

IN SEARCH OF MYTH AND REAL HISTORICAL EVENTS

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Annotation. Elley and Omogoy are considered the legendary ancestors of the Sakha (Yakuts), the indigenous people of North-Eastern Siberia. We have put forward a hypothesis that the legendary Elley is a historical person and the first pastoralists in the territory of the middle Lena.

The aim of the study search for Elley historical prototype and determine the probable time of his arrival in the middle Lena and the origins of cattle breeding in this territory.

Subjects and methods. The analysis of all the existing versions of the legends about Elley, data from humanitarian, historical, archaeological, genetic studies, which have a connection with the historical prototype of the hero.

Results. Analyzing the Sakha legends about the ancestors, we concluded that the personalities and events described in these legends are based on real historical facts. Probably, cattle began to breed on the territory of Yakutia during the rise of the Xiongnu at the beginning of our century.

Conclusion. A number of scientific facts indicate an earlier period of the appearance of the Yakut cattle breed in Yakutia. At the present time, we can state with a certain degree of probability that the personality of Elley is connected with the events that took place in the XII century in East Asia during the period of Song China.

Keywords: legends Sakha, Elley, Northern Song period Empire, Tian-zou, Qinzong.

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Introduction. Elley and Omogoy are considered the legendary ancestors of the Sakha (Yakuts), the indigenous people of North-Eastern Siberia, who have lived in this territory since time immemorial. According to the All-Russian census of 2002, 432,290 people who consider themselves Sakha live on the territory of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) [1]. There are 456,288 Sakha-speakers throughout Russia [2]. Thus, the Sakha language is currently one of the most common languages of the indigenous peoples of Siberia and the subpolar regions of the Earth.

There are numerous versions of the legends of Elley. The earliest mentions of him in written sources date back to 1696-1698 [3]. The first attempt to collect and systematize myths and legends about Elley was

made in 1921-1926, by the famous Yakut ethnographer, G.V. Ksenofontov. The collected materials were published only after his death in 1977. [4]. He considered Elley a mythical hero. So, G.V. Ksenofontov, in his monograph, "Uranghai Sakhalar Essays on the ancient History of the Yakuts", wrote about him [about Elley]: "At present, most of the Yakut storytellers paint him as a simple person. Only within the limits of one Kangalassky ulus do they endow him with the title of a khan's son, that is, of royal origin. So, like the mythological parallels found among the southern steppe peoples, Turkish and Mongol tribes, come to the same conclusion that the idea of the ancestor of the people is closely related to the images of the legendary kings" [5]. These ideas of the au-

thor have become widespread. Thus, in modern scientific literature, Elley is referred to as an epic ancestor, as well as a mythical ancestor, cultural hero and legendary image [6].

In recent years, publications have appeared that Elley is a real person who fled to the north after the fall of the Liao Empire and is probably associated with the dynasty that ruled this state from 907 to 1125 [3, 7-9]. In 2008, the Turkologist, Yu. Vasiliev admitted that Elley was a prince from the Khitan Yelü dynasty. He came to this conclusion while testing the hypothesis of his teacher, the Turkologist, V.M. Nadelyaev [7].

For the first time, a hint of the noble origin of Elley is present in the legend discovered in the drafts of G.F. Miller, compiled between 1737 and 1747 [10]. It resembles the leg-

end recorded by G.V. Ksenofontov, in 1921 with a 72-year-old resident of Nemyuginsky region, Nikolai Fedorov (entry No. 19. P. 32-33) [4]. So, G.F. Miller writes after it became clear that the Batulin [meaning Omogoy] trembled at the sight of Elley: "... The wife suggested that the husband apparently has a mysterious respect for the newcomer, since he begins to tremble in his presence, and the stranger must belong to a noble family. "But it has significant differences, according to Miller:

Elley – "... a poor stranger who has no relatives ..." [10], and according to Nikolai Fedorov, "He came from the Tatars, and his older brother was their king. The latter waged a war with the Russians and was defeated by them" (p. 33). G.V. Ksenofontov translated the Yakut word "nuuchcha" as "Russian," while Vasiliev admits that the word "nuuchcha" probably meant the Jurchens, which in a number of sources were called "niu-chi" or "nuuchzhen" [7]. We carried out a detailed analysis of the work of Yu. Vasiliev in another study [3], so we will not dwell on it. It should be noted that for 200 years the main plots of the legend have not changed significantly. The storyteller told Miller about Elley's noble origins, but he probably refrained from mentioning his royal origins and the defeat of "nuuchcha". It is known that even at the end of the XVII century, Chosen Ides wrote that the ancestors of the Sakha were ousted from the Mongolian and Kalmyk lands by the Russians.

Subjects and methods. The analysis of all the existing versions of the legends about Elley, data from humanitarian, historical, archaeological, genetic studies, which have a connection with the historical pro-

totype of the hero and the events of the supposed period of Elley's arrival on the territory of the Middle Lena, is carried out. Having dealt with this problem for more than 10 years, we have accumulated a lot of material, which was subjected to a comprehensive analysis in this study.

Results and discussion. There are many versions of the legends about Elley and Omogoy. It should be noted that only G.V. Ksenofontov collected 34 versions of the legends about Elley. We analyzed in detail all the legends available to us about the ancestors of the Sakha and made the following scenario for the development of events. So, the first to arrive to the middle Lena was the Batulin resident, Omogoy, with his friends: a shaman and a blacksmith. In the Sakha gene pool, according to the study of Y-chromosome markers, three large clusters are noted, probably belonging to the descendants of Omogoy, his friend and Elley. The same data confirm the stories that Omogoy and Elley were relatives. According to our calculations, the common ancestor of these three persons lived between 1083 - 1465 AD (1249) [8]. So, in the dynastic chronicle "Liao shi" in the description of the biography of Yelü Wuzhi (耶律 屋 質, Yelü Wuzhi), it is described about the condemnation of the brothers Liuge (劉 哥, Liuge) and Yelü Pendou (耶律 盆 都, Yelü Pendou) for participating in planning a rebellion in 948. According to the translation of L.V. The Tyurymina of the Manchu version of the chronicle "Dailiao guruni suduri" – "Liuge was removed [from the post of tiin] and settled on the border, Pendou was sent [to live] to a wild people fearing robberies" [11]. On this occasion, G.G. Pikov reports:

"From time to time, ambassadors and Khitan were sent to individual Siberian tribes. They had a custom of sending those who committed any crimes there. In the last section of "Liao shi" "Lezhuan" (列傳, Lièzhuan) in the biographies of Yelü Wuzhi (tsz. 77) and Pendou (tsz. 113) mentions the fact of the exile of the rebel brothers, Liuge and Pendou, to the possession of the Kyrgyz in the upper reaches of the river, Yenisei (948), as ambassadors. Upon his return, Pendou received forgiveness" [12]. Yelü Liuge, removed from all ranks and exiled, probably left his descendants near Lake Baikal. As for Omogoy, his escape from the Baikal territory of the upper Lena is mentioned in the legends recorded by I. Billings [13], G.V. Ksenofontov [4], S. Bolo [14] and others.

The statements of J. Lindenau (1733-1743) and F.I. Strahlenberg (1730) that the resettlement of the Sakha took place recently and this resettlement was led by Badschei [15], and in another case "Deptzi Tarchan tegin" [16] as well as the stories that 20 or more families moved with Omogoy became the basis of the migration theory of the origin of the Yakuts. The question remains unresolved: "How did the Yakut cattle get to the territory of the middle Lena?" A number of legends say that cattle were transported from the upper reaches of the Lena on rafts. According to others, the cattle were found in the middle Lena valley.

One of the first to write the legend about Omogoy was I. Billings, with the head of the geographical and astronomical expedition of the northern part of Russia in 1785-1794. [16]. According to his records, Omogoy-baai¹ moved with his cattle and people from the south in con-

¹ By I. Billings Omogai Bey.

nection with the oppression of the Mongols to the Buryat steppes, located near Lake Baikal between the city of Irkutsk and the Lena River. He lived here for several years in constant clashes with the Buryats. After one major skirmish, he, taking advantage of the time of the defective moon, during which the Buryats, according to superstition, never attacked their enemies, crossed with cattle to the other bank of the Lena River in the place where the settlements of Kachug and Verkholsk are currently located. Adhering to the river and stopping for the night in places convenient for cattle pastures, they reached the mouth of the Olyokma River. According to I. Billings, Omogoy could not stay at the mouth of the Olyokma for a long time, despite the abundance of pastures and game, because it was the ancestral lands of the Tungus. On the way, his hunters found Elley, also a refugee from the Buryats. Omogoy took him in as a worker. Then the stories of the legend, described by G.V. Ksenofontov and S. Bolo have some differences. These stories reveal a probable clue of an unknown genus of three Yakut lineages of Y-chromosome haplotypes detected by genetic research data [8]. So, according to I. Billings, Omogoy's own daughter was refused marriage by Elley because of his foresight that she would never have children. After the death of her father, unlike later legends², she married the worker Omogoy Batulin, but truly did not have children. Batulin (probably Batyly) had several wives and thanks to this he left offspring. Batulians strengthened due to the annexation of Khoro. At which time this intensification took place, Billings' inter-

locutor did not know³ [13]. According to the research of the historian V.V. According to one version, the Ushnitsky ancestor of the Batulians is the shaman Kerekeen; in addition, Khoro and Batulians are different names of the same genus [17].

According to another, contrary to the I. Billings version of the legend, Omogoy found cattle in the Tuymaada valley (see G.V. Ksenofontov, legends Nos. 50 and 53 [4], S. Bolo pp. 8-11 [14]). So, G.V. Ksenofontov cited in the book "Elleyeda" a legend published in the newspaper "Yakutskaya Zhizn" on February 16, 1908. Thus, according to her: "... bypassing the seats behind the southern Ytyk-Khaya, I [Omogoy] found a pair of foals, a male and a female. Having raised and multiplied them, I acquired horses. Then at the northern Ytyk-Khay, I found a pair of calves, also a male and a female. So I got livestock" [4]. There are several reasons to believe the legends about the early appearance of livestock in Yakutia.

1. The Sakha had the custom of "kyidaa", which consisted in the expulsion of a certain number of white horses as a gift to the patron of horses, Dyosogoy ayy. It is described in detail by French researcher Emilia May [18]. The custom is ancient, but its origin is unknown. We assume that this custom could have arisen during the formation of the first steppe empires of nomadic peoples. Thus, some archaeological artifacts associated with the Xiongnu Pokrovsky burial ground (390-190 BC) and the multi-layered site Ulakhan-Segelennyakh (layer IVB - 200-900 AD) contain the bones of a horse and a bull. In addition, from the same layer IVb of the Ulakhan-

Segelennyakh site, a bone pendant-amulet in the form of a pair of horse heads turned in different directions, which once again testifies to the early penetration of shepherd nomads into the territory of modern Yakutia. The cattle brought by the Xiongnu in the territory of the central Lena, probably ran wild. According to the conclusions of L.M. Baskin and Chikurova E.A. feral domesticated livestock are more resistant to survival in nature than wild ones [19].

2. Cattle-breeders know the phenomenon of imprinting, which was studied in detail by the German physiologist Nobel Prize Winner, K. Lorenz, in gray geese [20]. For cattle, 24 hours are enough for imprinting to develop, while in moose this period can extend up to 10 days [19]. In the 50s, last years' herds of Yakut cows consisted of a mixture of Yakut and Kholmogorsk cattle breeds. The milkmaids were always very careful about calving. If a pregnant cow disappears, then they tried to find her as soon as possible so that she calves in the presence of people. The herd usually always contained Yakut cows with "wild" genes, if they are not found within a day from the moment of calving, then they can only be caught by shepherds using a horse, and if a week has passed, it becomes very difficult to drive a cow with a calf back into the herd ... During this time, they become so wild that when they see people from afar, they immediately run away to the forest with all their might. Therefore, the first day after calving a cow is the most suitable period for the domestication of calved cows with a calf.

3. The study of the genome of the Yakut cattle revealed that it is genetically closer to the Korean (Hanwoo)

² According to the legends collected by G.V. Ksenofontov, S. Bolo and others. Omogoy's own daughter, having received a refusal from Elley to marry her, committed suicide.

³ According to current opinions, this happened in connection with the permission of trade with China under the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689. I. Billings talked with his interlocutor 100 years later, during this time it is quite possible that the memory of this period may be forgotten (Tikhonov, Zakharova, and Neustroeva 2020).

and Chinese breeds, while it has a mutation not found in any cow breed in the world in the NRAP gene (Nebulin-related-anchoring protein). 8 species of animals adapted to cold have such a mutation: 4 of them hibernate and 4 species of marine mammals. These facts indicate an earlier period of the appearance of the Yakut cattle breed in Yakutia. The cow genome contains 86.5% “taurine-like” and 13.5% “indicine-like” genomes [21]. According to another study, the late Pleistocene horses of Yakutia could have survived during the time of the arrival of the Sakha, and probably introgression of their genetic material into the genome of the Yakut horse took place [22]. Apparently, this could have been facilitated by the “kyidaa” custom that existed among the Sakha in ancient times.

Turkologist Yu. Vasiliev suggested that Elley is the prince of the Khitan dynasty Yelü [7]. It should be noted that none of the pre-revolutionary⁴ and post-revolutionary records of the legends about Elley say anything about his royal origin⁵. We find such information only in “Elleyada” by G.V. Ksenofontov, moreover, only according to the stories of the natives of the Khangalassky ulus. So, in 8 legends it is said that Elley is the son of the Tatar king (legends №№ 16, 19, 21, 23, 28, 30, 34) [4]. According to G.V. Ksenofontov's Tatar origin of Elley in the Sakha legends arose later, after acquaintance with the “Tatars” people “... in all likelihood, not earlier than the 19th century, when they began to arrive in the Yakutsk Territory as exiles. Noticing the similarity of the Tatar

language with his own, an ordinary Yakut had to come to the conclusion that his ancestor, Elley, was once a Tatar” [5]. In 1922, G.V. Ksenofontov recorded from Mikhail Dmitriev, a resident of the 3rd Malzhegarsky nasleg, the legend that Elley had 6 brothers. The older brothers beat the younger [Elley], the latter accidentally killed one of the brothers. After that Elley, together with his 270 or 300 year old father, fled (legend 42). A year earlier, he wrote down a legend from 72-year-old Nikolai Fyodorov, a resident of Nemyuginsky nasleg, who stated: “They say that he [Elley] came from the Tatars, and his older brother was their king. The latter waged war with the Russians and was defeated by them. Elley ran alone. Previously, in his homeland, he had letters and books, but when fleeing, in a hurry, he forgot to take them with him. That is why we, Yakuts, now do not have our own diplomas”.

According to the dynastic chronicle, “Liao shi” (遼史, Liáo Shǐ) translated into Russian from the original in Manchu language “Daylyao guruni suduri” [11] of the last Liao emperor was called Tian-zuo (遼天祚帝, Emperor Tian-zuo of Liao). He was born on June 5, 1075, ascended the throne by will on February 15, 1101, and was deposed on March 26, 1125. Tien-zuo had 4 sons, the first son was captured by the Jurchen before anyone else, the third son was ordered to die by suicide under false pretenses, the second son died, and the younger son, probably was with him until captivity. The Emperor Tien-zuo apparently had no brothers. But according

to Denis C. Twitchett et al. Tien-zuo had 6 sons [23].

What facts can speak about the Khitan origin of Elley:

1) Distribution of related Y-chromosome haplotypes designated as “Elley” around the world [8]. So, we find such haplotypes in the east in China, Korea and Mongolia, and in the west, Afghanistan, Cyprus and on the territory of Semirechye (Zhetysu). We have shown that the haplotypes in the east may be related to the Yelu dynasty, and to the west they could spread along with Yelu Dashi⁶ [8];

2) Haplogroup N1 was found in the remains of representatives of archaeological cultures of the West Liao River Valley, starting with the Hongshan culture with an age of 4000-3000 BP. Beginning with the Upper Xiajiadian culture (3000–2700 BP), the type of farming changed to nomadic, and the haplogroup of the Y chromosome N1c with TatC mutation appeared (such is the haplogroup of the Y chromosome, probable descendants of Elley) [24]. The descendants of these first pastoralists could later become part of the Xiongnu and Khitans. The first mentions of the Khitan appeared in the Wei-shu dynastic history, written in 551-554. [25];

3). According to archaeologist, V.V. Pitulco, in 2015, local residents donated a fibula found near the Yana River. So, the bone belonged to a man, 160 cm in height, approximately 20-30 years old. The average probability of radiocarbon age is 766 BP, i.e. 1184 [26]. The haplogroup of the Y chromosome and single nucleotide polymorphisms correspond

⁴ Before the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia.

⁵ The reason for which may be several circumstances. During the period of tsarist Russia, censorship, and the silence about the royal origin of Elley, the storytellers from other non-Khangalassky uluses, the desire not to unnecessarily exalt the Khangalassky district. This is evident from the fact that according to the stories of residents of non-Khangalassky uluses, Elley first arrives in the Tuymaada valley, and according to the Khangalassky people he first arrives in the Engsieli valley (where the Khangalassky people live up to the present time), which is confirmed by a number of facts.

⁶ Yelü Dashi, a member of the Yelü clan, after the fall of the Liao empire, founded the state of the Kara Khitan on the territory of Semirechye (Zhetysu).

to the haplotype and haplogroup we defined for the Elley genus, with the exception of one mutation coinciding with the site of DNA degradation. It should be noted that according to the legends, the first son of Elley, the wandering preacher Lamynkha Syuryuk, went missing [9].

4). In the 80s of the last century, in the territory of the Khangalassky ulus, a treasure of 147 Northern Song Chinese coins of the late X - early XII centuries was found. The coin collection year ends in 1125 [27], i.e. with the year of the fall of the Liao Empire, the coins probably belonged to Elley;

5). The hole of Chinese coins was used by Yakut shamans to suck out the "evil spirit" causing illness from the patient's body, for this, air was sucked in through this hole with a noise, and the sucked "infection" was spat with the words "home", repeating this action three times. According to R. Bravina et al. "... the ritual functionality of Chinese coins allows us to conclude that they are quite widespread among the Yakuts." The authors note that at the beginning of the XX century, a certain Sylyky - D.P. Sivtsev found a fairly large hoard of Chinese coins in a tymtai⁷ [28]. Thus, a large volume of Chinese coins, incl. dated X-XII centuries, found on the territory of Yakutia (with the absence of such on the territory of Siberia) is a strong argument in favor of the hypothesis of the origin of Elley's Khitan origin.

The legends about Elley say a lot about his innovations in the life of

the ancient inhabitants of the middle Lena. So, according to legends, life on the middle Lena before the arrival of Elley was different. Here they did not know koumiss dishes made of birch bark, birch and leather, chorons (including three-legged ones), fish-pot and nets for fishing, sokhso⁸, cross-bows for wild animals, smokers for livestock, sele⁹, cattle sheds, hedges, yurts with inclined walls, windows and stoves, no Ysyakhs¹⁰, no urasa moguls¹¹, etc. All of the above was done by Elley. He is credited with the invention of blacksmith's fur, the production of dairy products and butter. Indeed, an impressive scale of innovation, worthy only of a highly educated person. According to legends, his father was an educated man and had a book, but when they fled in a hurry, Elley forgot to take this book with him. It is said that he hid his father in a bovine leather bag and rode northwest on horseback. His father died on the way. He was buried at the headwaters of the river, along which he sailed to the Erkeani Valley¹².

Could Elley be the son of Emperor Tien-zuo? If you trace the fate of the last emperor Liao, then the date of his death remains the most mysterious. So, according to the "History of the Iron Empire" he died at the age of 54, that is, in 1128, in 1140, he was posthumously elevated to the dignity of Yu-wang, and in 1144, the remains were reburied [11]. According to the monograph "The Cambridge history of China" by Denis Twitchett et al. writes that: "Little

is known about the life of Tian-tso in captivity or the date and circumstances of his death." The authors write that according to Chin shih, he was still alive in 1126, as one of the servants falsely accused him of planning an escape [23]. In this regard, Ye-Long Li writes: "Tian-tso was relegated to the title of Haibin-'wang and sent to a place east of the city of Changboshan, where he was settled in a room built for him. A year later ... he died " [25]. If Tian-tso managed to escape, then who accompanied him? It is known that: "... all of Tianzuo's children had been distributed to the soldiers as rewards" [29]. It should be noted that the two Northern Song emperors were exiled to the north after the capture of the capital of China by the Jurchens with all their servants, wives and children [29]. On this occasion, N.I. Bichurin wrote: "The Niuzhi took Khai-fyn-fu [Kaifeng], the capital of China, and took two princes abroad, where they ended their lives in extreme poverty on the banks of the Amur (in the city of Wu-go-chen, located at the confluence of the Sungari uly in Amur). But the fate of the last Northern Song emperor, Qinzong (钦宗, Qinzong), and his sons, who are serving exile with him, is not very clear. On this occasion, P.B. Ebrey only wrote: "Qinzong lived until 1161, never ransomed by his younger brother Gaozong" [29]. Who knows what really happened?

According to Y.I. Lindenau, Elley had 8 sons and 4 daughters^{13, 14}[15], who became the founders of six cen-

⁷ A vessel made of birch bark with a volume of approximately 8-10 liters.

⁸ Trap for the hare and game.

⁹ Long rope to which the foals are tied.

¹⁰ According to A.N. Gogolev Ysyakh resembles the holiday of the Huns, which they arranged at the beginning of summer on the 5th moon.

¹¹ A large three-belt urasa up to 10-12 m high. The belts symbolize the lower, middle and upper worlds.

¹² According to the legends of the inhabitants of the Khangalassky ulus, he sailed to the Erkeani valley, and according to others Tuymaada (where the modern city of Yakutsk stands). The facts show that he actually sailed into the Erkeani Valley.

¹³ The number of Elley's children and their names are interpreted in different ways. Like the emperors of Liao, in the Sakha, a person's name (before the adoption of Christianity) can change several times during his life, in accordance with his characteristics and deeds.

¹⁴ The number of Elley's children and their names are interpreted in different ways. Like the emperors of Liao, in the Sakha, a person's name (before the adoption of Christianity) can change several times during his life, in accordance with his characteristics and deeds.

tral uluses of Yakutia. According to Y-chromosome markers, which are only passed from father to son, there are three large related lines with common roots in the Sakha population. These lines belong to three large males of the Sakha: Elley, Omogoy and Batuli¹⁵, respectively, 47, 19, 22% of the male population. According to our data, 6% of male lines belong to the autochthonous population, which may include surviving descendants related to the Scythians, Xiongnu and ancient inhabitants of the region [8]. According to M. Sikora et al. the female population in Northeast Asia has remained constant since the Holo-

cene [26]. At the same time, the male population of the middle Lena was constantly changing due to refugees during the periods of the fall and rise of the steppe empires.

Conclusion. A number of scientific facts indicate an earlier period of the appearance of the Yakut cattle breed in Yakutia. At the present time, we can state with a certain degree of probability that the personality of Elley is connected with the events that took place in the XII century in East Asia during the period of Song China.

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