, Mazda, you created the World and Faith, at the same time created thee the carnal life, the deeds and sayings of the thoughtfulness and the mind, in which a person is given the freedom and will choose Right or Lie".

The 31st Gatha also tells us about the launch of the world's time when it was produced by the Mind's Thoughts and intentions of the future, including the people clothed in flesh, in order to create the unity of the spiritual and corporeal beings, so that the person could then express their beliefs freely, be free in front of their Choice.¹¹ This topic is about the original source of all things created by God, has its parallel in the Muslim dogma of almysok which finally predetermines the fate of the future.

I.M. Steblin-Kamenskiy commented this thesis in the following way: "A man who has been provided with a carnal life is free in thought, speech and deeds ever since Mazda created life (the world) and Faith, that is, Avestan *daenu* (*den*) which corresponds to such concepts as "pious beliefs of a person and his own conscience which meets the soul of the righteous in the other world in the shape of a beautiful girl".¹²

In verse 31.13 Zoroaster warns the mankind that it is impossible for a person to hide any deed, committed openly, secretly in league with anyone or with his conscience, or any wrong doing from the all-seeing, all hearing, ubiquitous Ahura Mazda. Sins will inevitably be punished.

Mazda, clearly and truly, he sees everything. In Zoroastrianism there is a sacrifice in various shapes and sizes. However, not all of them are accepted as good. Donations (gifts) from the unrighteous are likely to be considered at the end of the world? What will be the reward of donations for the righteous? The social and political elements can be found in one of the verses of the Gatha. Zarathustra asks Ahura Mazda "... is there a punishment to those who give the power to liars? Who cannot imagine life without any harm to the shepherd, cattle and righteous people?" There is an interest in an imperceptible feature in this stanza: "Zarathustra, speaking of the unrighteous, that is, of evil and unjust rulers, adds the idea about the danger of giving the Power to liars".¹³

The meaning of following (31.16) stanza refers to the social structure of the Zoroastrian community (or society-time addition of Zoroastrian tradition): "... when will He, the graceful, arrange for Right (fair) power over the house (family), settlement (origin), country (tribe, union of tribes)?" At the same time, the word "grace" has a conditional character. I.M. Steblin-Kamenskiy sees this as an allusion to the meaning of "savior" whose coming at the end of the world is foreshadowed in the *Avesta*.

In the next verse the Prophet warned the people that they were not mistaken in the choice of Knowledge, Knowledge of right and Knowledge of Lie. Just some lines above he put a rhetorical question: "Who urges more – a righteous or a liar?" He also insisted that choosing the right way which certainly leads to the Right is provided by Ahura Mazda as he is Omniscient, mentor of Good Thought. Ahriman is a Liar, he is not master, and he only deceives from the Right way.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

31st Yasna proclaims the status (or pretention to the status) of Zarathustra as a prophet. Well-known authors¹⁵ like Bartholomae, F.Andreas, H. Lommel, A. Meillet, W. Henning and others share the same idea as for this aspect of Zarathustra's mission which was declared in present Gatha [4; 5;6; 7; 8]. Thus, people are encouraged to follow the word of Right only, reject the speech and knowledge of Lie, since the latter betrays their affliction, death of his home, his family and his country. In connection with this passage Gatha suggested that during the sermon of Zarathustra, his opponents also carried on propaganda for which there were social forces interested in preserving traditional paganism. Moreover, they are scared of appealing ideas of Zarathustra, hearing

and knowing voice of Right, World healer mastering the language and direct (true and genuine) speech, able to separate the Lie from the Right with the help of red Fire, the embodiment of Right. Next set of ideas describe the heavenly prosperity promised to the righteous, that it comes down to the radiance of heaven, while lasting darkness awaiting Liars, bad food, moaning on their deeds. Mazda will give the righteous Immortality and Wholeness, connection to the Good Power, good Richness of Thought. That is all being said in the last stanza of 31st Yasna, "For sensible and aware of Good Thought it is clear that he keeps good words and good deeds with the help of the Good Power and Right".¹⁶

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