

Article

Russia and Siberia:
Russian People's Entry into the
Lena Basin and
Russian-Yakut Relations

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By the end of the second decade of the 17th century, the Russian state began to expand its eastern borders to the Yenisei River. This was supposed to complete the process that has already begun with the Yermak's campaign, aiming at the total subjugation of the territory of the former Siberian Khanate, which was a fragment of the once powerful state - the Golden Horde, under the rule of the Moscow government. Having previously subjugated its other parts - both the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates, the Moscow Tsar, thereby, in fact, became the successor of the Golden Horde khans, including the names of these khanates in his own official titles. Therefore, the subjugation of the Siberian Khanate was considered in Moscow as a completely logical and legitimate event.

Having discovered territories outside the khanate, where the local population had no idea about any "state relations," the Russian people who came to Siberia, as well as the Moscow authorities, regarded those people as "those who belonged to no one". In their view, those territories with ethnic groups often previously unknown to Russians, if they did not belong to any state formations, then they had to pay taxes (*yasak*)¹⁾ to the Moscow Tsar.

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1) *Yasak* - a natural tax, tribute levied by the furs.

Thus, the advancement of the Russian people further towards the east was considered by them as a completely legitimate expansion of the territory of the former Siberian Khanate, which already belonged to the Moscow Tsar; consequently, all "those who belonged to no one" and previously unknown lands, according to their logic, were the domain of the sovereign, or, in other words, the possessions of the Russian state.

The Yenisei River flows from south to north across the whole of Siberia and divides it into two, approximately equal, parts. Thus, the Yenisei is a natural border between Western and Eastern Siberia. But for the Russian people, rivers have not been an obstacle for a long time, but, on the contrary, they were a way of movement, a means of communication. It is no coincidence that the formation of the Old Russian state in the 10th century happened around the river route also known as a "road from the Varangians to the Greeks". This route started from Novgorod in the north, which controlled the route to the Baltic Sea and trade links with Northern Europe, to Kiev in the south, which controlled access to the Black Sea and trade links with the Byzantine Empire.

After the foundation of the Yeniseisk *ostrog*²⁾ on the left bank of the Yenisei in 1619, the prospect of moving further east along the right tributaries of this river opened up for Russian merchants and military servicemen. This prospect was reinforced by the interest of the Moscow government and the Siberian administration, aimed at expanding the *yasak* territory from where the treasury received furs. State servicemen who collected *yasak* from the native population were also interested in expanding the "sovereign estate" in Siberia, since they had the opportunity to personally enrich themselves by appropriating part of the furs.

It should be noted that in the North, in the lower reaches of the Yenisei, the advancement of Russian merchants along its right tributaries, such as Nizhnyaya (*the Lower*) *Tunguska* and Podkamennaya (*Under-the stone*) *Tunguska*, had been going on for several decades, as we can trace the evidence of certain trade transactions with small groups of *Tungus* tribes

2) *Ostrog* - a small wooden fortress with towers (blind and passable), ditches and other defensive fortifications.

noted in the documents from the early 17th century. The construction of the city of Mangazeya³⁾ and the establishing of a garrison inside it led the Siberian administration to the extraction of tributes from them. That was also accompanied by armed clashes between Russian servicemen and the *Tungus*, leading to the movement of the latter to the east for considerable distances up to several hundred kilometers, as the way of life of the *Tungus* was that of mainly wandering hunters and the sparsely populated areas of the northern *taiga* accommodated this lifestyle. But even after the departure of some *Tungus* tribes, the sovereign's servicemen also advanced in that same direction.

On the Middle Yenisei, where the Yeniseisk *ostrog* was founded, the main route to the east was along the river Angara, which in the 17th century was mostly called Verkhnyaya (*the Upper*) Tunguska or, more often, simply Tunguska⁴⁾. It is quite natural that the advance of the detachments of the Yeniseisk military servicemen began to be accompanied by the tributary of the *Tungus* population of the right bank of the Yenisei, and the lower reaches of Angara. Thus, the Angara *Tungus*, who were fierce competitors of the Russians in their struggle for the subjugation of the *Ket*-speaking population⁵⁾, immediately turned into an object of their *yasak* interest.

The first *Tungus* clan groups began to pay *yasak* to the Yeniseisk *yasak collectors*⁶⁾ already in the winter of 1620/1621. As a result, the territory of

3) Mangazeya was built in 1601 on the river Taz, the right tributary of the river Ob in its lower reaches.

4) As soon as Russian people got acquainted with the Yenisei basin, its three largest right tributaries were called Tunguska – Nizhnaya (Lower) Tunguska, Podkamennaya (Under-the-stone) Tunguska and Verkhnyaya (Upper) Tunguska, or, more often, just Tunguska, which also had the Buryat name of Angara, attached to its part above the Bratsk rapids.

5) *Ket*-speaking population in the beginning of the 17th century included the local inhabitants who lived on the left bank of the Middle Yenisei, between the rivers Yenisei and Angara on the right bank of the Yenisei, in the south of the modern-day Krasnoyarsk. They were the so-called “remnants” of the ancient population of the south part of Western and Central Siberia, who spoke the old “Yenisei languages” .

6) *Yasak collectors* - military servicemen who collected *yasak* from the already taxed aboriginal population. In the near-border districts, their task also included collecting information about the neighboring lands that has not yet been explored.

the new Yeniseisk *uyezd*⁷⁾ increased dramatically and its border moved east to the river of Angara. In May 1621, several authoritative *kniazecz*⁸⁾ of the Lower Angara *Tungus* brought up *yasak* to the Yeniseisk *ostrog*. In 1622, two most powerful *kniazecz* of the Lower Angara, Tasei and Tarei, also paid their *yasak*. A year later, *yasak* was paid by several more *kniazecz* who lived up the Angara. In 1623, a detachment of fifty Yeniseisk military servicemen went up the Angara, almost to the *river bend*⁹⁾, and took *yasak* from several more tribal groups of the *Tungus*. As a result, the borders of the Yeniseisk *uyezd* came close to the places of residence of the *Buryats* - "fraternal people", as they were called by the Russians in the 17th century.

The *Buryats* turned out to be a serious and rather numerous enemies compared to the *Tungus*. It is known that among the Western *Buryats* at the beginning of the 17th century there was a fairly strong tribal union, and they expanded in relation to the *Tungus* and *Ket*-speaking tribal groups, subordinating them to themselves at a considerable distance from their places of permanent residence in the Angara region. For example, the Krasnoyarsk *Cossacks*¹⁰⁾ around 1630 encountered the *Buryats* in the area of the foundation of the Kansk *ostrog* - more than 350 km from the Angara. In this situation, the *Buryats* competed with the Krasnoyarsk *Cossacks* for the possession of tributary territories. An additional problem for the promotion of Russian

7) *Uyezd* - a territorial and administrative unit in Old Russia, the basis of the administrative division of the Russian state.

8) *Kniazecz* (little prince) - this is how the Russians called the leaders of the aboriginal clan groups, distinguishing them from the bulk of their relatives and compatriots.

9) The bend mentioned here was the bend of the Angara, where it changes the direction of the flow from north to west.

10) A "Cossack" is a free, independent person, an adventurer, a vagabond (originally from the Turkic languages). By the end of the 17th century in the lower reaches of the rivers of Eastern Europe, a certain type of military "brotherhood" has developed; the people there lived by robbing neighboring territories and trading ships that passed along the rivers. The Russian government sought to use those brotherhoods to defend its southern borders from Tatar and Turkish invaders, and sometimes even recruited *Cossacks* as an armed force. As a result, some of the *Cossacks* who retained their independence from the state, remained being free, and those who entered the service, became servicemen and received the sovereign's salary (monetary, grain and salt).

military servicemen up the Angara was the range of thresholds¹¹⁾, which, in the face of constant danger of attack by the *Buryats*, were very risky to pass. For these reasons, the expansion of Russian possessions in the Angara region was suspended. But as a result of the suspension of the advance of the *yasak collectors* of the Yeniseisk *ostrog* up the Angara, it became possible to move further east, into the basin of the river Lena, where numerous Yakut tribes lived, mostly in its middle part.

In 1621, the Mangazeya military servicemen received from the *Tungus* living in the Nizhnyaya ("Lower") Tunguska information about the large river Elyuene¹²⁾, located further to the east, where people lived in *izba*¹³⁾ (log huts) and bred cattle and horses. This information caused a certain interest among the fur hunters, and in the same year one of them, Pantelei Penda, set off up the Nizhnyaya Tunguska in search of a "*new zemlitsa*¹⁴⁾" ("new land" in Russian), with a detachment of 40 armored people. As a result of his campaign, two *zimovyas*¹⁵⁾ (winter huts) were built on the Nizhnyaya Tunguska, which received his name, and then for a long time were used as places of *yasak*

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- 11) The Angara thresholds created a very serious obstacle to the advance of the Russian people up the Angara. In total, there were 9 thresholds on the Angara from its mouth, the place where it flows into the Yenisei, to the modern city of Bratsk. Six of them were concentrated over 100 km below Bratsk and had a significant difference in altitude. Thus, the Pokhmelnny threshold closest to this city had a water height difference of 7 m per 1 km. The fourth threshold is called Padun - 15 m by 1.5 km. Until the middle of the 20th century, the thresholds were very serious problem for navigation on the Angara. At present, after the construction of a cascade of hydroelectric power stations on the Angara, the Angara thresholds are flooded with water from reservoirs. The only exception is the Strelkovskiy threshold, the lowest, located 5 - 7 km from the place where the Angara flows into the Yenisei.
 - 12) It is believed that in translation from the *Tungus*, "Elyuene" means "big river".
 - 13) Izba - a type of housing for the Russian population of the forest zone and the North, a sort of a log-house.
 - 14) Zemlitsa - literally: a small land, territory. In Siberia, "zemlitsa" was the name for the territories inhabited by tribal groups of aborigines, which, as a result of their annexation to the Russian state, were taxed (fur). At the same time, the "zemlitsas" became taxable units.
 - 15) Zimovye is a temporary dwelling built by hunters for the winter period. Until the 17th century, those were fortified buildings that made up the original settlements of Russian people in the Urals and Siberia.

collection for the Mangazeya military servicemen. Having reached the upper reaches of the river, Penda's detachment crossed the Lena River along the *portage*¹⁶⁾ and reached the place where, a few years later, the Yakutsk *ostrog* was built.



Photo 1. Wooden walls of the old Yakutsk ostrog (2nd half of 19th century)

In the *Yakut* folklore, certain information has been preserved about the sudden appearance in their land of some unusually fair-haired and light-eyed bearded people who spoke an incomprehensible language. Moreover, the place of their appearance was the land of the *Kangalas* tribe, which had been dominant among the local *Yakut* tribes since the turn of the 16th-17th centuries. There, the newcomers met with the legendary *toyon*¹⁷⁾ named Tygyn¹⁸⁾. After spending the winter in the territory of the *Kangalas*, in the spring, when the ice melted, these people went up the river, as suddenly as they had appeared before that. However, there is a report that Penda and his people lived in the land of the *Kangalas* for three years.

16) Portage - an isthmus between two rivers or two other reservoirs, where ships and their cargo were dragged from one to the other along a dry path.

17) Toyon - the name (title) of the leader of the tribe among the Yakuts. This term, denoting the leader, was also found among some other peoples of the Far North and Siberia, as well as in "Russian America" (among the *Aleuts*, *Tlingit* tribes). Russians often called *Toyons* as *Kniazec*, as they called the tribe leaders of the other Siberian peoples.

18) According to *Yakut* folklore, Tygyn was the youngest son of the family of the leader of one of the clans of the *Kangalas* tribe. He managed to subjugate his family at first, then captured power over the entire *Kangalas* tribe. After that, he managed to create "Il" - a union of tribes related to the *Kangalas*.

Penda and his detachment returned to Mangazeya using a different path, previously unknown to the Russian people: the detachment climbed up the Lena to its upper reaches - steppe places, where the distance from the Lena to the Angara is no more than 150 km. Then, crossing the steppe to the Angara, they went down to the Yenisei and further, to Turukhansk *zimovye*, from where it was not far to Mangazeya (by Siberian standards).

Probably, moving down the Angara, Penda met in the summer of 1628 with a small detachment of ten people from the Yeniseisk military garrison led by Vassily Bugor. They were heading to the river Ilim¹⁹⁾ to collect *yasak* from the local *Tungus*.

The information about a new big river, received from Penda, interested those military servicemen. As a result, Vassily Bugor, when still going up the Ilim, found a dry path to the river Kuta, the left tributary of the Lena, and in 1629, reached the right tributary of the Lena, the river Chaya, which flows into the Lena 400 km below the river Kuta, where Bugor and his men spent the winter. Vassily Bugor finally returned with some part of his people to the Yeniseisk *ostrog* in the summer of 1630. Thus, the Yeniseisk military people explored the path to the Lena River.

What was the population of the Lena basin and the *Yakut* society at that time? It is known that the formation of the modern *Yakut* ethnic group started after the resettlement of the Turkic-speaking ancestors of the *Yakuts* to the Middle Lena, to where they came from the more southern regions, from the upper reaches of the Lena or other parts of the Western Baikal region. That was later evidenced by the *Yakut* folklore, including legends and traditions telling us about the first ancestors of the *Yakut* people. At the same time,



Photo 2. Yakut female in traditional clothes (2nd half of 20th century)

19) The right tributary of the Angara, above its bend. At present, the lower reaches of the river Ilim are part of the Ust-Ilimsk reservoir.

folklore also says that the Turkic-speaking tribes who first moved to the Middle Lena, did not yet represent a single ethnic entity, and the process of their resettlement most likely did not occur at the same time. In any case, according to some legends, the legendary ancestors of the *Yakut* people, Omogoi and *Elley*, were the ancestors of various *Yakut* tribes, or tribal groups. Unfortunately, being solely based on the folklore data, it is rather difficult and not always possible to determine the kinship of the Turkic-speaking tribes of the Middle Lena, which had developed by the beginning of the 17th century, because of the influence of the synthesis of local tribal and common *Yakut* traditions based on the traditions of the *Kangalas* people mentioned above. As a result, the same tribes are often shown in different relations to each other, according to different versions.

Academician Alexei P. Okladnikov, who back in 1940s has already analyzed a large amount of folklore and archaeological material, and had also studied the observations of researchers from previous centuries (including Nikolaas Witzen and Jacob Lindenau), finally discovered the existence of three ethnic components of the *Yakut* people, who in different times appeared on the Middle Lena. For the first component, Okladnikov singled out the most ancient population of this region - *taiga* hunters and fishermen, possibly the ancestors of the *Tungus* or *Yukagir*. The researcher considered the second component to be the Turkic-speaking ancestors of the *Yakuts* with a small Mongol-speaking group interspersed among them, who migrated to the Middle Lena in the 9th-10th centuries, or maybe the 10th-11th centuries, and partly preserved the



Photo 3. Tungus family

economic and cultural type of nomadic pastoralists, successfully adapting it to the local climatic conditions. And the third component, according to Okladnikov, were the Turkic-speaking tribes of the *Kangalas* group (aka the people of *Elley*), who migrated to the Middle Lena from the Western Baikal region at the end of the 15th - the middle of the 16th century.

It is quite logical to assume that the Turkic-speaking and Mongol-speaking pastoral tribes that migrated to the Middle Lena at the beginning of the first millennium of our era, would inevitably have to stop at the most favorable territory for this kind of economic activity. Their first choice would be the areas adjacent to the modern city of Yakutsk, where floodplain meadows stretch along the banks of the river for many kilometers in a wide long strip. It is also inevitable that the processes of expanding the zone inhabited by those tribes, and the displacement and assimilation of the former population - *taiga* hunters and fishermen - should have immediately started. Thus, when the tribes of the *Kangalas* group, in the process of migration down the Lena at the end of the 15th - the middle of the 16th century, reached the most convenient places for cattle breeding, they were already occupied by the descendants of their predecessors, who had managed by that time, to some extent, to merge with the natives as a result of their assimilation of the latter²⁰). The newcomers had no choice but to enter into a fierce struggle with the local population for pasture lands.

One may assume that such a situation has been repeated: the newcomers, as had already happened on the Middle Lena several centuries earlier, were crowding out the natives once again. However, this time the confrontation was of a fundamentally different nature. In the first case, cattle-breeding tribes pushed tribal groups of *taiga* hunters and fishermen to the outskirts of a territory favorable for their economic activity with many steppe inclusions in the *taiga* massif, the so-called *alases*²¹). At the same time, the natives had the opportunity to move to other *taiga* regions while maintaining their traditional

20) Academician A. Okladnikov considered the northern *Yakuts* to be former *Tungus* who had forgotten their language.

21) Alas - shallow depressions formed as a result of ice melting in the thickness of loess-like deposits. Their area ranges from several hundred square meters to dozens of square kilometers.

economic and cultural type and their way of life. Naturally, this process could not proceed without armed clashes. But they should not have been fierce at that time, since the different economic and cultural type of pastoralists and taiga hunters and fishermen oriented the newcomers and natives to the regions of the Middle Lena, which were different in their natural resources.

In the second case, with the advent of the tribes of the *Kangalas* group to the Middle Lena, the confrontation between the newcomers and the indigenous population of this territory (a.k.a the descendants of the Turkic-speaking migrants of the first wave) had a fundamentally different character: for both of them, the struggle for territories suitable for cattle breeding was a struggle for survival in the harsh conditions of Eastern Siberia. Two groups of pastoral tribes were doomed to fight each other for pastures, for *alasses*. The stake in this struggle could be the preservation of the economic and cultural type traditional for pastoralists and, as a result, the very preservation of tribes as ethnic entities. Accordingly, the losers, in the end, either had to leave the territory of the Middle Lena, while changing their economic and cultural type, or be subjected to assimilation (or physical destruction) by the winners. In both cases, we are talking about the disappearance of a group of related tribes as an independent ethnic entity, as happened with the Turkic-speaking tribes of the *Khori* and *Bayagantai* quite shortly before the Russians arrived in the Middle Lena. Of course, the process of such confrontation could be very long, and its intensity could depend on a number of factors; some of them also changed over time.

As we can suppose now from the materials of the *Yakut* folklore and early written sources of Russian origin, the advantage in that struggle was on the side of the newcomers - the tribes of the *Kangalas* group. And the very location of the *Yakut* tribes on the territory of the Middle Lena clearly indicates that the pastoral tribes of the first wave of migration were pushed by the newcomers from the most favorable pasture areas to the north and northeast. As a result, the center and south of that territory by the beginning of the 17th century turned out to be inhabited by the *Kangalas* and related tribes, and the north and northeast from the mouth of the Vilyui River and further to the southeast, along the left bank of the Aldan River to the middle reaches of the Amga River, by the tribes of the *Nam-Borogon* group with large inclusions

of other tribes not related to them (possibly, Turkicized descendants of the ancient population of the Middle Lena). The line of contact between the two groups of pastoral tribes stretched from the northwest to the southeast for 300-350 km from the left bank of the Lena to the right bank of the Amga.

During the appearance on the Middle Lena of the second wave of migrants from the Baikal region, when the struggle for pasture lands between the two groups of tribes was extremely fierce, the factors that led to "the ability to wage war" certainly came to the fore. The first of those factors was the numerical superiority of the tribes of the *Kangalas* group in comparison with the former pastoral tribes of the Middle Lena. The second reason for the advantage of the aliens was the presence of some kind of military alliance or its semblance, in any case, during their arrival on the Middle Lena, as folklore says. It should be noted that the name of the legendary *Elley* in the vocabulary of the *Yakut* language reflects the idea of the former tribal association. And among the ancient Turks, "el" was the concept of a union of tribes. There is no doubt that the more cohesive and organized newcomers had a military advantage over the more widely dispersed and less organized natives. The third reason should have been seen in the superiority of weapons and battle tactics among the tribes of the *Kangalas* group. Of course, for the period from 10th to 15th century, there were no revolutionary changes in this regard among the peoples inhabiting the Eurasian steppes. But the former nomads still had to have the appropriate skills of military prowess, combined with a sufficient number of standard weapons (both offensive and defensive equipment). Their opponents also could have had all this, but not in such modern shape and not in such a large quantity.

Subsequently, an important role in the existence of the *Yakut* civil strife and their "warming up" was played by the level of social relations, which inevitably led to the so-called war of "all against all", which, nevertheless, had a certain focus on the Middle Lena. There are two factors here. Firstly, this is the so-called heroic period that the *Yakut* society was going through. Heroism and valor were manifested, first of all in the accomplishment of feats glorifying a male warrior, aimed at acquiring some kind of material wealth, naturally, due to the robbery of neighbors, interest in which became regular. Secondly, rather strong tribal relations, the "shadow" side of which was a blood feud,

which, in combination with the material interest mentioned above, led to an endless struggle of tribal groups or tribes until the enemy was completely destroyed. Such relations of blood feuds are observed most often between representatives of different groups of tribes.

From the end of the 16th century, another new factor appeared as one of the reasons for the *Yakut* civil strife, persisting there until the arrival of the detachments of Russian military servicemen on the Middle Lena; the factor that became clearly dominant in that period - the personality of Tygyn. As it can be judged from the *Yakut* folklore, Tygyn set himself a number of tasks, for the implementation of which he was intensively engaged for several decades. Firstly, being the youngest among his brothers, he was forced to fight with his closest relatives for the unconditional recognition as the legitimate leader of the *Kangalas*. Such situation is not very rare in world history. Secondly, there is reason to believe that Tygyn's plans included the restoration of some kind of union of the tribes of the *Kangalas* group, in which he, naturally, had to become a leader, while assigning a dominant role to his tribe. And, thirdly, by the 1630s it was more than obvious that there were irreconcilable contradictions between the *Kangalas* leaders (such as Tygyn and his sons) on the one hand, and the leaders of the *Nam* and *Borogon* tribes (Mymak and Loguy) on the other. All those things were later recorded also by Russian written sources, and were subsequently reflected in the formation and development of Russian-*Yakut* relations²²⁾.

Those contradictions may indicate not only the aggravation of a long-standing bloody struggle for pasture lands between two groups of pastoral tribes. There were precisely the contradictions between the leaders of the two groups of tribes that came to the fore, which intensified the long-standing contradictions between the *Kangalas* and their main irreconcilable opponents, the *Nams* and *Borogons*. It seems that, having united the tribes of the *Kangalas* group under his command, Tygyn began active actions to subjugate other pastoral tribes. This is confirmed nowadays by *Yakut* folklore and the map of Tygyn's campaigns compiled on its basis. We do not know how far this process

22) In the scientific literature, there is also an idea about the existence of two *Yakut* tribal unions opposing each other.

went, but it is obvious that the salvation of the opponents of the *Kangalas toyon* (maintaining independence from the *Kangalas*, preserving their pastoral lands and economic and cultural type, and possibly preserving themselves as a tribal group) was the appearance of detachments on the Middle Lena of the military servicemen from Yeniseisk. It is also obvious that for several more decades for the *Nam* and *Borogon toyons*, Russian *yasak collectors* represented a much lesser evil than the descendants of Tygyn. This will be also explained below.

The main result of Vassily Bugor's campaign, which was mentioned above, was the information he collected about the "new lands" and the paths to them, which allowed the Yeniseisk administration to plan the further advance of detachments of military servicemen into the Lena basin. Prince Semyon Shakhovskoy²³⁾, who was at that time the Yeniseisk *voivode*²⁴⁾, understood the significance of the "new land" explored by Bugor's detachment and hastened to send a well-equipped detachment of the *ataman*²⁵⁾ Ivan Galkin numbering thirty people along the explored path the same summer.

It is very likely that the haste of the *voivode* Shakhovskoy was connected with a clear understanding of the current situation: if in the summer of 1628 Bugor

23) Prince S. Shakhovskoy was the governor of the Yeniseisk ostrog from September 1629 to August 1631. By the time he was appointed governor to Yeniseisk, he was already a well-known spiritual writer in the Russian state. Due to political disagreements in the Russian elite, in 1606 he managed to be in disgrace with Tsar Vassily Shuisky. In 1620, due to the political actions of his relatives, he fell into disgrace with Patriarch Filaret, the father of then Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich. But in 1625 he was forgiven and began to carry out important assignments of the Patriarch, although when he was the Yeniseisk governor, he had not yet completely got rid of disgrace. Nevertheless, S. Shakhovskoy's connections forced other governors and officials of the Order of the Kazan Palace, who ruled all the eastern territories of the Russian state in those years, to reckon with his opinion. Therefore, the Yeniseisk governor periodically considered it possible to act at his own discretion, without regard to the attitude of the Tobolsk and Tomsk governors who were above him in rank. This was also facilitated by the origin of the Shakhovskoy princes, who were descendants of the Yaroslavl princes, who considered their family having its origin from the legendary prince Rurik and prince Vladimir Monomakh.

24) Voivode - a military leader, senior in the army, appointed from among the representatives of the nobility. In the 16th - the first half of the 18th century, in the Russian state - an official who manages an administrative unit.

25) Ataman - the elected leader of the free cossacks.

received information about the distant Lena River from Pyanda, ascending the Angara, then at the end of the summer this information was already in the possession of the Mangazeya *voivodes* and it became possible in 1629 to send their military servicemen to Lena. The predecessor of Prince Shakhovskoy in the position of the Yeniseisk *voivode*, Vassily Argamakov, despite the fact that he already had the information about the distant Lena, still was unable to have the opportunity to send a detachment of military service people there: certain events of the summer of 1629 that occurred on the banks of the Angara, such as the frankly predatory campaign of part of the *Cossacks* Krasnoyarsk garrison, after which the Yeniseisk administration had to reestablish control of the aboriginal population of the Angara region "under the sovereign's hand"²⁶⁾, did not even allow one to think about any further expansion.

Voivode Shakhovskoy was absolutely right in his actions. It was in 1629 that the first small detachment of military servicemen was sent from Mangazeya to the Lena, who went along the Nizhnyaya Tunguska and its tributaries to the river Chona, a tributary of the river Vilyuy, and further - reached the rivers Lena and Aldan. Having collected *yasak* from the local *Yakuts* and *Tungus*, the detachment lost half of its personnel in armed clashes. After that, detachments of *yasak collectors* began to depart regularly from Mangazeya, collecting tribute with furs from the population of Vilyui and trying to firmly subjugate the *Yakuts* and *Tungus* of Lena and Aldan, thereby competing for *yasak* territories with the Yeniseisk military servicemen²⁷⁾.

Ataman Galkin's detachment set out from the Yeniseisk *ostrog* on July 20, 1630. That was too late - usually detachments going up the Angara left from Yeniseisk in late May - early June. This is what testifies to the haste of the

26) Not having received in the summer of 1629 a grain salary stored in the Yeniseisk *ostrog* (in Yeniseisk there was no one to transport it to Krasnoyarsk, and the Krasnoyarsk people themselves did not want to do such hard work), about 150 men of Krasnoyarsk *Cossacks* were beaten and drowned in a small tributary of the Yenisei River, Kacha, at the mouth of which the Krasnoyarsk *ostrog* was built, ataman Ivan Koltsov, considering him guilty of this. Then they went to the Yeniseisk *ostrog*, with the aim of capturing and plundering it. But, having received a rebuff, they were forced to go along the Angara, robbing Russian fur hunters and the aboriginal population.

27) This competition was so serious that it came to armed clashes between detachments arriving in Yakutia from Yeniseisk and Mangazeya, and then from Tomsk.

actions of the *voivode* Shakhovskoy in relation to the subjugation of Yakutia. As a result, Galkin's detachment could get to the *zimovye* built by V. Bugor on the river Ilim only around mid-September: traversing the path from the Yeniseisk *ostrog* to the Ilim *portage*, which lay upstream of the Yenisei, the Angara and the Ilim, took at least six weeks. One of the main goals of this campaign was to use the information received by V. Bugor and to build *ostrog* on the Lena, ahead of the Mangazeya, and thereby secure the newly explored "*zemlitsa*" for the Yeniseisk *uyezd*, which would create a base for further penetration of the Yeniseisk military servicemen along the Lena and its tributaries.

However, I. Galkin managed to build *ostrog* only on the Ilim, in the place where the *portage* on the Lena began. Having wintered in this place, Galkin's detachment at the end of the spring of 1631 went down the Lena, then went to the river Aldan, collecting furs from the local population. This campaign was accompanied by constant hostilities: sources note that the Yeniseisk detachment withstood several serious armed clashes with the *Yakut toions*, and when the detachment began to return, it was attacked by the *Kangalas*, led by Tygyn himself, going up the Lena. In such a situation, it was not necessary to talk about the construction of a fortified point in the land of the *Yakuts* - there were clearly not enough forces to fulfill that task.

The *ostrog* in the land of the *Yakuts* was next built in 1632 by a detachment of the Yeniseisk people under the leadership of the *strelec*²⁸⁾ centurion Peter Beketov. The whole experience of the foundation of *ostrogs* by military servicemen makes it possible to suggest that this *ostrog* had to be built on the site of modern Yakutsk, to where it was transferred ten years later by the first Yakutsk *voivodes* Peter Golovin and Matvey Glebov. The determining factor in choosing a site for the construction of any fortified point (*ostrog*, *ostrozhek*²⁹⁾ or *zimovye*) was not only the terrain, but also its strategic importance: proximity to the river (the main route for the projection of military units across the Siberian expanses) and to the main center of local resistance in each *zemlitsa*,

28) *Strelec* - an equipped serviceman in the 16th - early 18th centuries, who served in the state *Strelec army* and was armed with a "fire fight", usually an infantryman, less often riding infantry. The *Streltsy* (pl.) in Pre-imperial Russia became the first permanent army units.

29) *Ostrozhek* - little *ostrog*.



Photo 4. Tungus male holding *palma* weapon.

which made it possible to establish control over the nearest groups of the aboriginal population, and also to gain a foothold in the new territory. In cases in which military servicemen met with serious resistance from the local population, a fortified point was placed on the very border of the *zemlitsa* and became the basis for its gradual systematic subordination. The first method of choosing a place was used in the founding of almost all cities and *ostrogs* in Western Siberia. The second was used at the foundation of the Yeniseisk, Kuznetsk, Krasnoyarsk and Bratsk *ostrogs*.

The main opponents of the Yeniseisk military servicemen in the Middle Lena from the very beginning were the *Kangalas toyons*. For a fast “pacification” of the recalcitrant

“sovereign disobedients”, the *ostrog* should have been placed in the very center of their territory, the center of “disobedience”. However, the balance of power was completely different. Surpassing their enemies in terms of the quality of weapons - firearms, chain mail armor and sabers against arrows, *kuyak*³⁰⁾ and *palm*³¹⁾ - the military servicemen were nonetheless significantly inferior to them in numbers, and thus were forced to look for another place to build an *ostrog*, guided not so much by considerations about the best means of subjugation the enemy as by the conditions of their own security. But, instead of creating a base for a gradual penetration into the Middle Lena and setting up a *ostrog* on the border of the “*Yakolskaya*

30) *Kuyak* is an armor made from small plates sewn like scales onto a woven or leather base.

31) The *Yakut* “*palma*” is a single-edged piercing and cutting weapon. It was of two types: “*batuya*” for everyday camping, and household tool that served as a spear, knife, ax, with a medium-length handle and a knife-shaped blade; “*batas*” is a type of weapon, and since the 19th century it was used as a hunting tool for large animals, with a long handle and a broken straight line in the form of a blade.

*Zemlyitsa*³²⁾”, somewhere, at the mouth of the river Synyaya (Blue)³³⁾, and, thereby, constantly threatening the *Kangalas toyons*, Pyotr Beketov in 1632 behaved completely unexpectedly: he moved downstream the Lena to the mouth of the Aldan, where, after collecting *yasak* during the summer, he set up an *ostrog* on the right bank of the Lena in a place that was not convenient enough for its floodplain. It was such a wrong decision that two years later, the *ataman* Galkin, who replaced Beketov, had to put up a new *ostrog* - it is very likely that the former *ostrog* was simply demolished by ice during the spring flood of the Lena. At the same time, a strong enemy, the *Kangalas toyons*, remained behind the backs of the military servicemen, blocking their possible escape route in a critical situation. Such a decision by an experienced leader of a military unit who also had rich experience in building *ostrogs* on the Angara, looks completely thoughtless.

Subsequent events clearly testify that the choice of a place for the construction of the *ostrog* was not accidental. It is very probable that this side of the bank of the Lena belonged to the *Borogon toyon* Loguy, an old and irreconcilable opponent of Tygyn, and was at a sufficient distance from the *Kangalas*, moreover, on the other bank of the Lena. It is also worth assuming that the builders of the *ostrog* did not experience serious concerns about the *Yakut* tribes living in the neighborhood. In any case, there was the establishment at that time of some special relations between the Yeniseisk military people and the *Borogons*, and primarily, of course, with Loguy himself. It is noteworthy that the first mention of the name of *toyon* Loguy in Russian written sources dates back to 1636 and is associated with an attack on his *ulus*³⁴⁾ and Russian *yasak collectors* made by a large detachment of *Yakut Kniazeces*, united under the leadership of the sons of Tygyn. It is also curious

32) This name at first the Russian people called “Yakutia” .

33) The left tributary of the Lena, which basin by some researchers was considered to be the southwestern border of the settlement of the *Yakuts* by the 1630s.

34) *Ulus* - a tribal association in a certain territory, subject to a *khan* or another leader of the peoples of Central Asia and Siberia. In Russia, *ulus* was an administrative-territorial unit like the Russian *volost* for the *Buryats*, *Kalmyks* and *Yakuts*.

that the Borogonsk *volost*³⁵⁾, closest to the then Lensk *ostrog*, for the first time appears in the list of *yasak volosts* only from 1638, that is, until that time the *Borogons* had been free from *yasak*.

It is worth paying attention to the behavior of the *Borogon toion* Loguy during all the anti-Russian actions of the *Yakuts* in the 1630-40s, where the *Kangalas* were invariably the initiators. At first, it probably looked very strange and inconsistent, but if we try to link his actions with some special relationship with the Russians, then everything will fit its place: Loguy could not openly oppose the *Yakut Kniazeces* united under the leadership of the sons of Tygyn, and also could not even initially ignore their anti-Russian actions. At the same time, he understood that after the destruction or expulsion of the Russians, he would not be able to resist the *Kangalas*, who were clearly in the lead among the *Yakut Kniazeces*, and their allies, whose military power, in the event of their successful actions, would undoubtedly increase and the aggressiveness of the *Kangalas* directed precisely against the *Borogons*.

Considering all of these circumstances, it seems that Beketov's foundation of the Lensk *ostrog* on the right bank of the Lena near or on the territory of the *Borogon toyon* Loguy was not an accident. The implacable opponent of Tygyn could not miss the opportunity to acquire a reliable ally, at least from a military point of view. And his political choice at that time turned out to be justified, although later the Russian administration gave priority to the descendants of Tygyn as senior in position among the families of the *Yakut Kniazeces*.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the *Yakut Kniazeces* very quickly figured out the relationship between the detachments of military servicemen from different garrisons operating on the Lena and its tributaries - from Yeniseisk, Mangazeya and Tomsk - and began to use the situation to their advantage, provoking detachments of Russian *yasak collectors* to attack each other. This chaos in Yakutia, which lasted several years, prompted the government to create a new administrative unit on the Lena, covering almost

35) Volost - from the Old Russian "power, country, district". Here: the territorial-administrative unit of the aboriginal population with the most authoritative leader (the chief), where a certain amount of furs was collected.

the whole of Eastern Siberia - the Lensk *Razryad*³⁶⁾, which radically changed the situation in the Middle Lena.

The first plan for how to join the Russian state with the creation of an independent county inside the basin of the river Lena was described in detail by the former Mangazeya *voivode* Andrey Palitsyn in 1632. But the central government started to implement it only in 1638. *Stolnik*³⁷⁾ Peter Golovin and Matvey Glebov were appointed the first Yakutsk *voivodes*. Their administrative apparatus was formed by transferring a significant number of people from the Moscow *Prikaz*³⁸⁾ to their subordination. The formation of the first Yakutsk garrison was made by transferring military servicemen from the garrisons of other Siberian cities: 245 people from Tobolsk, fifty from Berezov and one hundred from the Yeniseisk *ostrog*. The Siberian *voivodes* were supposed to provide people with the experience of service on the Lena, and the Yeniseisk *voivode* also had two interpreters with ability in the *Yakut* or *Tungus* languages.

Until the summer of 1639, the required number of people from Tobolsk and Berezov military units were supposed to be gathered in the main city of Siberia, then Tobolsk. During the summer, before the onset of frost, the *voivodes* Golovin and Glebov with their garrison and, together with grain supplies, were supposed to get to Makovsk *ostrozhek*, where during the winter, together with a hundred Yeniseisk military service people, also transferred to the Yakutsk *voivodes*, they were to transport all supplies by *portage* to the Yeniseisk *ostrog*.

36) Razryad - a large military and administrative unit created on the outskirts of the Russian state by combining some uyezds for operational management of the territory and to solve military problems (when necessary), a prototype of the future unit *guberniya*. On the Lena, a Razrad was created as a part of one *uyezd*. Probably, Moscow government considered that the huge, rapidly expanding territory would have to be divided into several uyezds. Ten years later, Ilimsk *uyezd* was excluded from it. After that, the Lensk Razrad began to consist of the Yakutsk and Ilimsk uyezds.

37) Stolnik - before 17th century it was a courtier with a rank below the *boyar*, appointed from representatives of noble families and holding the highest positions in the administration; originally a courtier who served at the princely or royal table (*stol*).

38) Prikaz was a highest official body of the central government in Pre-Imperial Russia in 16th-early 18th centuries. Those *prikazes* were permanent institutions and the basis of their activities was (although not fully maintained) the functional principle. The term itself comes from the word "order", meant as an assignment.

In May, 1639, P. Golovin and M. Glebov already were in Tobolsk, where they took under their command 295 military service people from Tobolsk and Berezov. They included thirty professional carpenters, capable to build ships, and two blacksmiths, familiar with the repair of firearms. In Tobolsk, they received cash money, grain and salt as part of their own salary for the current 1639 and the future 1640 and 1641, as well as salaries for the entire Lena detachment, including one hundred people who were already waiting for them in Yeniseisk.

The detachment set off from Tobolsk in mid-June 1639. Having passed along the Irtysh, Ob and Ket rivers, *voivodes* Golovin and Glebov both reached Makovsk *ostrozhek* in the fall, as it was planned before. During the winter of 1639/1640, military servicemen were engaged in transporting their supplies along the winter route to the Yeniseisk *ostrog*. After the liberation of the rivers from ice, the participants of the campaign went along the Yenisei, Angara and Ilim to the Ilim *portage*, where, during the next winter, they were engaged in transferring their supplies to the Ust-Kutsk *ostrozhek*. Only in the summer of 1641, having descended along the Lena, did the first Yakutsk *voivodes* with their detachment arrive in the Yakutsk *ostrog*.



Photo 5. Wooden tower of Yakutsk ostrog
(2nd half of 20th century)

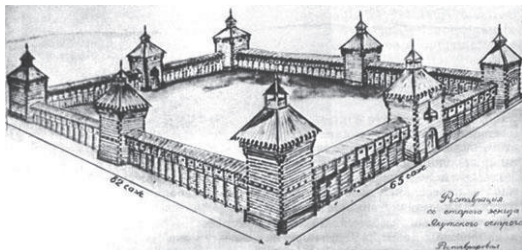


Photo 6. Old picture of Yakutsk

The establishment in the Yakutsk *ostrog* of its own permanent *voivodes* and its own garrison led to very serious changes in the Lena basin. Firstly, the formation of a permanent garrison of more than four hundred people (a big

amount of armed people for Siberia in 17th century), provided an impressive force and allowed the first Yakutsk *voivodes* not to be afraid of the attacks of the *Yakut kniazeces*, and also helped to move the Yakutsk *ostrog* to a more optimal place for it - on the shore of Lake Saysary³⁹⁾. Thus, full control was established over the descendants of Tygyn and over the whole territory of the *Kangalas*. Secondly, the confrontation between detachments of military servicemen from different West Siberian garrisons was finally stopped, and all the military units, which were by that time dispersed on the territory of Yakutia, were forced to submit to the new *voivodes*. The *Yakut kniazeces* also lost the opportunity to use the Russian military in their domestic confrontations, which, in turn, contributed to the extinction of tribal clashes. Thirdly, a flexible policy towards the *Yakut* population, while taking into account some social differentiation, preserved and legally legitimized the privileges of *kniazeces* and other "best people"⁴⁰⁾, and finally led to the latter's interest in cooperation with the Russian administration.

Conflicts between the *Yakuts* persisted, but they were no longer so fierce and were mainly focused on a natural property: the preserved documents include numerous cases related to cattle theft, seizure of pasture and hay lands, various petty thefts, etc.

Being mainly interested in obtaining furs from the aboriginal population, the Russian administration prevented armed clashes not only among the *Yakut* tribes, but also between the *Yakuts* and other ethnic groups - the *Tungus*, *Yukagir* and others. The result of such a policy was the rapid expansion of the territory where the *Yakuts* lived. Comparing to the 1630s, when the *Yakut* population was concentrated in the Middle Lena and along the Aldan, by the turn of the 17th -18th centuries the *Yakuts* settled over a vast territory covering a significant part of Eastern Siberia⁴¹⁾.

The creation of a new administrative unit on the river Lena allowed the Russian authorities to gain a firm foothold in Eastern Siberia. And the

39) The modern city of Yakutsk is still located there nowadays.

40) Best people - in Old Russia this meant the wealthy and generally distinguished representatives of the local population, in comparison to their fellow tribesmen.

41) The territory of Yakutia currently covers more than 3,103,000 sq. km with a population of about 1,000,000 people.

formation of a significant garrison not only ensured this consolidation, but also allowed the intensive penetration of military service people into new territories previously unknown to the Russian people.

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