

# RESULTS AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIBIRYAKOV'S (YAKUT REGION) EXPEDITION (1894 - 1896)

## RESULTADOS Y RELEVANCIA CIENTÍFICA DE LA EXPEDICIÓN DE SIBIRYAKOV EN LA REGIÓN DE YAKUTIA (1894 - 1896)

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### ABSTRACT

This article considers the scientific results of the first comprehensive stationary expedition studying the indigenous peoples of Eastern Siberia – the Sibiriyakov's (Yakut region) expedition of the East Siberian Department of the Russian Geographical Society (1894-1896). This study aims to identify the scientific significance of publications based on the results of the expedition in the source study aspect, which will allow us to consider the history of the accumulation of knowledge about the Yakut language (Sakha language) and Yakut literature (Sakha literature) of the 19th-20th centuries, and will replenish the source study base of historical and literary science. During the research, systematic and holistic approaches, as well as contextual, interpretive, historical-literary and comparative methods of scientific research were used in the study of the source. In this regard, the study of the dictionary of the Yakut language by E.K. Pekarsky gains increasing relevance in the problematics of supertext, both its linguistic value and its significance in the historical and cultural terms are highlighted. As a result of the study, special importance is given to the role of a persons exiled for political reasons to Yakut region, who became participants in this expedition, which undoubtedly had a favorable effect on the results of field research and the fate of the exiled themselves. Precisely the involvement of these young people in the work of the expedition enabled to collect and publish scientific works on the beliefs of the Yakuts (Sakha people), folklore and the Yakut language, which laid the foundation for the development of the Yakut people's verbal folklore. It is no less valuable that owing to the work of the exiles, it was possible to attract representatives of the local population to further scientific study of their language, culture and region, the spiritual and moral influence of the Russian language and culture on the development of the national region as a whole.

**Keywords:** source; scientific results; source study base; indigenous peoples of Eastern Siberia; Sibiriyakov's (Yakut region) expedition; "Dictionary of the Yakut language" by E.K. Pekarsky; political exiles of Yakut region.

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## RESUMEN

Este artículo considera los resultados científicos de la primera expedición estacionaria completa que estudió a los pueblos indígenas de Siberia Oriental: la expedición de Sibiryakov en la región de Yakutia del Departamento de Siberia Oriental de la Sociedad Geográfica Rusa (1894-1896). Este estudio tiene como objetivo identificar la importancia científica de las publicaciones basadas en los resultados de la expedición en el aspecto del estudio de las fuentes, lo que nos permitirá considerar la historia de la acumulación de conocimiento sobre el idioma yakuto (literatura sakha) y la literatura yakuta (literatura sakha) de los siglos XIX-XX, y enriquecer la base de estudio de fuentes de la ciencia histórica y literaria. Durante la investigación, se utilizaron enfoques sistemáticos e integrales, así como métodos científicos contextuales, interpretativos, histórico-literarios y comparativos en el estudio de la fuente. En este sentido, el estudio del diccionario del idioma yakuto por E.K. Pekarsky cobra cada vez más relevancia en la problemática del supertexto, destacándose tanto su valor lingüístico como su importancia en términos histórico-culturales. Como resultado del estudio, se otorga especial importancia al papel de las personas exiliadas por razones políticas en la región de Yakutia, quienes se convirtieron en participantes de esta expedición, lo que indudablemente tuvo un efecto favorable en los resultados de la investigación de campo y en el destino de los propios exiliados. Precisamente la participación de estos jóvenes en el trabajo de la expedición permitió recopilar y publicar obras científicas sobre las creencias de los yakutos (pueblo sakha), el folclore y el idioma yakuto, sentando las bases para el desarrollo del folclore verbal del pueblo yakuto. Es igualmente valioso que, gracias al trabajo de los exiliados, fue posible atraer a representantes de la población local para el posterior estudio científico de su idioma, cultura y región, influyendo en el desarrollo espiritual y moral del idioma y cultura rusos en el desarrollo de la región nacional en su conjunto.

**Palabras clave:** fuente; resultados científicos; base de estudio de fuentes; pueblos indígenas de Siberia Oriental; expedición de Sibiryakov en la región de Yakutia; «Diccionario del idioma yakuto» de E.K. Pekarsky; exiliados políticos de la región de Yakutia.

## INTRODUCTION

Sibiryakov's expedition of the East Siberian Department of the Russian Geographical Society (1894-1896) was the first comprehensive stationary expedition to study the indigenous peoples of Eastern Siberia, which later became the largest scientific event of the East Siberian Branch of the Russian Geographical Society. The main purpose of the expedition was the practical study of the social system and cultural and everyday characteristics of the ethnic groups residing in the Yakut region, and the collection of information on geography, geology, statistics, economics, ethnography, etc.

The findings of the Sibiryakov's (Yakut region) expedition were absolutely innovative and brought fundamental results in the scientific coverage of the historical and ethnographic studies of Eastern Siberia, which remain relevant even after more than a century.

In this regard, the published materials of Sibiryakov's (Yakut region) expedition are updated and specially considered. Particular attention is paid to the in-depth study of scientific works on the Yakuts (Sakha people)' beliefs, folklore and the Yakut (Sakha) language in the source study aspects, which laid the foundation for developing the Yakut (Sakha) people's verbal folklore. In this perspective, particular importance is given to the study of the role of the political exiles of Yakut region, who

became participants in this expedition, which, undoubtedly, was a mutually beneficial circumstance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The organizational and educational role of the activities of the Russian Geographical Society is reflected in the studies of T.N. Oglezneva, in which the author characterizes the activities of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society as “a new step in the development of historical and ethnographic science for the study of Northeast Asia” [16: 48]. T.N. Oglezneva emphasizes that the programs of the Russian Geographical Society, which they specially issued and sent to “voluntary assistants in the field – enthusiasts, local historians from among the priests, local intelligentsia, officials, doctors, teachers, merchants and other patriots of their native land, being directly in contact with the life of the people” were among the active organizational tools [16: 47].

Indeed, one of the fundamental principles of the activities of the Russian Geographical Society was the use of all possible channels to study a scientific problem, which, probably, made it possible to arrive at the fundamental results of the expedition. But most of all it is worth highlighting the role of Innokenty Mikhailovich Sibiryakov, who acted as the initiator, organizer and patron of the Sibiryakov’s (Yakut region) expedition, which was immortalized in the very name of this expedition.

The archaeological research of the Sibiryakov’s expedition was described in the publications of I.S. Astakhova [2]. K.I. Gorokhov [4] studies the researchers and materials of the members of the Sibiryakov’s expedition in the field of Yakut ethnography. You can also highlight A number of scientists can also be distinguished such as A.A. Sirina [22], Goncharenko N.V. [3], and A.B. Panchenko [18], who cover the activities of individual ethnographers and their personal archives.

## METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Currently, many sciences are becoming interdisciplinary in nature, studies of the humanitarian cycle often intersect in the field of studying the human personality and issues of understanding. These aspects are of great importance for literary and linguistic research.

Modern trends in textual research are considering the human factor in language and form, which means that the text is considered from the position of discourse. This approach allows researchers to study deeper the issues of interpretation, understanding of the text, and features of the author’s self-expression. An integrative approach, spreading in the field of human personality and issues of understanding, is of great importance for various kinds of humanitarian practices, including various types of work with text. Thus, the broadest context is needed to interpret the source: this is not only an understanding of the language means used in this text, but also an understanding of culture, historical era, style, genre, emotive meanings in the text, and much more. The text is seen rather as a product obtained in a communication situation, depending on its structure and many extralinguistic factors than a system enclosed in itself (internal linguistics in the theory of F. Saussure) [23].

The context of interaction and interconnection of language and culture is considered from the viewpoint of the theory of Yu.N. Tynyanov, on the application of the ideas of structural linguistics to the analysis of the literary process, in particular, the synchrony/diachrony opposition (according to F. Saussure) [23].

The problem of the author's self-expression and worldview, which is displayed and fixed in the language in the form of mental models of the linguistic image of the world, lies the relationship between culture and language, it is quite multifaceted and is represented by a number of methodological approaches.

The problem of the relationship between language and culture is deeply investigated by Professor N.F. Alefirenko, who emphasizes that consideration of this relationship is possible only in case of recreating the missing (central) element in the chain – consciousness. Since the main components of the content of culture – the accumulation and processing (transformation) of information obtained in the process of human activity, are functions of social consciousness [1].

Within the framework of the presented study, systemic, holistic, integrative approaches, contextual, interpretive, historical-literary and comparative methods of scientific research are used in the study of the text.

Thus, the study of source contexts is a necessary condition for penetrating into the semantic depths of works, one of the essential prerequisites for comprehending the authors' concepts and primary intuitions. In the general perspective of the development of scientific thought, simultaneous and equal consideration of close, specific, and remote, universal contexts is essential.

## RESULTS

Quite a few works have been written about the personality of I.M. Sibiryakov, a hereditary owner of gold mines who received good education since childhood, but summarizing all this information, it is necessary to highlight his main feature – his desire to acquire new knowledge and understand the importance of knowledge. Conducting gold mining activities on the Lena River, the Siberian industrialist thought about the population living in the attached territory, which formed the main tasks of the proposed expedition: to study the change in the number of Yakuts (Sakha people), the most numerous people in the Yakut region, and to identify the impact of gold mining on their well-being. In this regard, this study allows us to identify the original goal of the expedition as innovative, determined rather by realizing a more exploratory nature than by a simple interest in studying the “members of national minority in the Yakut region”, which was a cognitive foundation for further research.

Two main components can be distinguished as distinctive features of this expedition: the first is the involvement of political exiles who became participants in this expedition, which, undoubtedly, was a mutually beneficial circumstance; the second is an even distribution of responsibilities, goals, territories between the members of the expedition, which together did not even practically intersect.

The work of the expedition took place in three districts of the Yakut region: Yakutsk, Olekminsky and Kolyma districts. The assignment of each member of the expedition, their goals and objectives are described by V.A. Obruchev in the *Program for publishing the works of the Yakut expedition equipped with the funds of I. M. Sibiryakov* (1897) [15]. V.G. Bogoraz studied the “members of national minority in the Kolyma district – the Chukchi, Chuvans, Stone Lamuts and the Russian population along the river Kolyma” [15: 3]. N.A. Vitashevsky studied the legal life of the Yakuts, N.L. Gekker was engaged in anthropological and anthropometric studies of the Yakuts. V.E. Gorinovich and E.D.

Nikolaev collected data on the Yakuts' dwelling, clothing and food. S.Ya. Dmitriev collected materials on cattle breeding. V.M. Ionov researched the pre-Christian beliefs of the Yakuts and shamanism. V.I. Yokhelson studied the Yakuts, Yukaghirs and Tungus of the Kolyma region. S.F. Kovalik was engaged in studying the economic situation of the Yakuts in the Olekminsky and Kirensky districts to reveal the influence of the gold industry on them. A.G. Leventhal examined the economic structure of the Yakuts. V.V. Livadin studied the arts and crafts of the Yakuts. I.I. Mainov conducted anthropometric research on the issue of "assimilating the Russians with the Yakuts" [15: 4]. D.I. Melikov dealt with the criminal psychology of the Yakuts. A.I. Nekrasov, G.F. Osmolovsky and N.S. Sleptsov collected data on hunting, fishing, games and entertainment of the Yakuts. V.V. Nikiforov studied the family life of the Yakuts, E.K. Pekarsky, in addition to compiling a Russian-Yakut dictionary, was collecting material on the language and folk art of the Yakuts. A.I. Ionov studied the morals and national character of the Yakuts. S.V. Yastremsky was engaged in compiling the grammar of the Yakut language and collecting their folk-art materials.

Various types of field work and methods for collecting material were used as part of the Sibiriyakov's (Yakut region) expedition. Depending on the nature of the forthcoming work, according to the adopted program of the expedition, there were four methods: 1) some of the researchers spent almost all the time traveling from one settlement to another, staying only for the period necessary to interview the local population; 2) others moved very unevenly, wandering and staying with the local population in the nomads' camps; 3) the third group traveled mainly around the points that served as centers, in which there were "nasleg and ulus councils, fairs, missionary camps, places for reloading luggage, etc." [15: 5]; 4) the fourth group of researchers practically did not leave their places of residence, collecting information from their neighbors or through them, making small trips within their ulus or nasleg. Such a diverse way of collecting material, including direct (personal) observation of an object, informant or process; interviewing or surveying; identifying and recording material sources; identifying and processing of documentary materials confirms an integrated approach to the scientific study of Eastern Siberia, the expertise of the organizers and members of the expedition speaks about the desire to conduct a comprehensive study of this issue.

Undoubtedly, the political exiles, who fell into the conditions of a harsh land and got the opportunity to join the expedition, received, so to speak, freedom of expression as researchers of a skill they had not previously explored. Moreover, many of them received actual freedom, having returned as accomplished researchers who had contributed practical results to fundamental science. In this regard, the role of the political exiles of Yakut region in the study of the history of Yakut literature, the history of the Christianization of Yakut region and the spiritual and moral influence of the Russian language and culture on the development of the national region as a whole is great, but this expedition was even more significant for the political exiles themselves, who received the main business in their subsequent life and whose names were immortalized in the scientific world. At the same time, the local residents should not be left unmentioned: they were involved in the work of the expedition. After all, owing to the local population – from officials to ordinary residents – we can talk about the fundamental results of the expedition.

## DISCUSSION

The main scientific results considered within the framework of this study include materials on the

Yakut language and beliefs of the Yakuts, and the first scientific descriptions of the Yukagir and Chukchi languages.

The “Dictionary of the Yakut language” by E.K. Pekarsky [19] is one of the fundamental results of the Sibiriyakov’s expedition. In 1881, Eduard Karlovich Pekarsky was sent into exile in the Boturus region of Yakut region, where he immediately faced the need for communication and asked for an assistant to help him communicate in the Yakut language with the locals [17]. Thus, the study of the Yakut language was initially determined by social and everyday factors, and later it was determined by the research interest of the compiler, who wanted to show the rich linguistic potential of the Yakut language. E.K. Pekarsky initially independently dealt with the study and compilation of the dictionary, then he joined the Sibiriyakov’s expedition as a member, which allowed him to extract the works of previous researchers in the Yakut language from the archive of the East Siberian Department of the Russian Geographical Society. Thus, the first volume of the “Dictionary of the Yakut language” was printed in the Yakut Regional Printing House after the expedition was completed as a publication funded by I.M. Sibiriyakov [20]. Subsequent volumes of the dictionary have already been published by the Publishing House of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Between 1907 and 1930, thirteen volumes of the dictionary were published under the official full title “Dictionary of the Yakut language, compiled by E.K. Pekarsky with the close participation of protopriests D. D. Popov and V. M. Ionov” in the publishing house of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, including the reprint of the first issue of 1899. The significance of this dictionary does not lose its relevance to this day. “Dictionary of the Yakut language” by E.K. Pekarsky is a fundamental work in Turkic studies and one of the largest dictionaries of the Turkic language family (25 thousand words). This fact only emphasizes the historical significance of the dictionary, revealing its social nature.

The value of this dictionary is in linguistic, historical and cultural terms, the dictionary reflects the linguistic image of the world, reveals the historical peculiarities of the time period. Moreover, the dialectical unity of the objective and the subjective inherent in a bilingual encyclopedic dictionary is clearly defined and emphasized. The objectivity of the “Dictionary of the Yakut language” by E.K. Pekarsky is seen in the external manifestation of the form as a multi-volume dictionary, but at the same time it includes the subjective, that is, it reflects a person with his consciousness and needs.

The works by V.F. Troshchansky on the life and beliefs of the Yakuts: “Materials on the ethnography of the Yakuts of the Yakut region: Clothing, dishes, utensils”, “Experience of a systematic program for collecting information about the pre-Christian beliefs of the Yakuts” [24: 5] are distinguished among the scientific results of the Sibiriyakov’s expedition. The value of his works lies not only in the ethnographic context of the studies, this information is also reflected and discussed in the ethnographic research by A.E. Kulakovsky (1877-1926), a Yakut thinker and one of the founders of Yakut literature. Kulakovsky considers the main merit of Troshchansky’s research to be that “he was the first to approach the Yakuts’ beliefs from a scientific perspective, drew many parallels with the beliefs of peoples related to the Yakuts, and shed the light on many incomprehensible terms and concepts” [21: 81].

In the introduction, he notes: “The religion of the ancient Yakuts is almost completely forgotten. The reason for this was the lack of the writing system and the introduction of Christianity. Only miserable

fragmentary data from religious beliefs remained in the memory of the people, and moreover, only from the realm of the external, ritual side. As for the inner content and ethical side, this part is completely lost in the deep darkness of the unknown.

A.E. Kulakovsky calls the work of V.F. Troshchansky “The evolution of the black faith of the Yakuts (shamanism)” the only valuable and serious publication on the issue raised.

The search activities of I.V. Yokhelson and V.G. Bogoraz resulted in the first scientific descriptions of the Yukagir and Chukchi languages, and folklore, which laid the foundation for further scientific research. The works of A.A. Sirina reflect the formation of I.V. Yokhelson as an ethnographer based on his travel (diary) notes made during his work in the Sibiryakov’s expedition and stored in the archive of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The researcher emphasizes that “the methods of field ethnographic work were developed by Yokhelson on the basis of personal qualities and life experience, education and self-education, orientation seminars for members of the Sibiryakov’s expedition and work under the approved programs. The decisive role in the success of his activities in Siberia was played by his acceptance of the Upper Kolyma Yukagirs, the subsequent long-term residence in their environment and the study of the language” [23: 76]. The participation in the Sibiryakov’s expedition enabled I.V. Yokhelson and V.G. Bogoraz to obtain tremendous experience in field scientific work, and develop an ethnographic methodology, which they purposefully applied in their further research in the Jesupov expedition. The first published works of I.V. Yokhelson, concerning a comprehensive description of the way of life of the population of the Yakut region [5-13] are ethnographic sources that formed the basis of all further scientific publications of the researcher.

The “Program for publishing the works of the Yakut expedition”, compiled by V.A. Obruchev (1897) can be singled out among the published materials on the results of the expedition. In addition to the basic information regarding the organization of the expedition, the participants, their goals and objectives, the program included a general scheme for publishing the expedition’s works, which were supposed to be united into three main departments: Department 1. General Studies (in 2 volumes: Demography. Anthropology); Department 2. Yakuts (in 4 volumes: Material culture, home and family life of the Yakuts. The economic system of the Yakuts. The legal life of the Yakuts. The economic status of the Yakuts of the Olekminsky and Kirensky districts and the influence of the gold industry on them); Department 3. Nationalities of the Kolyma District (in 7 volumes: Yukagirs. Yakuts of the Kolyma Ulus and District, Zhigansky Ulus. Verkhoyansk Ulus. Chukchi. Russian population along the Kolyma River. Stone Lamuts and Chuvans). The program also provides “a detailed list of the contents of the volumes indicating the materials collected or the programs under which the materials were collected” [15: 14], which gives a more detailed description of the available material, indicating the author, location, dates, number of interviewees, the amount of material available in printed sheets, the amount of required means for processing the material or its publication.

Only six separate issues of the planned 13 volumes were published. “In addition, the expedition members published more than seventy articles and reviews in various publications. Some of them appeared exclusively in English, some could be found only in special editions of the capital, but still the most interesting works were published: articles by N.L. Gekker “Toward the Characteristics of the Physical Type of the Yakuts” (Notes on Ethnography. 1896. Vol. III. Issue I), S.V. Yastremsky

“The remains of ancient beliefs among the Yakuts” (Izvestiya VSOIRGO. 1897. Vol. XXVII. No. 4) and V.I. Yokhelson “Revisiting the issue of the disappeared peoples of the Kolyma district” (Izvestiya VSOIRGO. 1897. Vol. XXVII. No. 2). In 1898–1900 “Proceedings of the Yakut region expedition, outfitted at the expense of I.M. Sibiryakov” were published, which included the works of S.V. Yastremsky and V.I. Yochelson” [14: 194].

## CONCLUSION

Thus, within the framework of this article, the main materials of the Sibiryakov’s (Yakut region) expedition of the East Siberian Department of the Russian Geographical Society (1894-1896) were presented in the light of identifying the scientific significance of the publications in the source study aspect, which will make it possible to consider the history of accumulating knowledge about the Yakut language and Yakut literature of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and replenish the source study base of historical and literary science.

Analyzing and evaluating the work of the historical and ethnographic expedition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, undoubtedly the scale of this event should not be left unmentioned. Moreover, the large range of the expedition is estimated rather in the scale and fundamental nature of the results obtained than in kilometers of the covered territory.

In this perspective, we attach particular importance to the role of persons exiled for political reasons to Yakut region, who became participants in this expedition, which undoubtedly had a favorable effect on the results of field research, and on the fate of the exiles themselves.

Against the background of a certain number of participants in criminal and religious exile, who caused material and moral damage to the local population, the exiles who continued self-education, provided practical assistance to the local population, having certain knowledge and skills in matters of medicine, jurisprudence, agriculture and etc., markedly distinguished themselves. Due to the involvement of these fourteen, educated young people in the work of the expedition, scientific works on the beliefs of the Yakuts, folklore and the Yakut language were published, which laid the foundation for the development of the Sakha people’s literature.

It is no less valuable that the work of the exiles enabled to attract representatives of the local population to further scientific study of their language, culture and region, the spiritual and moral influence of the Russian language and culture on the development of the national region as a whole. Thus, the underestimated and significant role of the local population in the implementation of the Sibiryakov’s (Yakut region) expedition of the East Siberian Department of the Russian Geographical Society is emphasized, which requires further research.

In this perspective, the problem of communication and interaction between the expedition members and local residents is of particular importance. Under local residents in this case, we can consider not only informants, assistants, but also local leadership, officials and representatives of the clergy. Aspects of interpersonal interactions should also be taken into account when studying the formation of writing system in the Yakut language and Yakut literature, for which the first translations of church literature, the first scientific works on the Yakut language and dictionaries are of particular importance.



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