

## STUDY OF YAKUT FOLKLORE: HISTORY AND ITS KEY FIGURES (THE CONCEPT OF THE BIOBIBLIOGRAPHIC DICTIONARY „YAKUT FOLKLORISTS”)\*

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**Abstract:** *The article covers the creation of the concept of a biobibliographic dictionary "Yakut folklorists". A study of the history of Yakut folklore and its key figures is an underdeveloped topic. The relevance of the study lies in the fact that in Russian folklore, interest in studying the personality of collectors and researchers of oral folk art is growing. The definition of scientific schools, interpretations of folkloristic ideas, the perpetuation of little-known collectors also refers to the novelty of the biobibliographic dictionary. In authors' opinion, such a dictionary will become another building block in preparation of the All-Russian biobibliographic dictionary of folklorists. The dictionary provides for the Yakut folklorists as representatives of a single type of historical and cultural activity and considers the interpretation of the scientific heritage. As a result of studying biographies and scientific activities of Yakut folklorists, the dictionary will serve as the basis for writing the history of the development of Yakut folklore. An intellectual biography of folklorists with a bibliography will also reveal the scientific heritage of Yakutia in the context of Russian science. In contrast to the biobibliographic dictionary of Russian folklorists, it is proposed to compile an index of folklore records and expedition maps.*

**Keywords:** scientific school, expedition map, field folklore, folklore textology, stories of the study of intellectual culture.

A biobibliographic dictionary is a reference book that provides brief information about persons, a bibliography of their works and literature about them.<sup>1</sup> It differs from the biobibliographic index due to a larger amount of information. It should be noted that the origins of the biography genre originate from the time of antiquity.<sup>2</sup> This genre of

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<sup>1</sup> Biobibliographic Dictionary. Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias, 2019. Available at:

[https://humanities\\_dictionary.academic.ru/1429/Биобиблиографический\\_словарь](https://humanities_dictionary.academic.ru/1429/Биобиблиографический_словарь).

<sup>2</sup> O.A. Kling, A.A. Kholikov (Ed.), *Russian literary scholars of the XX century: Bibliographic dictionary*, Nestor-Istoriya, Moscow; St. Petersburg, 2017.

encyclopaedic literature is widely distributed in Russia.<sup>3</sup> However, it should be noted that biobibliographic dictionaries on humanitarian researchers are inferior to other directions.<sup>4</sup> Recently, reference books on Russian literary scholars, folklorists and linguists have appeared.<sup>5</sup> In the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), an attention has been called to such books.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in 2000s, two volumes of “Encyclopaedia of Yakutia” edited by Professor F. G. Safronov,<sup>7</sup> “Pedagogical Encyclopaedia”,<sup>8</sup> “Treasures of Culture of Yakutia” from the series “Heritage of the Peoples of the Russian Federation”,<sup>9</sup> “Encyclopaedia of Culture and Art”,<sup>10</sup> Encyclopaedia for children.<sup>11</sup> Now the Research Institute of M.K. Ammosov Olonkho North-Eastern Federal University is preparing the “Olonkho Encyclopaedia”.<sup>12</sup>

Yakut folklore as an integral part of Russian science has amassed a solid scientific heritage, however, our knowledge about it is insufficient. The identification and study of the life of Yakut folklorists will make a significant contribution to the study of the history of Yakut folklore, to the definition of scientific schools, and will perpetuate the names of little-known collectors. Compiling a biobibliographic dictionary of Yakut folklorists will become another building block in the preparation of the All-Russian biobibliographic dictionary, which was mentioned in the

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<sup>3</sup> I.M. Kaufman, *Russian biographical and biobibliographic dictionaries*, State publishing house of cultural and educational literature, Moscow, 1955; Ya. V. Vasilkov, M. Yu. Sorokina, (Ed.), *People and Fates: A Bibliographic Dictionary of Orientalists – Victims of Political Terror in the Soviet Period (1917-1991)*, St. Petersburg Journal of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> U.G. Saitov (Ed.), *Encyclopaedic Issues*, Bashkir Encyclopaedia, Ufa, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> T.G. Ivanova, A.L. Toporkov (Ed.), *Russian folklorists: Bibliographic dictionary*, PROBEL-2000, Moscow, 2010; S. P. Bavin, (Ed.), *Russian philologists of the 19th century: a biobibliographic dictionary*, Sovpadenie, Moscow, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> D.G. Bragina, “Encyclopaedics in Yakutia: problems and prospects”, in K. I. Agliullina (Ed.), *Regional Encyclopaedias in the Modern Scientific Infocommunication System of Russia*, Bashkir Encyclopaedia, Ufa, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> F.G. Safronov, A.F. Safronov (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Yakutia*, Vol. 2, Yakut Encyclopedia, Yakutsk, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> M.G. Mikhaylova, S.M. Petrova, *Pedagogical Encyclopaedia*, Ministry of Education of the Republic of Sakha, Yakutsk, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> A.M. Tarunov, *Treasures of culture of Yakutia*, Scientific Information Publishing Centre, Moscow, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> V.A. Bosikov (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Culture and Art of Yakutia*, Bichik, Yakutsk, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> N.P. Androsova (Ed.), *Yakutia: Encyclopaedia for Children*, Bichik, Yakutsk, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> V.N. Ivanov, S.D. Lvova, L.N. Gerasimova, “Olonkho Encyclopaedia (concept)”, in *Humanitarian Research*, 2015, no. 12, Available at: <http://human.snauka.ru/2015/12/13552>.

discussion of the Dictionary of Russian folklorists: “Let's hope that subsequent to our Dictionary (or in parallel with it) another team of authors will prepare a biobibliographic dictionary of Russian folklorists, which summarizes information on the folklore researchers of the peoples living in the territory of the Russian Empire (for the 18th – early 20th centuries), the Soviet Union (for the Soviet period) and the Russian Federation (for the post-Soviet period), respectively. It is possible that coverage of this topic will take not one, but a whole series of publications, and this work will stretch for many years”.<sup>13</sup> The relevance of the study lies in the fact that in Russian folklore, interest in the personality of collectors and researchers of the oral tradition is growing.<sup>14</sup> Yakut folklorists and their activities have not yet been the objects of scientific study. The compilation of a biobibliographic dictionary of Yakut folklorists will become the basis for the study of the history of Yakut folklore, summarize and systematize information about collectors and researchers of folklore, make it possible to make a modern assessment and interpretation of their activities, determine scientific schools and their evolution, reveal the names of “forgotten” collectors, establish their identity, determine the contribution to Russian science and culture, supplement the information on their diversified activities. The legacy of certain folklorists requires reevaluation. We should acknowledge the non-staff correspondents, local historians, enthusiasts who generously shared materials and saved folklore from oblivion.

The aim of the project is to compile a biobibliographic dictionary of Yakut folklorists with an interpretation of their scientific heritage as representatives of a single type of historical and cultural activity. To achieve this goal, the following objectives were set:

- 1) development of the dictionary concept,
- 2) identification of personalia, vocabulary,
- 3) systematization of folklorists,
- 4) collection of biographical and bibliographic data,
- 5) creation of dictionary entries,
- 6) compilation of record indices, informants, expedition maps,

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<sup>13</sup> A.L. Toporkov, “Russian folklorists: a biobibliographic dictionary”, in *Anthropological Forum*, 2009, no. 11, p. 1-10.

<sup>14</sup> L.V. Rybakova, (Ed.), *Russian folklorists. Reference book*, Indrik, Moscow, 1994; A.S. Kargin, I.E. Posokh (Ed.), *Russian Folklorists: A Quick Reference to Personalia*, State Republican Centre of Russian Folklore, Moscow, 2007; M.D. Alekseyevskiy, V.E. Dobrovolskaya (Ed.), *Slavic traditional culture and the modern world*, State Republican Centre of Russian Folklore, Moscow, 2008; L.V. Fadeeva (Ed.), *Personality in the cultural tradition*, State Institute of Art Studies, Moscow, 2014.

7) identification of science schools.

This work is the first study to integrally represent the Yakut folklorists as exponents of a single type of historical and cultural activity. For the first time, a biobibliographic dictionary of Yakut folklorists is compiled with an interpretation of their scientific heritage. As a result of the project, it is planned to prepare a scientific work “Yakut folklorists: a biobibliographic dictionary”, to publish scientific articles on this issue. The results of the study can be used to write the history of Yakut folklore, will serve as the basis for a database of Yakut folklore. The materials of the biobibliographic dictionary can be used in study guides on Yakut folklore. The hypothesis of the study is related to the fact that the biobibliographic dictionary of Yakut folklorists plays an important part in studying the history of Yakut folklore as a science.

### **Materials and methods**

The material of the study is formed by documents, records stored in the Manuscript Fund of the Archive of the Yakutsk Scientific Centre of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the National Archives of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Russian Geographical Society, Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences<sup>15,16</sup>. Published materials, books on Yakut folklore,<sup>17</sup> and reference books of scientists also appear to be of great value.<sup>18</sup> Lately, there has been a tendency toward anthropologization of social science and humanities, including the emergence of new methodological approaches to the study of history

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<sup>15</sup> T. Portnova, “Giants against Gods (regarding the plastic nature of sculpture and theater by the example of the exhibition and installation of the pergamon altar in the Pushkin State Museum of fine arts)”, in *European Research Studies Journal*, 2015, vol. 18, no. 4, p. 189-196.

<sup>16</sup> T.V. Portnova, “Structural features of theatrical excursions (Methodology based on theatre museum expositions)”, in *Mathematics Education*, 2016, vol. 11, no. 8, p. 2963-2973.

<sup>17</sup> G.U. Ergis, *Essays on Yakut folklore*, Nauka, Moscow, 1974.

<sup>18</sup> P.I. Doktorov, E.P. Antonov, S.E. Nikitin (Eds.), *Researchers at the Institute for Humanitarian Research and the Problems of Indigenous Peoples of the North*, Institute for Humanitarian Research and the Problems of Indigenous Peoples of the North of the Siberian Department of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Yakutsk, 2010.

through the personality of a person, their biography.<sup>19</sup> The main research method is the study of personal biographies (biographics), through the lens of which the history of a specific research area is formed, in our case, the history of Yakut folklore.

Another work that is valuable from the standpoint of methodology is “Russian Folklorists: A Bibliographic Dictionary”, which is our ideological inspiration. With that, biobibliographic information should be scientifically interpreted and evaluated<sup>20,21</sup>. To represent a single type of historical and cultural activity, it is necessary to systematize the different types, kinds, levels of folklorists and find a common unifying beginning in them. Upon analysing the methodology of collecting activities, we shall use the historical and folkloristic approach to the folklore textology.

## Results and discussion

### *Personalia selection principles*

The biobibliographic dictionary of Yakut folklorists has its own principles for selecting personalia. It will include folklorists who studied Yakut folklore, i.e. the nationality of the folklorists themselves is irrelevant

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<sup>19</sup> L.P. Repina, *Historical science at the turn of the 20th – 21st centuries: social theories and historiographical practice*, Krug, Moscow, 2011; L.P. Repina, G.P. Myagkov, “Intellectual Culture and Scientific Communications”, in *Bulletin of Udmurt University*, 2014, no. 3, p. 137-142; L.P. Repina, G.P. Myagkov, “Intellectual Culture and Scientific Communications”, in *Bulletin of Udmurt University*, 2014, no. 3, p. 137-142; A.B. Nikolayeva, “Biographical reflective history as a result of the transformation of the modern biography of a scientist”, in *Bulletin of Omsk University*, 2019, vol. 24, no. 2, p. 135-140, DOI: 10.25513/1812-3996.2019.24(2).135-140; A. B. Nikolayeva, “Understanding, explanation, interpretation, construing: four hermeneutic procedures for understanding the text of a scientific biography”, in *Humanitarian Studies*, 2019, vol. 1, no. 22, p. 29-32; V.V. Nozdrinov, “Prospects of intellectual history in the new directions of historiography”, in *Scientific Thought of the Caucasus*, 2017, no. 1, p. 87-90, DOI: 10.18522/2072-0181-2017-89-1-87-90; T.G. Ivanova, *Textology of bylinas (according to the North Russian records of the second half of the XIX – XX centuries)*, Pushkin House of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Leningrad, 1982.

<sup>20</sup> D. Pylypenko, “Editorial”, in *Astra Salvensis*, 2019, vol. 7, p. 9-10.

<sup>21</sup> T.V. Portnova, “Practices and methods for actualization of the scientific information in art excursions (Excursions and cultural heritage in the contemporary world”, in *International Journal of Environmental and Science Education*, 2016, vol. 11, no. 14, p. 6690-6696. Cf. Aleftina Golovchun, Beibitkul Karimova, Maira Zhunissova, Gulaim Ospankulova, Kuralay Mukhamadi, „Content And Language Integrated Learning In Terms Of Multilingualism: Kazakhstani Experience,” in *Astra Salvensis*, V (2017), no. 12, p. 300.

– it is the object of their study that is important. For example, I.A. Khudyakov, a Russian by nationality, who studied Russian fairy tales before being exiled to Yakutia, and then, upon arrival in the Verkhoyansk district of the Yakutsk region, was engaged in folklore and culture of the Verkhoyansk Yakuts, must be included in the list of personalia. And, on the contrary, ethnic Sakhas, engaged in folklore of other peoples, will not be included in the dictionary.

Researchers point out that in the history of the study of intellectual culture, not only outstanding personalities are important, but also people who played a mediocre role: “And, we should add, this understanding is incomplete – even, moreover, a significantly distorted one – and without the so-called “supporting figures”, without those who do their job, staying “in the shadow of geniuses”: without them, one cannot simply imagine the very space of intellectual life, penetrated by many connections and mediations – neither in statics, nor in historical dynamics”.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, the Dictionary will provide information about all Yakut folklorists, regardless of their scope and value of work. This will facilitate an ultimate scientific assessment of their activities and provide an idea of the history of Yakut folklore in its entirety. The Dictionary will include folklore specialists, collectors of various levels (from amateur to professional), musicologists, writers<sup>23</sup>, scientists in other specialties, popularisers, organizers, the definitions of which will be given in a dictionary entry. At the same time, our dictionary is not intended to replace dictionaries, reference books of Yakut writers, musicologists, cultural workers, etc.

The following groups of personalia can be distinguished in terms of the person's relation to folklore:

- 1) collectors;
- 2) researchers;
- 3) publishers;
- 4) compilers of the plot or content of a folklore work;
- 5) translators;
- 6) writers;
- 7) composers;

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<sup>22</sup> L.P. Repina, “Biography in the context of “global microhistory””, in O.N. Shirokov (Ed.), *The paradigms of Russian history through the lens of biography (on the 140th anniversary of Alexei Ivanovich Yakovlev)*, Sreda Publishing House, Cheboksary, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> N. Orazbayeva, K. Nurgali, “Russian writers with bimental thinking and the formation of readers' multicultural competence”, in *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2017, vol. 25, no. 2, p. 823-836.

- 8) artists;
- 9) propagandists (popularisers);
- 10) organizers of various folklore events (coordinator of collecting, research, folklore festivals, conferences on folklore).

The compilers of the Dictionary are specialists in various fields of science (folklorists, ethnographer and literary critic) and will be engaged in the search and research of biobibliographic information mainly on the subject matter of their speciality. The name list (glossary) will be presented in alphabetical order without division into periods, categories, volumes. Over 300 folklorists have already been preliminarily identified. Unfortunately, information on many collectors is very scarce. We consider it necessary to include the names of all identified people on the topic of the study in order to supplement the missing information in the future.

### ***The problem of the structure and content of the dictionary entry***

The structure of the dictionary entry of the biobibliographic dictionary of Yakut folklorists consists of three main parts. Firstly, brief biographical information shall be provided, arranged in a direct chronological sequence. Secondly, an analytical review, scientific interpretation and assessment of folkloristic activity shall be made. Thirdly, it includes a bibliography of works, records of a folklorist, publications about them, which acquire particular value in entries on “forgotten” names. We concur with the statement that “Bibliographic dictionary should not be limited to reporting information about the life and publications of various folklorists”.<sup>24</sup> It should attempt to reveal the intellectual and organizational activities of the folklorist more fully and provide it with a scientific evaluation.

This biobibliographic dictionary will evaluate the activities of the individual included in it, and therefore its various features (“well-known”, “famous”, “outstanding”, “prominent”, etc.) will be appropriate. The content of the dictionary entry should be aimed at revealing the scientific and other creative activities of the individual related to folklore. It goes without saying that the main moments of life (date and place of birth, education, place and position of work, scientific, organizational activities), the main works of the folklorist will be indicated. If a person was engaged in activities other than folklore, then they can be briefly mentioned

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<sup>24</sup> A.M. Tarunov, *Treasures of culture of Yakutia*, Scientific Information Publishing Centre, Moscow, 2011.

(“ethnographer”, “writer”, “literary critic”), trying not to wander off from the main topic.

For our Dictionary, the instructions of literary scholars will be of great value: “Despite the fact that only the main “hero” should be at the centre of a biography, it is impossible to create a full biography of a literary critic, even in the form of a dictionary article, outside the context of the fate of a scientific or literary community. Attention here must be paid to the influence of general historical and social factors on the personality of a literary critic and their immediate environment. Ideally, such a biography, albeit in a condensed form, “can serve as a source of valuable scientific information” relating to the development of the science of literature”.<sup>25</sup> Along with this, it is important to highlight the individual specificity of each folklorist.

To some extent, biographical reconstruction is allowed in the absence of detailed information on the object of research: “Authors of biographies of a scientist and writer deal with the same-type sources (epistolary, diaries, autobiographies, documents of the era) that require searching, selection, that is, professional criticism and challenging, processing. Faced with a lack of reliable materials, upon the reconstruction of “blind spots”, any biographer is forced to appeal to intuition for help, choosing between scientific speculation and fiction”.<sup>26</sup> If available, a photograph or portrait of a scientist may be included so that the reader could get a visual description of their appearance. Unfortunately, in some reference publications occur absurd cases when, for example, instead of a portrait of I. A. Khudyakov, a portrait of the Russian writer N.A. Nekrasov is put. Such falsifications are forbidden in our Dictionary.

Unlike other biobibliographic dictionaries, our Dictionary will include an index of the records of folklore texts, a map of expeditions. For this purpose, the database No. 2019621682 “Database of names of the Yakut Olonkho heroic epos<sup>27</sup>: central, Vilyuysky, northeastern and northwestern (Dolgan) regional traditions” can be used, where, in addition to the Olonkho titles, collectors' names are listed. Archival materials, personal documents of folklorists are also valuable sources of information. Among the published works, a bibliographic index on Olonkho compiled

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<sup>25</sup> O.A. Kling, A.A. Kholikov (Eds.), *Russian literary scholars of the XX century: Bibliographic dictionary*, Nestor-Istoriya, Moscow; St. Petersburg, 2017.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> B.M. Aitbayeva, B.A. Rakhmetova, A.M. Maulenova, Z.B. Akhmetzhanova, A.C. Smailova, B.C. Rahimov, “Functions of expressive facilities in heroic epos”, in *Ponte*, 2017, vol. 73, no. 10, p. 43-47.



by the research professor of the National Library of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), V.N. Pavlova,<sup>28</sup> “Bibliography of Olonkho”,<sup>29</sup> “Essays on Yakut folklore” by G.U. Ergis,<sup>30</sup> the names of the collectors indicated in various collections of folklore texts.<sup>31</sup> In the course of work on the dictionary, compilers should prepare and publish articles covering the main subject matter of the Dictionary, the research results. It is important to conduct methodological seminars and discussions with specialists in this field.

The biobibliographic dictionary “Yakut folklorists” is mainly based on the experience of Russian folklorists, on the fundamental project “Russian folklorists: a biobibliographic dictionary”. In contrast to this project, we shall compile an index of folklore records and a map of expeditions and include them in the appendices to the Dictionary. These materials will clearly display the state of knowledge of the Yakut folklore. Due to the small number of the Yakut people, the relatively recent spread and development of education and literacy, isolation and remoteness from the centre of Russia, a relatively small number of people have been engaged in Yakut folklore compared to Russian folklore. Therefore, if it is planned to publish 5 volumes on Russian folklorists, then the biobibliographic dictionary of Yakut folklorists will be compiled in just one book.

The history of Yakut folklore needs new coverage. Almost the only book on this subject is the work of G.U. Ergis “Essays on Yakut folklore”, published in 1974.<sup>32</sup> For almost half a century since that time, many events took place, new names of folklorists emerged and a more scientific understanding of the genres of Yakut folklore appeared. We think and hope that our work will serve as an impetus for a new academic study of Yakut folklore. Unlike the studies of the Soviet period, we should not give preference to a certain philologist, collector, any particular schools and ideas in science. The group of authors has set a goal – to show the richness of such a unique phenomenon as Yakut folklore in all its diversity.

Thus, the concept of creating a biobibliographic dictionary of Yakut folklorists should be based on the experience existing in this area. Ahead is a responsible, substantial work on compiling a biobibliographic

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<sup>28</sup> V.N. Pavlova, *Yakut Olonkho heroic epic: bibliographic index (1848–2013)*, Bichik, Yakutsk, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> D.S. Makarov, (Ed.), *Olonkho Bibliography. Methodical Developments*, FOL YaF SO AN SSSR, Yakyutsk, 1982.

<sup>30</sup> G.U. Ergis, *Essays on Yakut folklore*, Nauka, Moscow, 1974.

<sup>31</sup> G.U. Ergis, (Ed.), *Sakha ostuoruyalara – Yakut tales*, Yakut book publishing house, Yakutsk, 1967.

<sup>32</sup> G.U. Ergis, *Essays on Yakut folklore*, Nauka, Moscow, 1974.

dictionary of Yakut folklorists, which is designed to perpetuate their names, provide a scientific evaluation of their activities and ultimately become the basis for writing the history of Yakut folklore. An intellectual biography of folklorists with a bibliography shall also reveal the scientific legacy of Yakutia in the context of Russian science. We hope that other regions follow the example of Russian folklorists and start compiling their own Dictionaries, which would eventually become part of creating a common database of Russian folklorists.