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Толковый словарь якутского языка // Саха тылын быһаарыылаах тылдьыта (Explanatory dictionary of the Yakut language [in fifteen volumes], in the text below referred to as <the Dictionary> or <Sleptsov 2004-2018>). Под общей редакцией академика Академии наук Республики Саха (Якутия) П[ётра] А[лексеевича] Слепцова // Саха Ороспубулукэтин Наукатын академиятын академига П.А. Слепцов уопсай эрдээксийэтинэн (under the general editorship of academician P[yotr] A[lekseyevich] Sleptsov of the Sakha [Yakut] Academy of Sciences). 2004-2018. Новосибирск // Новосибирскай: «Наука» (Novosibirsk: Nauka Publishers)

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The “First International Symposium *in* Languages of the Indigenous Peoples of the [Russian Northern] Far East” (*I Международный симпозиум на языках коренных малочисленных народов Дальнего Востока*, October 2-3, 2014) convened in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk on the premises of the Sakhalin Regional Museum (SOKM // СОКМ¹), in which this author had the privilege to participate, was an unprecedented (and unexpected!) event of historical dimensions and significance. Representatives of the peoples in question from various, often very distant, locations gathered to speak to others and with others not only *about* their language situations, language endangerment, language revitalization, endeavors to protect their tongues and pass over to further generations through kindergarten, school and club education, literary and artistic creativity, native press and broadcasting, theatrical performances, publishing (poetry and prose but also translations of international documents like the Declaration of Human Rights or UNO Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) – but, above all, *in* their own languages, often long since pronounced as confined to simple everyday matters at home, if at

¹ Сахалинский государственный областной краеведческий музей. The square brackets have been used here because one of the presentations consisted in projecting an anime in the Ainu language with comments partially also in Ainu, and because the name of the event seemed inadequate: the Ainu language is not used in everyday life anywhere and currently not existing on the territory of Russia but it was indigenous for Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands in the past; the title of the ‘Second International Symposium in Languages of Indigenous Peoples of the Far Eastern North of Russian Federation’ (*Второй Международный симпозиум на языках коренных малочисленных народов Севера Дальнего Востока РФ* Feb. 21, 2019) was more precise.

all, and unfit to discuss complicated issues of the outside modern world. The symposium revealed that these languages – to be sure, in most cases very seriously endangered indeed – can still be used by very competent fluent speakers (among them e.g. varying-level school teachers with university education with academic degrees and highly specialized university researchers²) for speaking on, and discussing (at times fiercely), highly sophisticated professional issues, manifesting erudition and readiness to render in *ad hoc* translation quotations from recent literature in the field.

It is not easy to exactly determine the western and southern borders of what the Russians (seemingly at times intuitively) categorize as ‘languages of the Far North of the Russian Far East (*языки Крайнего Севера Русского Дальнего Востока*)’ but the territory may roughly equal that of one, namely “Far Eastern”, among the currently eight “Federal Districts” of Russia, with perhaps four “Federal subjects” of the “District” (Republic of Buryatia, Zabaykalskiy Kray, Jewish Autonomous Oblast and even Amur Oblast³) excluded. Some 18 to 20 languages indigenous to the region are still spoken there, of which practically all, save one, are seriously endangered because of small number of speakers⁴ but above all because they stopped being used by the youngest generations or because this intergenerational transmission becomes insufficient and because of historical and political factors (as e.g. insidious state language policies).

The only language of the area discussed, the future of which is safe, is Yakut – the only one with its population of users counted not in hundreds or lower thousands in the first 10,000 but in hundreds of thousands with half a million on the time horizon. Quoting data from the 2010 census after Vakhtin 2016: 10-12, 450,140 of the total of 478,085 persons declaring their Yakut nationality declared also the competence in Yakut. The nearest result on the list (excluding languages from beyond the area under concern) is, respectively 4,802 of 37,843 for Ewenk(i)s, and the lowest but one – 47 of 295⁵ for Uilta (Oroks). Yakut is in fact the only language on the territory as defined above which is absent from the ‘red books of the languages of Russia’ (Neroznak 1994; 2002).

The Yakut language has always been the treasure and pride of the nation. This attitude proved “infectious” for aliens who involuntarily (as political and law breaking convicts, “disloyal” religious exiles, “administrative re-settlers”, pauperized individuals, families, social groups escaping poverty and hunger, etc.) or voluntarily (as colonizers in state service on the one hand, volunteers looking for better opportunities, people interested in

² E.g., St. Petersburg Herzen State Pedagogical University Institute of the Peoples of the North runs BA, MA and PhD programs and courses in the cultures and languages of over twenty peoples inhabiting the circumpolar regions of Russia – the area belt particularly wide in that country. Teachers and cultural workers are also being prepared at many academic institutions within that belt like e.g. Russian Academy of Sciences Siberian Branch Institute of Philology in Novosibirsk or North-Eastern Federal University Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Peoples of the Northeast in Yakutsk.

³ Only 1,481 Ewenk(i)s and 449 Yakuts registered in the 2010 census.

⁴ This factor alone is not necessarily the source of danger, see e.g. this author’s review of D. Schokkin’s *Grammar of Paluai* in the present volume, pp. 121-133.

⁵ With regard to the latter, the parallel statistics provided by Ozoliņa (2001: 5), who in 1994 checked the official documents in rural administration offices (*selsoviets*) and simply counted the Orok’s speakers, were 25 (“in their majority persons in their declining years”) and “217”; in 1995 (93, fn. 4) Ozoliņa commented on the then official total Uilta population census figure – 283: “seems impossible [...], much exaggerated”.

staying as far away as possible from state authorities on the other hand) found themselves brought or arrived on their own initiative to that almost empty, record cold, and uninhabitable vast land to find the sparse local population friendly, open to outsiders, capable of appreciating their knowledge and skills and ready to share it in turn for their skills and experience without which the newcomers' adaptability to survive in the demanding, and surely hostile environment would not be possible. It is almost certain that in Yakutia more than in any other region of Russia (regardless of its changing political status and substance) the Russian newcomers attempted at acquiring with success competence in the Yakut language rather than at linguistically Russifying the local people⁶. At an academic museological conference in 1990 in Vladivostok, this author's Yakut friend introduced to him a number of Russian participants from Yakutia proudly emphasizing the fluency in his language of all of them and later started enumerating Poles who significantly contributed to the study of Yakutia, its culture, and especially the Yakut language⁷.

The academic study of the language is associated with results of the Russian⁸ naturalist and explorer Alexander Theodor von Middendorff's 1842-1845 expedition to the Taymyr Peninsula, Yakutia, the Amur and Irkutsk regions and in focus of our interest here is the third volume of materials from the voyage, published in 1851 in two parts (and two books) entitled "On the language of Yakuts"; part (*Theil*) one (over 450 pages of print) includes an extensive 'introduction' (54 pp.), texts in Yakut with an interpretation in German (96 pp.), and a 'Yakut grammar' (300 pp.); part two is a 184 pp. Yakut-German dictionary.

The work is considered to be the first and for decades the only description of the Yakut language and its author was Otto von Böhlingk, a distinguished Indologist, author⁹ of the famous monumental "Petersburg" Sanskrit-German dictionary in seven volumes and its 'concise' version and, among others, two editions of Panini's Sanskrit grammar, one in German translation. He was a polyglot with the knowledge of a number of Oriental languages and his erudition in this aspect is reflected in his Yakut dictionary. The entire work is a typical desk-scholar product: Böhlingk did not participate in the expedition and his task was to organize the raw Yakut language (which he neither knew nor heard before) materials handed over to him by Middendorff into a publishable form.

The 1851 work was translated into Russian and published in 1989¹⁰.

⁶ Who, as a matter of fact, never were against learning Russian and whatever they found useful from those newcomers, to be sure – mostly Russians.

⁷ I seemingly was aware of and knew a lot about it but my knowledge ended more or less after the initial third part of the list in his memory; he later became a minister of culture in the government of the Yakut Republic after the disintegration of the USSR and the administrative reforms which followed. This personal recollection should turn out to be of importance in the text that follows.

⁸ A zoologist and botanist, he was a prominent Russian scholar; ethnically, he was son to a Baltic German father and a Baltic German-Estonian mother; his Russian name was Александр Фёдорович Миддендорф. For details see Tammiksaar & Stone 2007.

⁹ With assistance from Rudolf Roth and Albrecht Weber. The full version of *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch* was released in 1853-1875, the concise version (*Sanskrit-Wörterbuch in kürzerer Fassung*) in 1879-1889 in St. Petersburg (hence the nickname for the dictionary; Böhlingk was born in Petersburg, was full member of the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences there, his Russian name was Оттон Николаевич Бётлингк).

¹⁰ Certain fragments (like the introduction), however, were translated between these two dates.

Published in German, the 1851 dictionary thus remained inaccessible to wider audience of those potentially interested and proved practically useless beyond the circle of convicts and exiles from the European part of the Russian Empire. In Turkic studies it set standards for consecutive language descriptions¹¹.

There were attempts at compiling something practical like prayer books (two published in 1883) or an ‘ABC primer (*букварь*) for Yakuts’ of 1895, all printed in Kazan, some lists of e.g. “names of animals and birds”, “various objects collected among Dolgan-Yakuts of Yeniseyan Gubernya for the Imperial Academy of Sciences Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography”, etc., longer lists of Yakut words, and even some small dictionaries (like Poryadin 1877 with 7,051 (or, according to Migalkin 2013: 42, 7,691) words or Budishchev 1926 with 2,530 words), almost all remaining in manuscripts – information on such materials can be found in the introduction to Pekarskiy 1907 and in the “continuation of the list of sources” appended to Pekarskiy 1930.

Among them of particular interest here are: **(1)** Poryadin’s manuscript dictionary; **(2)** a “Yakut-Russian and Russian-Yakut [manuscript] dictionary” (*Якутско-русский и русско-якутский словарь*) by M.A. Natanson dated 1882; **(3)** a “Manuscript Russian-Yakut dictionary based on Böhlingk’s dictionary with additions based on the manuscript Yakut-Russian dictionary by E.K. Pekarskiy, with comments by I.A. Popov” (*Рукописный русско-якутский словарь составленный по Бётлингу и дополненный по рукописному якутско-русскому словарю Э.К. Пекарского, с замѣтками I. А. Попова*) and “A list of Yakut words not found in Böhlingk’s dictionary, with their meanings provided” (“Списокъ якутскихъ словъ, не найденныхъ въ словарь Бётлинга, съ ихъ значеніями”), both by S. V. Yastremskiy; **(4)** “Materials for the study of shamanism among Yakuts” (Материалы для изученія шаманства у якутовъ, Irkutsk 1890) by N[i-kolay] A[lekseyevich] Vitashevskiy; and **(5)** Sieroszewski 1896.

Yakutologists distinguish three periods in the history and development of research in the Yakut language: **(1)** pre-Böhlingk with its beginnings dated back as far as the last decades of the 17th century and was associated with the Russian expansion eastward and colonization of the vast territories of Siberia and the Russian Arctic and Far East (lists of native words were the inevitable fruit of first contacts with the natives of the lands captured to ‘civilize’ – the first such printed records of Yakut date back to e.g. 1692 and 1730¹²); **(2)** 1851 to 1917 (beginnings of Yakut written texts and literature, intensive research and data collecting in the fields of ethnography, folklore, and language); **(3)** (the emergence and standardization of literary genres, forms, and norms, orthography). The first and second periods were times of accumulation, ordering, and analysing of vast amounts of materials – manuscripts, prints, museological objects and collections – which altogether enabled Pekarskiy to compile his “dictionary of the Yakut language” published

¹¹ Böhlingk insisted on, and has been provided with a speaker born and raised in Yakutia for consultations and persuaded him to write his recollections in Yakut which became the dominating text in the text selection mentioned.

¹² The former is a record of 35 words in Nicolaes Witsen’s *Noord en Oost Tartarye...* (Amsterdam), the latter – a list of 51 words in Philipp Johann von Strahlenberg’s *Gentium Boreo-Orientalium vulgo Tatarorum Harmonia linguarum* attached to his *Das Nord- und Ostliche Theil von Europa und Asia...* (Stockholm).

in seven “instalments” or fascicles (*выпуски*), actually volumes, in 1907-1930¹³ and unambiguously and unequivocally pronounced a lexicographical masterpiece which played a tremendous role in the study of not only Yakut but also other Turkic languages. At that time, no dictionary of any other Turkic language was said to match up with the *opus magnum* of Pekarskiy or even exist (see Kotwicz 1934; Okoneshnikov 1982; Filippov 2006, and, above all, Pevnov & Urmanchiyeva 2008)¹⁴. The publication of its second edition (1958) was “a great event in the cultural life of the Republic” of Yakutia (Okoneshnikov 1982: 34) and the third edition of 2008 was forwarded by Mikhail Yefimovich Nikolayev, the first President of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) who wrote: “This academic book enveloped in long-lasting fame [...] all the time remains among treasures of the greatest value in the national depository of the spiritual and intellectual culture of the Sakha people” (in Pekarskiy 2008: v). The boss of «Yakutskenergo» giant which financially supported the publication, and simultaneously Yakutia MP, Konstantin Konstantinovich Il’kovskiy echoed these words: “Pekarskiy succeeded in leaving behind something eternal” (*ibid.*, ix). The third foreword to the third edition has been written by Academician Nikolay Nikolayevich Kazanskiy, Head of the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Linguistics who argued that Pekarskiy’s work was *подвижнический* (‘based on self-sacrificing devotion to the cause’) and that thanks to its compiler *Россия обрела бесценный памятник якутского языка* (‘Russia found, discovered and is in possession of the inestimable monument of the Yakut language’ (Pekarskiy 2008: x-xi)).

Now, coming back to the above enumerated names which this author decided to draw the reader’s particular attention to: Prokopiyy Poryadin was an ethnic Yakut, the first native speaker of the language who compiled its dictionary, a graduate from a medical school in Kazan who worked as *feldsher* (paramedic) in the Vilyuyskiy okrug¹⁵ in Yakutia which was his motherland. All others of the list – Natanson, Yastremskiy, Vitashevskiy, Sieroszewski (Seroshevskiy), and Pekarskiy – were “devoted revolutionaries” or “freedom fighters” (depending on the conflict side), treated therefore as villains and notorious state criminals (*государственные преступники*) brought to Poryadin’s motherland against their will.

Mark Andreyevich (Mordukh Aronovich) Natanson came from a wealthy Jewish family from the town of Sventsiany (~ Svenziany, Rus. *Свенцяны*) in the then Vilna Governorate (*Виленская губерния*) in Russia, a region with strong Jewish and Polish ethnic

¹³ Frequently, the years 1899-1930 are provided in this context. In fact, Pekarskiy did publish the first fascicle of his dictionary (like Yastremskiy his Yakut grammar) as “vol. III, part I” of the “Proceedings of the I.M. Sibiriyakov Yakut Expedition 1895-1897) but as further fascicles could not be published due to financial problems, the publication of the whole work was resumed by the Imperial Russian Academy of Sciences with “fascicle 1” revised and prepared anew specially for the Academy edition (cf. Pekarskiy 1899).

¹⁴ The common opinion in Russian writings can indeed be summarized in one sentence as ‘one of the greatest (also in size) and most important dictionaries for any among Turkic languages’ (“один из крупнейших словарей, составленных для какого-либо из тюркских языков” – as we read in the entry “Якутский язык” of the Russian Wikipedia actualized Sept. 3, 2020).

¹⁵ An administrative unit in the Russian Empire, existed in the years 1775-1930, with the center in the town of Vilyuysk, some 600 kms northwest of Yakutsk. Now the Vilyuysk(iy) Municipal District of the Republic of Yakutia, in turn one of 92 “subjects” of the Russian Federation.

components on the territory of Lithuania¹⁶ – and in spite of his financial background – a fighter for “social freedom and equality”.

The remaining four are names of convicts and exiles who found themselves in Yakutia for not only, or not in the first place, the engagement in “revolutionary movements” in the sense Natanson was: their aim was the independence of their motherland: they all were Poles and at their times Poland was absent from the political map of Europe, partitioned by its three imperial neighbors. They all happened to be Russian “subjects”. For them, as for practically all of those many who shared their lot all over the prohibitively uninhabitable areas of the Empire, it was the natives whose situation was like their own: the oppressor was the same. Their attitude toward the indigenous population was therefore full of sympathy, openness, readiness to understand and to help¹⁷.

Eduard Karlovich Pekarskiy (original name Edward Piekarski) recollected his motivation to get interested in the Yakut language thus: “Thrown in 1881 in the faraway Yakut country [...] with the prospect of staying there for an indefinite number of years, and possibly till my death, and being aware of the perspective of living among the people not understanding Russian completely, I drew my attention in the first place, one may say from the very first days of my stay, to the necessity of getting acquainted with the language of the tribe I will involuntarily have to be in contact, i.e., with Yakut. With this aim, from the very beginning [...] I provided myself with two little notebooks and in one of them started writing down Yakut words and their meaning, and in the other Russian words with Yakut meanings” (Pekarskiy 2008:xiii)¹⁸.

¹⁶ Lithuanian name Švenčionys, Polish name Świeciany, present-day Russian name Швенчёнис; Natanson, with higher education in medicine and agriculture, was a prominent figure in various revolutionary movements in Russia (particularly the so-called *Narodniki*), exiled to various parts of the Empire for his involvement in them, after the October revolution took the Bolshevik side and was on friendly terms with such figures as Georgiy Plekhanov and even Lenin. He proved to be very useful for the new rulers of Russia as a good manager at various construction sites but became very soon disillusioned with the Communist regime and left the Russia in turmoil for Switzerland.

¹⁷ For a better understanding of it, let me give the floor to one of such exiles: “For whole 18 years and more of my sojourn in the Far East was involuntary. Constantly longing to return to my native land, I strove as much as I could to get rid of the painful feeling that I was an exile, in bondage and torn from all that was dearest to me. I therefore naturally felt attracted towards the natives [...], who alone had a true affection for that country, their immemorial dwelling place, detested by those who formed the penal colony there. When in contact with these children of nature whom the invasion of utterly different form of civilization had bewildered, I knew that I possessed some power and helpfulness, even though deprived of every right, and during the worst years of my existence. [...] I have always endeavored to live and act so as not to be numbered amongst the hateful destroyers of individual and national rights. I have felt deep pleasure in conversing with men of another race in their own language [...]. It has been pleasant to me to bring some joy and the hope of a better future into the minds of these simple tribesmen, troubled by reason of the hardships of life, which continually increase. The hearty laughter of amused children, the tears of emotion in the eyes of kind women, a faint smile of gratitude on the face of a sick man, exclamations of approval, or a light tap on the shoulder given by a good friend as a sign that he was pleased: such was the balm with which I willingly relieved the hardships of my fate” (Piłsudski 1912: vi-vii).

¹⁸ The notebooks mentioned possibly inspired Pekarskiy’s important “concise Russian-Yakut dictionary” dated 1905.

千里之行，始於足下¹⁹. Compare how this confession harmonizes with the one in fn. 17.

Sergey Vasilyevich Yastremskiy (Sergiusz Jastrzębski, arrested as a student of medicine, he later became a self-taught folklorist and ethnographer, and – incidentally – a linguist), also wishing to learn Yakut, decided to translate, with the support from none other than Piekarski, Böhntlingk’s grammar into Russian but, with his own numerous corrections and additions it resulted in a separate work published in 1900 with his authorship; its “second edition” published in 1938 has been considered inferior to the ¹1900 edition (Ubryatova in Böhntlingk 1989: 14). Nikolay Alekseyevich Vitashevskiy (Mikołaj Witaszewski) was mainly interested in studying Yakut customs but Anfertyeva mentions also his text concerning the ‘necessity to standardize orthography of Yakut words in school handbooks’ (*К вопросу об установлении определенного правописания якутских слов в школьных книгах*) indicating thus also his interest in the language, moreover, in the quality of the language taught in schools (cf. Pekarskiy 2008: xxxiv). Vatslav Seroshevskiy (Wacław Sieroszewski) spent twelve years in Yakutia, married a Yakut lady²⁰ there and engaged himself in ethnographical studies on Yakuts; his impressive monograph of the people published in 1896 has for decades been regarded as the most outstanding source of information in Yakut ethnography, later he became a noted novelist in Poland, President of the Academy of Literature. The monograph is packed with details crucial for ethnolinguistic research, therefore it constituted a source material not only for Pekarskiy.

Böhntlingk’s dictionary is said to have recorded about 4,600 Yakut words (a more precise figure – 4,702 – has been provided in Okoneshnikov 1982: 4), Pekarskiy’s dictionary is said to have recorded about 25,000 words (thus e.g. Kotwicz 1935: 191, some say that probably many more)²¹. Böhntlingk hardly moved beyond Europe and did not set foot on the Yakut soil, Pekarskiy and the others in focus here spent years in Yakutia. Böhntlingk did not know the language before deciding on an adventure with records of the language collected by others, Pekarskiy (and the others) was (were) fluent in Yakut and in constant verbal contact with its native users. But it is Böhntlingk who opened and paved the way to an entire field of studies. There was Böhntlingk, and the followers had something to work with and on, to improve and to enlarge it. The second period in the history of studies on Yakut belongs above all to Böhntlingk and to Pekarskiy in equal proportion. If any periodization of the history of studies on the Yakut language is to be rational, the ideological limit (1917) should be shifted at least to 1930, the date of the finalization of Pekarskiy’s dictionary publication despite the World War I, October revolution, fall of the Empire, emergence of the “Bolshevik” state, etc. – the period would

¹⁹ “Even the longest journey starts with the first step” (*qiānlǐzhī xíng, shǐyú zú xià*), an old Chinese proverb (attributed to philosopher Laozi and Taoism).

²⁰ A collection of letters exchanged between Sieroszewski and his daughter of the Yakut wedlock was published recently (Grażyna Legutko 2019. “*Wyrosłam na Rosjankę...*”. *Historia Marii – jakuckiej córki Wacława Sieroszewskiego – w świetle jej listów do ojca i innych dokumentów*. Wrocław: Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze).

²¹ We did not count, relying on outside sources.

then include also important Pekarskiy's "concise Russian-Yakut dictionary" (1905, ²1916) and Budishchev 1926.

In the 1930s (our data marking the beginning of "the third period in the history of research on Yakut"), a number of dictionaries were reprinted and a number of new dictionaries appeared (see foreword to Afanasyev & Kharitonov 1968: 5), including Oyunskiy²² 1935, in the following decades Pavlov & Popov 1948 and Barashkov 1955. But these were harbingers only to the highlights of the new stage in Yakut lexicology (новый этап в развертывании лексикографической работы в республике [Якутия] [Okoneshnikov 2005: 9]): Russian-Yakut 720-pp. dictionary with "с. 28,500 words" declared on the title page (Afanasyev & Kharitonov 1968, with a team of ten compilers and three coeditors, *ibid.*, pp. 6-7), Yakut-Russian с. 550-pp dictionary (Sleptsov 1972), with "25,300 words" declared in the same way, under the editorship of Pyotr Sleptsov who simultaneously was one of also ten compilers, responsible for words starting with the letters <и>, <о>, <ө>, <р>, <ф>, <у>, and "the first half of" <с> (*ibid.*, p. 7), and a с. 350-pp. dialectological dictionary of Yakut with over 8,500 entry words (Afanasyev, Voronkin & Alekseyev 1976).

In the foreword to Afanasyev & Kharitonov 1968 one reads: "Prolonged contacts with the Russian people, and the new life after the Great October socialist revolution, speedy economic and cultural development of the country brought about a tremendous importance of the Russian language for the Yakut people. Russian for the Yakut people appears to be the second indispensable language in their life. Russian is the language of the state, [communist] party, and academic institutions in the Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. It is taught and studied in secondary and higher schooling. Newspapers and journals are printed, and broadcasting is aired in both Yakut and Russian. The best literary works in Yakut have been translated into Russian, Russian classical and Soviet literary works have been translated into Yakut, and foreign classical literature as well as classical literature works of our [i.e., Russia's minority] nationalities reach the Yakut reader via Russian. Russian helps the Yakut reader in getting familiar with the achievements in sciences and technology. All this determined the urgent necessity of the compilation of [...] the present Russian-Yakut dictionary which is the first step in the enormous and complicated lexicographic task ahead" (p. 5). "The Russian-Yakut dictionary to a certain extent is intended to serve as a dictionary of the standard literary Yakut language" (*ibid.*, p. 6). Sleptsov's 1972 Yakut-Russian dictionary has the same character: "it is the first attempt at compiling a dictionary of these proportions and purpose. [...] The Yakut literary language is still very young" (p. 7). These two dictionaries and

²² Oyunskiy's Russian name was Platon Alekseyevich Sleptsov, Yakut – Быллатыан Ойуунускай; he was a very prominent literary, academic, and political figure, poet, novelist, philologist and ethnographer, initiator and the first Director of the first academic institute in Yakutia (Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic Council of People's Commissars Institute of Language and Culture), with high political positions in both local autonomy and central USSR authority bodies. Arrested at the beginning of 1938, he perished ("died in a hospital") in Stalinist purges (*chistki*) in 1939, "fully rehabilitated" gave names to countless locations and institutions (like literary museums, Academic Theater, and even the principal Airport in Yakutsk).

a two-volume grammar of the “contemporary Yakut literary language”²³ which followed soon after their appearance won the reference attribute “academic”.

Oyunskiy’s 1935 dictionary with its preceding extensive (pp. 5-102) thesis on “the Yakut language and ways of its development”²⁴ very much aiming at the standardization of Yakut, especially “literary Yakut”, prospectively was of great significance and potentially was to become also “academic” but turned out to find itself in the fatal *cul-de-sac*: the policy and the orthography basing on the Roman alphabet used in the dictionary returned to, or rather was replaced by, a new one based on the Cyrillic alphabet reintroduced or introduced to all “literary nationality languages of the USSR” – in spite of numerous invocations and references to Stalin, Lenin, and linguist Nikolay Yakovlevich Marr, Oyunskiy paid for it a high price (cf. fn. 22). But it was exactly in 1935 when Oyunskiy, assuming the post of head of the Research Institute of Language and Culture associated with the government of the Autonomous Republic of Yakutia, put forward a motion that “the most important task be the compilation of a new, contemporary and complete dictionary of the Yakut language” (quoted after Sleptsov et al 2011: 10). Seven decades of constantly meandering Soviet ideological reality kept the idea impossible to materialize. It was only in 1980 (according to some sources, e.g. Pustolyakova – earlier, in 1972) when the same institution (albeit under a consecutive new name²⁵) came back to the idea and a team of finally 25 lexicographers (thus Pustolyakova 2019; see individual and (one) collective photos of sixteen of them in vol. 15, pp. 573-574) headed by Pyotr Sleptsov sat to realize the dream and plan conceived and designed by Oyunskiy. Sleptsov (born July 1829, renowned in global Turkologic circles specialist in his native Yakut lexicology and lexicography, but also its history, socio- and ethnolinguistics, co-author of the most important collective works on Yakut, author of some 10 fundamental monographs and handbooks, and some 200 articles, “founder of the Yakut lexicographical school”) became the editor-in-chief and held the office throughout the entire edition until the closing volume appeared in 2018.

The first volume of the Dictionary was published in 2004 and the day of its release was celebrated in Yakutia, while the release of vol. 7 in 2010 met with an article “on a new type of an explanatory dictionary of the Yakut language” in the prestigious section “Results of fundamental research” of one of the popular “science-and-technology” magazines (Sleptsov et al 2011). The authors emphasize that the Dictionary is not only normative in character but it is also (or rather – in the first place) documentary or

²³ *Грамматика современного якутского литературного языка. Фонетика и морфология* (Е. И. Убрятова ed. 1982, Moskva: Nauka) and *Синтаксис* (М[айя] И[вановна] Черемисина 1995. Novosibirsk: Сибирская издательская фирма РАН Наука). A sketch of Yakut grammar by Ye. Ubratova has been appended in Sleptsov 1972 (569-606) along with a list of “geographical names” by P. P. Barashkov.

²⁴ “Якутский язык и пути его развития”.

²⁵ Currently, after another name alternation in June 2008, Институт гуманитарных исследований и проблем малочисленных народов Севера Сибирского отделения Российской академии наук, abbreviated usually to ИГиИПМНС СО РАН; official English version: Institute for Humanities research and Indigenous Studies of the North of Siberian Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences, IHRISN SB RAS (document *Положение об [...] ИГиИПМНС СО РАН* dated Feb. 7, 2019).

documentizing (*нормативно-регистрирующий*) – documenting and recording the language as it is, steering clear of the rigid principle to stick to literary norms²⁶.

In this context, it is interesting to observe the absence in the Dictionary in question of entries with initial В, Е, Ё, Ж, З, П, Ф, Ц, Ш, Щ, Ю, Я and compare it with (the same Pyotr) Sleptsov 1972 in which “Yakut” words beginning with these initials are registered – cf. (the number in parentheses indicates the number of entry words with the respective initial): В (~142)²⁷, Е (15), Ё (4), Ж (20), З (~80), П (~262), Ф (~143), Ц (~43), Ш (~116), Щ (5 entries), Ю (23), Я (26); all of them are purely Russian words, many registered with phrases including Yakut words clearly showing that they naturally entered the Yakut lexicon as loans.

In the case of reference books, and dictionaries in particular, of such proportions as the Dictionary being introduced here, it takes years if not decades to fairly evaluate the intellectual and physical effort invested as well as the greatness of the final result of the whole enterprise. We have it now at our disposal so there is something to work with and on and... further improve. Looking for possible misprints, omissions, interpretation errors, etc. at this stage would surely be inappropriate, petty, inelegant, even impolite. With years passing, constructive and mature criticism, on the other hand, will be welcomed.

²⁶ Most dictionaries are expected to fix, to secure the literary language standards – the Dictionary in question thus intentionally opposes such a postulate: “«Это значит, что с учетом всего разнообразия существующей лексики и ее семантики, авторы стремились как можно полнее охватить и представить богатство языка якутского народа, избегая жесткого принципа ограничения литературными нормами», – объясняет один из авторов словаря, кандидат филологических наук Владимир Монастырёв” (cf. Ivanov & Kharitonov 2019). Sleptsov knew what he was doing: he is also author of i. a. two monographs on the emergence and development of the Literary Yakut (1986; 1990), a monograph on Russian lexical loans in Yakut (1975), a practical handbook of Yakut lexicon (1990), and a handbook of the history of Yakut (1983).

²⁷ This we did count (cf. fn. 21); <~> implies a possible tiny approximation.

Below, a tabularized statistical picture of the Dictionary is provided.

Volume	year	scope	Number of words and phraseologisms	Number of pages	
				volume	dictionary
I	2004	A	~ 4,000 680	564	
II	2005	Б	~ 7,000	911	863
III	2006	Г-Д-Дь-И	~ 7,000	844	790
IV	2007	К*	~ 6,000	672	615
V	2008	К**	~ 4,000	616	556
VI	2009	Л-М-Н	~ 4,000	519	447
VII	2010	Нь-О-Ө-П	~ 3,400	519	446
VIII	2011	С*	~ 4,000	572	509
IX	2012	С**-Һ	~ 4,000	630	566
X	2013	Т*	~ 4,000	575	506
XI	2014	Т**	~ 4,000	528	460
XII	2015	У-Ү	~ 3,500	598	532
XIII	2016	Х	~ 4,000	639	570
XIV	2017	Ч-Ы	> 4,000	592	522
XV	2018	Э	~ 2,000	576	285
Total			~ 64,900 ²⁸	9,471	8,231

- К* entries <к> – <күөлэһиннээ>
 К** entries <күөлэһис гын> – <кээчэрэ>
 С* entries <с> – <сөллөбөр>
 С** entries <сөллөһэй> – <сээн>
 Т* entries <т> – <төһүүлээ>
 Т** entries <төтөлөөх> – <тээтэннэ >.

The first volume opens with lists of its authors and editors (with initials for given names and patronymics only) and a “foreword” in Yakut (pp. 7-13) and in Russian (14-20) followed by the presentation of the “structure of the Dictionary” (21-49 Yakut; 50-80 Russian), list of Yakut (81-87) and Russian (88-90) abbreviations – in both with explanations in the other language provided, list of glottonym abbreviations (91), list of literary persons (source authors) – separately pioneers in Yakut writing, literary figures with the

²⁸ Figures in this column have been taken from title pages of respective volumes; all depends, however, on what one counts: according to an apparently second-hand information in Ivanov & Kharitonov 2019, the dictionary includes “about 80,000 words and idiomatic expressions” (“В новом Большом толковом словаре содержится около 80 тысяч слов и фразеологизмов. Об этом сообщает издание «Наука в Сибири»” – this reference is to Pustolyakova 2019 but what was her source remains unclear).

honorary title “people’s writers” of Yakutia (*народные писатели Якутии*), writers and journalists of Yakutia, and writers whose works have been translated into Yakut (92-99), list of bibliographical abbreviations of literary and other (lexicographical included) sources used (100-111), list of lexicographical sources used (112-113)²⁹, table of the Yakut alphabet and list of symbols (six altogether) used (114). The remaining part of the volume contains the Dictionary entries in <A>.

Volumes 2-14 follow this pattern, with the “foreword” limited to one page in each of the two languages, the “Dictionary structure” introduction is omitted, and from vol. 5, the list of glottonyms takes into account also “dialects” (the language of the dialect is then identified in parentheses).

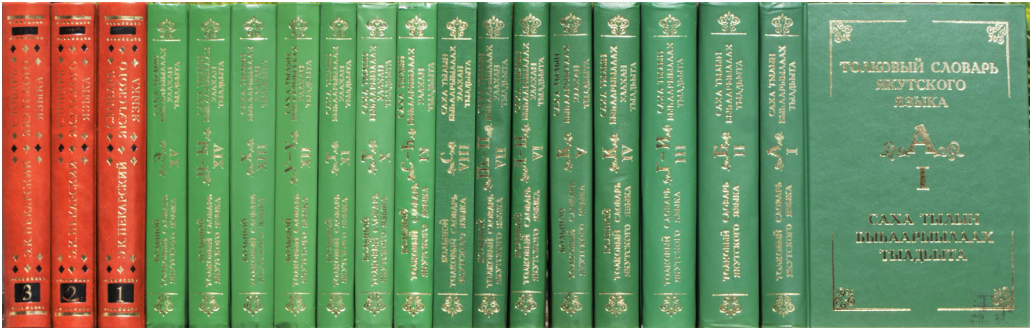
Vol. 15 brings about a justified new version of the text on the “structure of the Dictionary” (7-34 in Yakut and 35-63); it is obvious that in the preparation and publication process of such a work which expanded over 15 years unpredictable necessities emerge, so the decision for such a solution deserves praising. The final (and smallest, as it can be seen from the table) dictionary part is followed by afterword texts in Yakut (410-3) and Russian (414-7) i. a. summing up what entered and (very important!) what did not enter the lexicon and confirming the reliability of the numbers of words on the title pages of “every volume”, an outline of Yakut grammar (418-484 in Yakut and 485-569 in Russian) with a bibliographical list for both (570-572) and two pages with photographs of the authors’ team appended.

The entries, as expected, are extensive and packed with abundant documented linguistic material. As the Dictionary is addressed in the first place to the Yakut audience, the explanations are in Yakut but well marked (with ⊙) Russian glosses make it very useful for researchers from outside the field³⁰ (provided they have access to the edition printed in varying number of copies: vols. 1-2 – 5,200 copies; vol. 3 – 5,120; vols. 4-5 – 5,095; vol. 6 – 5,070; vols. 7-12 – 5,000; vol. 13 – 4,000, vols. 14-15 – 3,000 copies).

The Dictionary presented here looks and indeed is monumental and a photo of the entire 15-vols. set neighboring the 3-vols. of Pekarskiy 2008 on a bookshelf leaves no

²⁹ Definitely insufficient to serve or be of any help as a bibliography of such sources, lacking basic information, not to mention details (a great pity – there was an occasion just in this place to provide a solid – not Soviet-style – bibliography of Yakut lexicographical sources, even if selected only) – the same concerns all the remaining volumes. The list of lexicographical sources, which brings nothing new, is in fact sinfully redundant, while researchers painfully lack a correctly prepared bibliography of – in this case Yakut lexicography – but actually Yakut linguistics. In order to find, verify or complement names, titles, publishers this author made use of i. a. Anfertyeva (in Pekarskiy 2008a) and Yakut Encyclopedia 2000 but the scope of the former was limited as an appendix to Pekarskiy’s recollections and the latter, despite the special part devoted to “Languages”, turned out to be also of very little use. Taken all the bibliographies of the entire edition of the Dictionary, however, one can find some hints on new and locally printed lexicographical resources (like dictionaries of political, scientific, mathematical, technological, geographical, biological, ecological, etc., terminology) but hardly any effective useful bibliographical descriptions.

³⁰ “Explanatory” (толковые) dictionaries are usually (and are ex definitione expected to be) monolingual. Juxtaposing Russian “equivalents” they did not limit themselves to provide “simple direct translations” but rather sought to reveal their inner semantics from the philological point of view, especially in the cases when the meanings and usage of the Yakut words and Russian words usually provided as translations actually differ (cf. Ivanov & Kharitonov 2019).



Pekarskiy 2008

Sleptsov 2004-2018

doubt in this respect, although Ivanov & Kharitonov 2019 consider Pekarskiy's dictionary (1907-1930, 1958-1959, 2008) the only one comparable with Sleptsov 2004-2018.

This dimension concerns not only the physical size but also the contents and it became obvious even before the edition reached its middle point with vol. 8. Sleptsov et al. wrote in 2011: “after the publication of Pekarskiy’s dictionary” [also considered monumental], “there were but very few dictionaries including and displaying the inventory, composition, essence and strength³¹ of the Yakut lexicon, and providing explanations of Yakut words in Yakut or Russian”, mentioning five, among them Sleptsov 1972, Afanasyev 1994, and Nelunov 1998-2002. Both Pekarskiy 1907-1930 and Sleptsov 2004-2018 constitute also two solid monuments to the Yakut language erected primarily with the support of the Yakut people who not only were interested in these two gigantic lexicographical projects and eagerly assisted intellectually the compilers but also to a great extent financed the publication in both cases. Perhaps it is one of the reasons the glottonym <Yakut> does not appear in the “red books of endangered languages”.

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³¹ The authors used the highly polysemic word *состав* here embracing all these meanings.

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³² Only 100 copies printed (cf. Ubryatova 1989:14).

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³³ Between 1929 and 1939 official Yakut orthography was based on Roman characters (in the present orthography the title would be *Нууччалыы-сахалыы терминнээх-арпагырааптыыа тылларын кинигэтэ*).

³⁴ The full text of the Yakutsk edition of Pekarskiy’s Yakut dictionary title page is provided here in view of the extreme rarity of the publication.

³⁵ In his foreword to the 1916 edition, A[leksandr] N[ikolayevich] Samoylovich wrote (fn. p. xvi) that the first edition dated 1905 was released in 1907.

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³⁶ By historian and folklorist Afanasiy Vasilyevich Migalkin who established that it constituted the core (“skeleton”) of Pekarskiy 1907-30 – but Pekarskiy himself exceptionally precisely (taking into account the time of data collection) documented all the sources he had used (Anfertyeva pointed to over 2,000 of references to Poryadin’s dictionary, cf. Pekarskiy 2008:xi); Pekarskiy received the manuscript of Poryadin’s dictionary officially from the Geographical Society specifically for the purpose to incorporate the material collected by Poryadin into his own dictionary and he admitted that it had “extremely enriched” (чрезвычайно обогатил) his own lexical stock (see *ibid.*, p. xix).

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³⁷ 200 copies printed (cf. Ubryatova 1989:14).

³⁸ Benzion Meyerovich (~Moiseevich, possibly incorrect) Grande (Бенцион Меерович Гранде) was a Semitologist specializing in Arabic.