



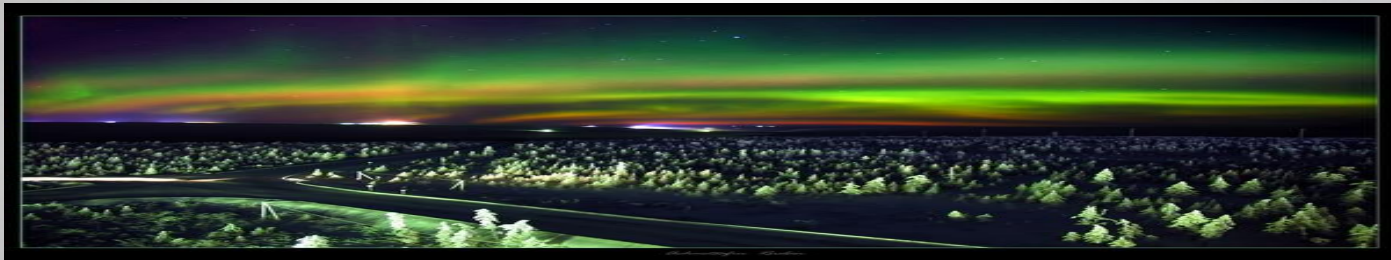
RESETTLEMENT OF THE YAKUTS

The Yakut people are the bearers of the outstanding culture of the Far North of Russia. It was formed by Turk, Mongolian, Tungus, Paleoasian elements, and from the 17th century - by Russians.



The origin of the Yakut people is something of a mystery. One of the theories is that they migrated from the lake Baikal a millennium ago. A catastrophe pushed them northward to the barren middle Lena. Where they mixed with other northern indigenous peoples such as the Evens and Evenks.

This resettlement took place step-by-step for a long time. In a number of ways, the Yakut people were different from the neighboring Siberian peoples. They were primarily pastoralists, whereas their neighbors were hunters and fishers.



As the Yakuts migrated north they lost their sheep and camels, but their cattle and shaggy ponies adapted to the cold, and gave them the advantage over the scattered peoples round them.

By early 17th century Yakutian kins lived in the Indigirka and Yana basins and advanced cattle- and horse-breeding to the arctic districts of Yakutia.

Their enterprise and resourcefulness grew. Yakuts' ancestors began developing various handicrafts (blacksmith's, jewelry's, pottery etc.) and constructing permanent houses.



Pastoralism preserved a semi-nomadic way of life. The Yakut moved twice a year between winter and summer camps, and their settlements were very widely scattered.

The winter camps consisted of two or three dwellings with a total population of less than 20.

The summer camps were usually larger. The yurt, the predominant type of dwelling, was a square structure with a pyramidal roof. Fire was religiously important--it was considered as the protector of the family and consequently the hearth was the most important area of the dwelling.



Fishing was the second most important activity. Hunting was done primarily for furs. Agriculture was introduced by the Russians in the mid-nineteenth century, but it was never widely practiced.

The diet consisted primarily of dairy products, secondarily of fish, thirdly of vegetable products, and lastly of meat.

The cuisine of Sakha consisted predominately of traditional drink, kumis, sliced frozen salted fish, loaf meat dishes, venison, frozen fish, thick pancakes, and Salamat - a millet porridge. Kourchah, a popular dessert, was made of mare milk. Indigirka is a traditional salad.





Siberian peoples are known for shamanism. The shaman among the Yakut was considered to be an attendant to the spirits. Men or women could be shamans, but women were considered to be more powerful. The appearance of a nervous ailment was a sign that a person was chosen by the spirits. The main duties of a shaman were to cure sick people and prevent catastrophes.

The shaman also acted as a diviner.

The Yakuts went a long independent way that was reflected in formation and composition of their eposes. Olonkho is an epos of ancient origin. It traces its roots from the time when Yakut ancestry lived in the south in the vicinity of other Turk-Mongolian tribes in vast Eurasian steppes. The epos reflects various stages of the people's development, from decay of tribal system to transition to class society, including accompanying religious and spiritual beliefs on the general heroic mythological background.



Folk poetry was genetically tied to magic ceremonies providing success in war times, in travels, and in common life. Olonkho embraces universal belief in word's magic power. It can explain the combination of the roles of a singer, a shaman, and a hero warrior in Olonkho as well as in Turk-Mongolian eposes.

Yakutia is one of the most enigmatic and unexplored places of the world. Only several hundred tourists come there every year and only a few dozen of them are foreigners. This is not surprising as Yakutia is 7,500 kilometers away from Moscow and even further from St. Petersburg. One day you may find yourself alone. But you've got much free time and enough money. Don't be of two minds!

All you have to do is to come to the unique place on the Earth - to Yakutia!



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