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Tamgas of the 19th and Early 20th Century Yakuts (Sakha)

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Abstract. The article deals with tamga symbols which played a role in the socio-economic life and culture of the Central, Vilyuisk and Northern local groups of the Yakuts since the lineage-based society up to the early twentieth century. Tamgas were marks to identify kinship and social status, property, enjoyment and dispose of the owner's property, as well as sacral symbols of religious beliefs and practices of the Yakuts. Tamga marks were used to denote numbers in the Yakut traditional number system. They are found on various seals and «eternal» calendars of the 17th-19th centuries. Based on a comparative study of the tamga mark system of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples of Central Asia and Southern Siberia, an attempt was made to systematize various forms and names of the most common tamga of the Yakuts and to determine their functional aspect. It is suggested that tamga marks are primary in relation to the Turkic runic writing, as well as Yakut rune-like tamgas that the Turkic-speaking ancestors of the Yakuts brought to their modern territory before their acquaintance with the runic writing.

Keywords: the Yakuts, tonal culture, tamga, livestock brand, ownership mark, clan emblem, seal, stamp, numeral system, runic calendar, Turkic runic alphabet.

Research area: history & archeology, philology

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Тамговые знаки якутов (саха) XIX – начала XX века

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Аннотация. Представлены тамговые знаки, игравшие определенную роль в социально-экономической жизни и культуре центральной, вилуйской и северной локальных групп якутов со времен семейно-родовых отношений и вплоть до начала XX в. Тамги являлись отличительными знаками родовой и социальной принадлежности, владения, пользования и распоряжения собственностью хозяина, а также сакральными символами религиозно-мифологических представлений и ритуальной практики якутов. Тамговые знаки входили в качестве цифровых обозначений в якутскую традиционную систему счисления. Они обнаруживаются на различных печатях и «вечных» календарях XVII–XIX веков.

На основе сравнительного изучения системы тамговых знаков тюрко-монгольских народов Центральной Азии и Южной Сибири предпринята попытка систематизировать различные формы и названия наиболее распространенных тамг у якутов и определить их функциональный аспект. Высказывается мнение о первичности тамговых знаков по отношению к тюркскому руническому письму, а также о якутских руноподобных тамгах, которые тюркоязычные предки якутов привезли на современную территорию своего проживания, предположительно, еще до их знакомства с руническим письмом.

Ключевые слова: якуты, традиционная культура, тамга, тавро, знак собственности, родовые «знамена», печать, клеймо, система счисления, рунический календарь, тюркская руника.

Научная специальность: 07.00.00 – исторические науки и археология; 10.00.00 – филологические науки.

Introduction

The word «tamga» of Turkic-Mongolian origin had several meanings in the languages of this group: «brand», «stamp», «seal». The use of tamga by the nomadic peoples of Eurasia in everyday life was diverse. Tamgas were used for branding livestock, marking land plots and grazing land, fishing and hunting areas, chattel and artisan work, signing documents, etc. Sacral marks often perpetuated places of sanctuaries or ritual prayers. The carving of tamga on the historical monuments evidences the presence of an ethnic group in this area which means that tamgas, undoubtedly, are among the most important sources for a comprehensive study of the history and culture of the peoples of Eurasia.

Tamgas and tamga-like symbols of the peoples of Siberia have been studied for more

than two centuries [Simchenko, 1965, 8–14; Tyulyush, 2016, 158; Tishin, 2017, 209–239]. Although the achievements are unquestionable, this topic and many problems associated are still far from being resolved. This is particularly true for rune-like tamgas of the Yakuts, functional, formal-typological and religious-mythological aspects of which are considered in this paper for the first time.

The beginning of the study of rune-like inscriptions in the Lena River area is associated with addressing the scientific problem of the origin of the Yakut people and their culture (Shirobokova, 2018). In 1920, the famous Yakut ethnographer and folklorist G. V. Ksenofontov in his lectures on the origin of the Yakuts drew attention to the presence in the Yakut epic Olonkho of «an artistic image of inscribed

stone pillars of the Orkhon type erected in honor of heroes describing their military exploits» (Sosnovsky, 1928). In Yakut folklore, the motif of written fate was widespread. In the epic text *Olonkho*, one of the descendants of the Supreme deity *Urung Aiyy toyon*, the scribe *Usun Dzhurantaaiy* recorded in his stone archive all vicissitudes of the heroes' fate since their birth, including their feats (Emel'yanov, 1980, 16).

Myths and legends say about the «white» and «black» letters which are written for newborns by the spirits of plants (*ot-mas ogoloro*). Thus, the white letter «*Yuryung suruk*» was intended for people with strong and happy fate, while the black one «*Hara suruk*» was written for people with incomplete predestination.

It is very interesting that the Yakuts used the expression «*tangha-bichik*» to denote fate and destiny; its meaning can be defined as «rebus-ideogram» (*tangha* «fortune telling, fate, predestination»). One of the deities of the Yakut Pantheon, *Tangha Haan*, determined the fate of tribes and clans of the Middle World according to the book written in blood. In this regard, of particular interest is the existence of the role of *tamgahan*, the guardian of tribal tamgas, in the Turkic Khaganates (Yatsenko, 2001, 107). In the epic *Olonkho*, the role of the Supreme judge in determining the fate of the characters belongs to the deity *Chyngys Haan*, who owned the book of the fates of the three worlds (Yemel'yanov, 1980, 15). Among the medieval Turks, *Khagan (Khan)* assigned tamgas to tribes and noble clans, later this custom was practiced by the great Mongol khans, including *Chengis Khan* (Mitirov, 1979, 129). It might be possible that there are traces of tamga-like symbols of power of the medieval steppe empires of Central Asia and Southern Siberia within Yakut names of the deities of fate.

Plots with books – heralds of fate – are widespread among the Turkic peoples of Southern Siberia. They may have originated in the ancient Turkic written tradition, one of the famous monuments of which being «*Yrk Bitig*» («The Book of Fortune-Telling» or «The Book of Parables»). In the Yakut language, the word «*yra*» means «foreshadowing, interpretation, prediction; a better fate» (Pekarsky, 1959, vol.

III, 3808–3809), which is comparable to the ancient Turkic *yrym, yrk* 'sign, prophecy, fortune-telling' (Old Turkic dictionary, 1969, 220).

In a series of myths and legends about the legendary Yakut progenitor *Ellei* it is said that his father *Tataar Tayma* was a well-born, literate person. Before his death he bequeathed his sacred «*suruk-bichik*» (reading and writing) to his son, which, according to one legend, was hidden in his homeland. Later, when already married, *Ellei* allegedly went to his father's homeland but didn't find the book which was believed to have burned, so the Yakuts were left without written language. According to other stories, *Ellei* received the letter from his father and lost it in the waters of the *Lena River*, when sailing downstream on a snag (Ksenofontov, 1977, 43, 53, 55).

In this context, the first artifacts of the possible existence of the written language among the southern ancestors of the Yakuts were two spinners with runic symbols found in the early 20th century in the *Baikal region* which was the territory of the *Kurumchi* archeological culture of the 6th-10th centuries. *B.E. Petri* published the data on the runes, being convinced of their Yakut origin: «Finding these writings in the *Baikal region* so far to the North, is of course a remarkable fact. However, it is important for us to point out that the ancestors of the Yakuts, who left Northern Mongolia in ancient times and detached themselves from the common Turkish core, might have known the Orkhon writing» (Petri, 1922, 27–28). At that time Turkology was in its infancy, so when the key to deciphering the runic inscriptions was found, of course, these artifacts immediately attracted the experts' attention. In 1932, Finnish researchers *Kai Donner* and *Martti Räsänen* published a paper in German «*Zwei neue türkische Runeninschriften*», in which they gave their version of rune decryption. Based on the nature of the letters, *K. Donner* made an assumption that at that time the Turkic population of the *Baikal region* was rather culturally connected with the inhabitants of the *Minusinsk steppes* than *Mongolia*. *G. V. Ksenofontov* argued their versions and suggested his interpretation based on the Yakut language: «*qatar küörčäq* (modern Yakut *khatar kuerchekh*)», where *qatar* means

«to twist, to spin», «küörčäq» «pinwheel, spinning top making noise», and «Bäsčit Arqaraj kis küölügär (modern Yakut «beschit Arkharay kys kueluger»)» – «on the lake, where Beschit Arkharay winters» (Ksenofontov, 1933, 170–173). His assumption was criticized by the famous Turkologist S. E. Malov (Malov, 1936, 251–279). However, over time, as evidenced in the Proceedings of the Scientific Conference on the Study of the Productive Forces of Yakutia (1941), where he made a report «The Yakut Language and its Relation to other Turkic Languages», the academician changed his view on the problem: «The Yakuts have legends that they had their own writing. Besides, on the banks of the Lena River and other rivers there are petroglyphs that are partly rune-like symbols.» Of some interest is the addition to his report made by the famous historian S. A. Tokarev: «There is very weak, but documented evidence that the Yakuts had written language. ... In the unpublished record of the Yakut uprising of 1642, there is a testimony of a Yakut named Metemik on the role of one of the leaders of the uprising Toyon Ogey. Some «memorial» was brought to this Ogeya, and the document states: «And Ogey looked at the memorial and threw it away.» This word «memorial» had the meaning of a written instruction ... Most likely, we deal with runic, pictographic, and perhaps more developed writing...» (On the Ancient Yakut Writing // nu.s-vfu.ru «Expert Opinion» o-drevney-yakutskoy...) (О древней якутской письменности // nu.s-vfu.ru Экспертное мнение о древней якутской...).

In traditional culture of the Yakuts, the image of rock petroglyphs «suruktaakh khaya» has formed as one of geo-cultural markers of sacred territories. Some of petroglyphs are written using a natural clay earth pigment ocher (Yakut *soho*) on noticeable river rocks along the Lena, Olekma, Markha, and Siine rivers. The Yakuts believed that ocher is a stone with a «secret-magic» that changes its color depending on the future fate of the person looking at the rock drawings. Shamans used ocher in their spells (Yakovlev – Kuruuppa oiun, 1993, 14).

As early as in the 1920s, P. A. Oyunsky identified 17 cases of similarities between

Yakut runic characters and the Lena River graphemes (Oyunskiy, 1935). Researchers of the Lena rock petroglyphs A. P. Okladnikov and I. I. Barashkov devoted a special work to the ancient prehistoric writing of the Yakuts (1942). An expert in local history, artist, candidate of theology P. V. Popov, while working at the Institute of Language, Literature and History of the Yakut ASSR, made a report on «Highlights of the History of the Yakut Writing (Descriptive Writing)» in 1945 (Department of Manuscripts, Institute for Humanities, SB RAS, collection 5, inventory 4, document 86). This paper was published as an Appendix to L. N. Kharitonov's university textbook showing samples of the runes of the Lena rocks provided by A. P. Okladnikov (Fig. 1). Their style is mostly similar to the Yakut tamga style (Kharitonov, 1947, 279–284).

A well-known expert on Turkic runes A. N. Bernstam deciphered one of the inscriptions on the Lena rocks as a Yakut phrase «min alkatim» «I bless» (Bernstam, 1951). In the 1980s, in the Ust-Aldan district, Central Yakutia, during the excavation of an ancient Yakut settlement of the Kulun-Atakh culture, a bone arrowhead was found with an inscription in Yenisei runes on its flat side. E. S. Sidorov and A. I. Gogolev read the inscription as «aga el» «union, father's tribe» (Gogolev, 1990, 47). Currently, there are other ways of reading those and newly discovered inscriptions. In this case, we find important the presence of runic writing in the area of the Turkic speaking Yakuts itself since it offers a way to analyze and interpret rune-like tamgas.

The current study is based upon the field material collected by A. A. Savvin in the 1930s in the Far North: Allaikhovskiy, Abyyskiy, Verkhoyanskiy, and Ust-Yanskiy districts (Department of Manuscripts, Institute for Humanities, SB RAS, collection 4, inventory 12, document 45). The author combined them into a separate folder titled «Ancient Writing of the Yakuts» that is kept in the Manuscript Department, Institute for Humanities SB RAS. We also use artisan brands on wooden goblets for drinking kumis «Choron» from the collection of the Russian Ethnographic Museum mostly

collected in the 19th–20th centuries in various regions of Yakutia.

Functional aspects of rune-like tamgas of the Yakuts

V. L. Seroshevsky writes in his work «The Yakuts» (1896): «... each family and each secondary tribe would have their own marks, «emblems and tamgas», ... their own tribal cries *uran*, military songs, and nicknames». These tribal marks, the author continues, are completely forgotten. However, it was recorded that in the old days Kolyma Yakuts of the Kangelassky kinship possessed the golden eagle mark *barilas*. Unfortunately, the record with the «common name» of this mark was later lost (Seroshevsky, 1993, 454). The Eastern Siberian eagle (golden eagle) was a deity, a totem of the ruling Kangelassky family from the Middle Lena under the leadership of the «king» Tygyn during the arrival of the Russians. In this regard, of particular interest is the rune-like tamga of his grandson Mazara engraved on the blade of his polearm *batas* (Ksenofontov, 1927, table. X, Fig.2).

In the 17th century documents, personal «emblems» (tamga) are found among Yakuts by occupation of fur tax payers. Shaman's tamga, similar to those of other indigenous peoples of Central and Eastern Siberia, was an image of a shaman drum. Graphically, it was depicted as a crossed-out circle (Simchenko, 1965, 185, Table 115). The motifs for most marks of ordinary Yakuts were horses and bows. Exceptions are the tamgas of the Yakuts from the Namsky district in the form of a spear and a quiver of arrows, those of the Batulinsky district in the form of a conical structure «*urasa*» (summer dwelling), and the Bayagantaisky district in the form of a yurt-balagan (winter dwelling) (Simchenko, 1965, Table. 116, Fig. 21, 22, 24, 7 and 9). Among the Yakut tamgas in the Krivogornitsin's list (17th century) there are images of fish and a fish trap (Seroshevsky, 1993, 453, Fig. 130). It is known that Tungus tamgas in the form of bows belonged to hunters who hunted on foot and tamgas in the form of horses and reindeer belonged those with horses and reindeer. These marks are most likely to have been in-

troduced by Russian authorities who charged the fur tax «according to people and crafts».

According to legends, in the old days, territorial possessions of families, fishing, hunting grounds, and hayfields were strictly delimited by special boundary cuts made on trees *erkeai*, *ekkeyi*, (Bolo, 1994, 171–172). In the epic *Olonkho*, the World Tree grows at the sunrise, where the Sky meets the Earth and all paths of the Universe begin. There, in the «nests» of nine fir trees standing in a row, live bright goddesses *Ajrisit* (Oyunsky, 1930, 17–18). Here we can see similar semantics of the images of a tree, a nest, and a house marking the inhabited space separated from the celestial sphere of the higher deities. In this regard, it is worth to mention a rune-like inscription of 46 different marks carved on the sacred tree in the area of Nučalah-Alas in the Churapchinsky district (Levin, 2014, 274).

It is likely that visiting sacred places, where religious and ritual events were held, was accompanied by application of tamgas on the surface of the worshiped natural objects. In particular, a Lena inscription read by A. N. Bershtam as «I bless» indicates that. Perhaps, the four-sided wooden column with a carved image of a female face with earrings on one side, and rune-like symbols on the other discovered by R. K. Maak in the Vilyuisk district belongs to this group of symbols (Maak, 1994, 147). In this regard, of special interest is the story about the white shaman Yegor Chukrov (Emčit D'ögüsä) of the Arctic Eveno-Bytantayskiy district who could use the ancient 'Viluy writing'. The famous healer died in 1946. Three crosses are believed to be there on his grave, each inscribed with unknown signs reproduced by his son at his request (Levin, 2014, 275). According to some accounts, these writings contained encrypted secret knowledge of ancestors, including prophecies and predictions of the future.

Complex semantics of many tamgas of Turkic-Mongolian peoples of Eurasia, especially those going back to the kinship cult symbols or even totems, allows their use as amulets. Perhaps it is the «protecting» function that explains the widespread custom of applying rune-like patterns on household items and products

among Yakuts. The most common are cross-shaped patterns, including «cross inside the circle» and the bud ornament (*ünügäs*), which lets us suggest a sacral connection between tamga and religious and mythological ideas of the Yakuts.

During ethnographic times «signature» tamgas were used by Yakut cattle breeders as a sign of personal possession of cattle (brand), certain valuable things (silver jewelry, subjects of ceremonial decoration of horse gear, weapons, etc.) that were the signs of high social status and material wealth of their owner. In Northern regions possession tamgas were put on dugout boats, hunting and fishing equipment, for example, crossbows, floats, nets, etc. A pole with the hunter's tamga was put near the shed where prey carcasses and skins were kept and over the pits with fish reserved (Department of Manuscripts, Institute for Humanities SB RAS, collection 4, inventory 12, document 45, l. 385, 405). Possession tamgas were passed from father to son or other family members inheriting fishing and hunting equipment. If heirs had their own tamgas, they would put it next to the tamga of the previous owner.

The Yakuts used tamgas as an «identity card», a personal «signature». According to the records of the famous Yakut folklorist S. I. Bolo, each tribe's head had his own tamga (Bolo, 1994, 55, 61). Graphically, they consisted of intersecting straight and wavy lines. At the times of the lineage-based society tamga «stamp» was likely to be a collective mark. However, it is difficult to say whether all members were entitled to the «family mark» and under what circumstances they used it without changing the grapheme. V. L. Seroshevsky, referring to a Yakut fairy tale written in the Verkhoyansk district, wrote that ordinary people did not have their «signature» or «stamp» and, whenever necessary, could «invent» them on the spot. In the fairy tale cited by the author, it is said that the poor man Dodoy goes to the rich man Boilyt and asks to take him as a serf. In response, the rich man asks to provide an «oath mark». «Dodoy pulled out a bone knife from the sheath on his hip and cut his little finger, he smeared the end of the knife with blood and used it to draw either a spear or just a stick on

a piece of birch bark and said: «From this day I consider you, my lord!» After that, he kissed the bloody knife and kneeling, gave the bark to Boilyt» (Seroshevsky, 1993, 455). As the text shows, there is no direct indication that the Dodoy «invented» his mark on the spot.

The fact that the «seal» tamgas were mainly the privilege of nobility is supported by a copper stamp with three runic symbols at the Elgyay Regional Museum in the Suntar district on the Vilyuy River, which, according to G. G. Levin, represent the initials of the owner of the stamp. It is possible that the stamp was made in the early 18th century by a local Yakut craftsman and belonged to Nikita Samsonov, who at that time was the head of the district. Paleography of the inscription is very different from the Orkhon and Lena-Baikal runic symbols, its form and character are strongly reminiscent of the Manichean ones (Levin, 2014, 273–274). The image on the ring, accidentally found in Namsky district, resembles the motif of a «crown» characteristic of the Khoytsegor culture of the Uighur of Western Baikal area, which was widespread among the Yenisei Kyrgyz and medieval tribes of the Southern Siberia. Under the «crown» there is a sign similar in shape to the Sanskrit letter «क».

Some «signature», «seal» tamgas may have been the craftsman's brand marks, especially those on valuable objects of decorative and applied art or of ritual purpose. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that the customer's tamga (future owner's) rather than that of a craftsman was initially made. This group of tamgas most likely includes rune-like stamps on wooden kumis goblets *choron* and boxes *matarchakh*, presumably dating back to the 18th–20th centuries. There are two types of wooden kumis goblet *choron*: with a conical stem and three legs, sometimes horse hoof-like.

Tamgas on the goblets from the collection of the Russian Ethnographic Museum (Saint Petersburg) are mostly placed on the bottom of the stem or between the legs, i. e., they, in contrast to the tamgas on «status» items such as belts, bridle sets, saddles, are placed in hidden places. Probably, not every craftsman had his own brand stamp. Only 15 out of 178 *chorons* investigated in the collection of the Russian

Ethnographic Museum had stamps. They are represented by initials, notches, dots, and rune-like symbols. The monograph of the art historian A. I. Potapov presents 16 personal craftsman marks that include ones similar to, in author's opinion, to the symbols of the Lena rock paintings (Potapov, 1972).

Thus, tamgas were used by the Yakuts to mark one's clan, family, social status; occupation of a territory; tribal and personal ownership of property; identity (personification); artisan's brand; sacred places and objects, which verifies close relation the Yakut ancestors to the Turks of the Sayan-Altay highlands (Tyulyush 2016). The fact that Yakut ancestors had close long-term contacts with neighboring peoples the Tuvans, Tofalar, Khakass, Shors, Altay is indicated by their languages, namely, a large layer of vocabulary that unites these languages and is absent in other Turkic languages.

Runic-like symbols in the Yakut traditional numeral system

As late as until 1930s, the Yakuts used their ancient number denoting system, which, at first glance, resembled Roman numerals. Numeral symbols were carved on a four-sided wooden tag called «ieres-dieres suruk», which might be translated as «agreement letter». Such tags were used in the 19th–early 20th centuries as receipts or tickets for various contractual obligations, trade or financial activities, imposts, etc. Counting was marked on them by notches. According to A. A. Savvin, such tags were used in the Northern districts during the off-season for sale of fish and deer carcasses to the local population. Numbers from 1 to 9 were denoted by transverse notches, 10 by two criss-crossed inclined notches (X), 100 was denoted by a circle drawn over a cross (⊗). On the left side of the tag there was an image of the goods sold, the lower half, which remained with the seller, had the buyer's tamga. Such a tag was usually split in half, and the people who made a deal or contract, each took one half. To settle, the two halves were again placed against each other; this way, the correctness of the notches was established, and the settlement was made without any misunderstandings. Usually, merchants made a hole in their half of the tag,















through which a string was passed and they held a bunch of tags in a special box (Manuscript Department, Institute for Humanities, collection 4, inventory 12, document 45, sheets 384, 385).

Also, similar symbols on wooden bars were used by the Yakuts of Central Yakutia on so-called «land registers» («Khandiedaat biemehe» or «Khandiedaat kerdeehe»), which looked like multi-faceted wooden blocks. «Register» generally shows the number of hayfields in this area, with each side indicating the amount of land belonging to a particular clan. The amount of hay is indicated in carts. So, ten carts of hay were designated by one point, twenty carts by two points and so on, up to forty; fifty was denoted by inclined incision, one hundred by two intersecting inclined lines in the form of the Roman numeral «X», five hundred by double inclined incision – //, thousand by a pair of double inclined incisions at the intersection in the form of a slanted cross. When the count was referring to money, one hundred rubles was designated by a circle with a cross inside; ten rubles by a rectangle, one ruble by a slanted cross; dots carved with the tip of a knife were used to denote kopeks, large dots were ten kopeks, and small dots were less than ten kopeks (Kharitonov, 1947, 282, 283).

If we look at other peoples of Southern Siberia, we find similar numeral designation of the Khakass and Tofalars (Butanaev, 1975, 257–258). It is noteworthy that the Khakass numbers are based on symbols made up of different combinations of the cross used only for counting livestock. Chuvash numerical symbols, like the Yakut ones, had some resemblance to the Roman numerals and were carved mainly with a knife on wooden bars and tags (Trofimov, 1993), which demonstrates the presence of an ancient Turkic tradition.

The symbols of the Yakut calendar indicating the main events of the agricultural year are also of great interest. Yakut folk calendars were close to Russian wooden church calendars. Basically, they were regular wooden planks with information about the beginning and progress of agricultural work, the timing of the hunting season and fishing, the days of family holidays carved with the help of notch-

Table 1. Rune-like tamgas in the Yakut calendar

September 1		Symeon's (the Stylite) Day. The end of the summer field work and the beginning of the consumption of the harvested stock of food. Gradual transition from summer to winter housing.
September 14		Isaac's Day. Complete moving to winter housing.
October 1		Intercession's (of the Theotokos) Day. Beginning of the winter season, from that day livestock is kept in barns. Fishing begins on small lakes.
October 26		(Saint) Demetrios's (of Thessaloniki) Day. Slaughter of livestock. Return of hunters from taiga. Beginning of the season for «city men» who bring meat, butter, game meat etc. to the city for sale.
January 1		New Year (taken from Russians).
January 18		Middle of the winter.
March 25		Annunciation.
April 23		St. George's Day – the patron of cattle.
May 9		(Saint) Nicholas' (of Myra) Day. Switch to summer. Beginning of spring field work. Start of hiring farm laborers for summer field work. Beginning of the ice drift and summer swimming.
June 29		(Saints) Peter and Paul's Day. Beginning of haymaking and summer season work. This holiday was always celebrated with national dances and games.
July 8		Procopius' (of Scythopolis) Day Beginning of haymaking.
July 20		Elijah's Day.
August 1		First «Honey» Feast of the Savior Complete harvesting of crops. Picking blueberry and black currant.
August 6		Second «Apple» Feast of the Savior

(Starostina. 1999).










es and special symbols. These calendars were found in almost every Yakut family. The collection of the Yakut State Museum of History and Culture of the Peoples of the North includes a calendar purchased from Petr Gerasimov from Yunkyur Dzhebarsk nasleg (county)

of the Western – Kangalassky ulus (district) in 1911. This perpetual calendar is a quadrangular wooden board with 12 horizontal stripes with holes, each corresponding to a specific month, and graphic designations of holidays. The year begins in September (this is taken over from

Table 2. Names of rune-like tamgas

№	Rune	Title	Translation	Note
1	2	3	4	5
1.	+	tuora kiries	cross	
2.	X	ustunan kiries	oblique cross	
3.	†	khann'ary tardyyaakh kiries	cross with oblique crossbar	
4.	†	ikki usuguttan tardyyaakh kiries	cross with barbs on the ends of the crossbar	baltysah
5.		kerdiis	notch	Suntarsky
6.	┣	baltysakh	arrow (bow-cross) with a blunt tip in the form of a transverse crossbar	Ust-Yansky
7.	┣	siire annyylaakh biir kerdiis	a notch with a oblique notch	Ust-Yansky
8.	E	ortotunan yus tardyyaakh biir kerdiis	single notch with three dashes in the center	Allaikhovsky
9.	┣	balta/baltysah	hammer / arrow (self-propelled bow) with a blunt tip in the form of a transverse crossbar	Kangalassky / Allaikhovsky
10.	K	biir kerdiis uonna chyy-chaakh tumsa	a notch with a bird's beak	Allaikhovsky
11.	H	Siire annyylaakh yus kerdiis	triple notch with a notch in the middle	
12.	N	yus byutei kerdiis	triple closed notch	
13.	M	tyuyort byutei	quadruple closed notch	Allaikhovsky: <i>toroosun</i>
14.	III	kerdiis, bagana	notch, column	
15.	III	taraakh/arangas	comb	Ust-Yansky: <i>arangas</i> – burial elevated platform
16.	1	kyokhyo	hook	
17.	┣	kiries tardyyaakh kyohyo, allaraa yottyo yuyose annyylaakh	cross hook with a bent up leg	Allaikhovsky
18.	┣	kiries tardyyaakh kyohyo	cross hook with a	Allaikhovsky
19.	Y			
20.	┣	khotoi (barylas?) khaas/khabdy ataga	Golden Eagle sprout, bud	Khangalassky Khangalassky
21.	○	kyun, tyogyuryuk/ dyungyur	sun, circle / tambourine	
22.	•	dyolyo anny	hole	
23.	☾	yi	moon	

Continuation of Table 2

1	2	3	4	5
24.		chyychaakh tumsa	bird's beak	
25.		khaas	Goose	
26.		ampaar	barn	
27.		ampaar	barn	
28.		yus munnuk ampaar	three-walled barn	Ust-Yansky
29.		balagan	balagan	
30.		balagan	yurt-balagan (winter dwelling)	
31.		urasa	yurt-urasa (summer dwelling)	Allaikhovsky: <i>chuoraa</i> (Tung.)
32.		chuoraa, ortotunan tardyylaakh	chum with a crossbar in the mid- dle	Allaikhovsky

the Russian folk calendar, as the Yakuts start their year in May). The calendar is made according to the Julian calendar. Rune-like symbols mark Orthodox dates coinciding with the agricultural calendar of the Yakuts.

As can be seen from the material above, some numerical symbols in the Yakut numeral system resemble those of the Orkhon writing or Lena rock petroglyphs.

Typology of tamgas of the Yakuts. As noted above, the names of rune-like tamgas in the Central and Vilyuy districts were forgotten as early as in the late 19th century. The field material of A. A. Savvin indicates that they survived in the North until 1930s and had generally nominal denotations.

According to the form, the Yakut rune-like tamgas can be grouped as follows:

1. Cross, four versions, No. 1–4;
2. Straight line and its complicated forms, No. 5–17.
3. Slingshot, No. 16–20.
4. Circle, No. 21–23.
5. Birds, No. 24–25
6. Farm and residential buildings, No. 26–32.

As can be seen, the Yakut tamga was based on the following forms: cross, straight line, slingshot, circle, square and its types, triangle and its types. Like those of the Turks of Sayan-

Altay (the Tuvans, the Altay, and the Khakass), most tamgas consisted of two elements: the main tamga with an additional symbol – lines directed up or down. Some tamga names are similar to those of clan tamgas of the Kazakh, the Nogais, the Tuvans, the Altay, and the Khakass: «yi» (the moon), «aya» (bow), «taraakh» (comb), «balta» (hammer).

Thus, Yakut tamgas reflected natural phenomena (sun, moon, sprout, ornithological symbols), tools and household items (bow, arrows, hook, hammer, comb), farm and residential buildings, social status (bow and arrow, tambourine).

Conclusion

In terms of the image, value and purpose Yakut tamgas are closely related to those of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples of Central Asia and Southern Siberia. They represent a fragment of the common system of symbols widespread in Asia, giving evidence of the once existed common ethno-cultural field of interaction and mutual influence of different Turkic and Mongolian peoples.

By its origin, tamga is a pre-written ideographic symbol system, widespread among Turkic and Mongolian tribes at the period of their cohabitation. The word *tamga*, as noted above, is deeply rooted in most Turkic languag-

es and means ‘stamp’, ‘seal’, ‘property mark’. Its meaning in the Old Turkish is ‘seal, print’, ‘sign (magic)’ (Old Turkic Dictionary 1969, 530). Despite the fact that functionally and typologically the Yakut preserved the original symbol system, the word *tamga* is absent in their language. The word *belie* is used to denote tamga, which corresponds to the Turkic *belge, belgi* ‘sign’.

It is interesting that in Yakutia tamgas of various types and purpose were preserved in their integral form only locally among Northern Yakuts. This fact can be interpreted in a way that the first Yakut ancestors, having reached the Northern territories, lived in socio-cultural isolation for a long period of time, resulting in preservation of traditional attributes of everyday life, including the active use of tamgas in relevant life situations.

Isolated existence also explains the presence of a significant number of archaic features in the Yakut language dialects of the North-East of Yakutia, which at one time served as the basis for G.V. Ksenofontov to identify groups of Southern and Northern Yakuts, as he wrote: «the dialect of the reindeer herder Yakuts diverges from the dialects of the Yakuts – cattle breeders much more than the latter among themselves. Therefore, it would be appropriate to first divide Yakut dialects into the Southern (cattle farmers) and Northern (reindeer herders)» (Ksenofontov, 1992, book 1, 317). This statement is still relevant, as evidenced by the existence of two ancient dialect formations of the Yakut language, «one of the main diagnostic features of which is the pronunciation of unstressed «o» as «a» or «o», convincing experts that «the mentioned ancient dialect formations resulted not from disintegration of one language in

the Middle Lena region but integration of two main Yakut-speaking tribal groups» (Ivanov, 2014, 233).

The similarity between tamga of the Yakuts before 1930s and the runic script of the ancient Turks from Orkhon and Yenisey may be explained by referring to the scientists’ opinion on the prototypical role of rune-like tamgas for some runic alphabet characters (Klyash-torny, 1964, 46–47; Amanzholov 2012, 299). If it is considered that the monuments of Turkic runic writing were created and became widespread in the 6th-9th centuries, and tamgas are pre-letter ideographic symbols that arose and became widespread among Turkic peoples, it may be suggested that the latter probably appeared on the territory of Yakutia when the Yakut ancestors had no idea of runic writing. Archaeological data indicate earlier arrival of the first wave of «settlers of the region» that «attest the penetration in Yakutia first of Hun-Xianbei groups in the 3rd – first half of the 4th century BC, and later from the 5th – 6th centuries of Turkic-Mongolian groups» (Bravina, 2018, 17) who were potential carriers of tamga culture.

As for a number of short runic inscriptions on rocks and small household items found in the territory of Yakutia, the reading of which is very difficult, it might be assumed that they appeared later with subsequent waves of Turkic nomads who had already had contacts with runic writing, or these are ancient Tamga symbols taken as runes (which was discussed in due time by Okladnikov, Barashkov).

The above confirms the idea that tamgas can be considered as an important source to study the ethnogenesis of the Yakuts as carriers of the ancient nomadic culture of the peoples who spoke Turkic and Mongolian languages.

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