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Source: *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 31  
(Jan. - Jun., 1901), pp. 65-110

Published by: [Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2842786>

Accessed: 15/06/2014 21:55

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## THE YAKUTS.

ABRIDGED FROM THE RUSSIAN OF SIEROSHEVSKI,<sup>1</sup> BY W. G. SUMNER, Professor of Political and Social Science in Yale University, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A., and revised and completed by M. Sieroshevski.

## I.—SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATION.

THE Yakuts inhabit a territory in North-east Siberia which is roughly 1,300,000 square miles in area, equal to about two-fifths of the area of the United States without Alaska. It all lies north of the parallel of 60 and is colder than any other part of the inhabited globe. The Yakuts number a little over 220,000. (See note A, p. 108.)

[p. 415.] The economic unit amongst the Yakuts, taking the whole territory into account, consists of four persons—two grown labourers, one youth, and one boy or old man incompetent to do full work. Ten head of cattle are regarded as indispensable for the maintenance of such a group. Above that norm the Yakuts think that comfort begins, and below it, poverty. In those districts where fish can be obtained as an adjunct, those who have ten head of cattle are well off; but where neither hunting nor fishing offers additional resources, fifteen or twenty head of cattle are indispensable to secure the existence of a family. The latter is the case in the north, on account of the duration of the winter and the badness of the meadows (see note B, p. 108). In the south, where tillage is available as an important subsidiary industry to maintain life, and where it is easy to find wages occupations in winter, the limit of independent means of existence falls to one and a half head of cattle per soul. In spite, therefore, of the wide difference between the absolute amounts of wealth indicated by these limits—from six to twenty head of cattle, *i.e.*, from 120 to 400 rubles (\$60 to \$200) of capital—all the households that are at the limit stand on the verge of distress. The least accident overthrows the security of their existence, and the least subsidiary resource gives them a chance to live and grow. Such households constitute the great mass of the population. In one *Nasleg* taken as a specimen, of 248 households, 101 are at the limit; 10 have no cattle; 74 have one head, or one and a fraction, per soul; 54 have from 3 to 9 head per soul, that is, are well-to-do in different grades; one has 12 and one has 18 head for each soul

<sup>1</sup> *Yakuty*, published by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, St. Petersburg, 1896, vol. i, pp. 720. The author, a Pole, was sent as a political exile to the land of the Yakuts, where he remained more than 12 years.

in the household. The author knows only one man in the whole Yakut territory who has 500 head of cattle. There are but two or three persons in the whole country who have at their disposition from 100,000 to 200,000 rubles of capital. Such persons have won their wealth by trade, and their capital consists in wares, money, and various credits.

The limit is set to the growth of households which depend on herding alone, in the first place by the small supply of wages-labourers, and secondly by the communal ownership of land. The point is that the family consisting of four or five souls, of whom three are productive labourers, with a subsistence capital of three head of cattle per soul, constitutes an organisation which can maintain itself with hired labour. The best Yakut mower and two female rakers can make in a summer from 1,200 to 1,800 *puds* (22 to 32 tons) of hay, according to the season. This amount is sufficient to carry through the winter from twelve to fifteen head of cattle. Any household in which the above-described organisation is incomplete must hire labourers, or buy hay, or keep its cattle in a half-starved condition. On the other hand, those who have less than one head of cattle per soul must hire themselves out for wages. Under this organisation the most common and striking phenomenon is that the more independent ones get a higher price for their time and their products than those who are in distress.

The rate of wages is almost everywhere nominally the same. The men get from 35 to 40 rubles per annum with board, if they are able-bodied mowers; and women who rake, or tend cows, get from 20 to 24 rubles, with board. The rations are determined by custom; those of the men are better than those of the women. Only a small part of the wages is paid in money; generally the employers give wares, sometimes such as the employé does not need and which he must sell at a loss. It is still more customary to pay with cattle, especially with horses, either slaughtered or living. The employers try to keep the employed in debt to themselves, and to this end even encourage them in vice—for instance, in gambling. Often an employer retains a portion of the wages and threatens not to pay it at all if the labourer does not consent to work for him still another year. It is not difficult for rich men to execute such an injustice as this, on account of the power which they possess in all Yakut communities. The scarcity of labourers is the cause of this conduct of the employers, but it also causes them, when once they have hired persons, to treat them well. In families in moderate circumstances, employés are taken in on an equal footing. In the north, even in the richest households, if no strangers are present, the employé sits at table with the family. He takes part in the conversation and in household proceedings. His intercourse with the members of the family is simple and free from constraint. The Yakuts are generally polite in their intercourse, and do not like haughtiness. Employés expect the customary courtesy.

The favourite form of labour contract, from the side of the labourers, is piece-work with payment in advance, although the rate of discount for this advance is very excessive. They think it a disgrace to lend money on interest. Probably

these prejudices are due to ancient customs touching economic relations, such as lending out cattle to be fattened upon a contract, or lending out milch cows and mares for a milk return.

The Yakuts dislike to hire themselves out for wages. They return to independence if the least possibility offers. For those who are poor the struggle for independence is so hard that it is useless to talk about their laziness or lack of forethought. If they have less than one and a half head of cattle per soul, they suffer from hunger nearly all their lives. When dying of hunger, they refrain from slaughtering an animal, from fear of losing their independence. The author knows of cases in which the authorities have forced people to slaughter their cattle that they might be saved from death by starvation. Hunger periods occur in every year, during which two-thirds of the Yakut population suffers from semi-starvation for a longer or shorter time. This period is not longer than a few weeks for those whose cattle during the winter were tolerably well nourished, so that in spring they quickly recovered their vigour, or for those who have such a number of cows that the latter produce calves at different times. The poor, however, suffer hunger for months, during which they live by the alms of their more fortunate neighbours. For them the most interesting subject of conversation is, Whose cow has calved? or, Whose cow will soon do so? Sometimes it happens that all the cows in a certain neighbourhood calve at the same time; then, if there is in that district no tillage, or if the grain harvest has failed, famine ensues. Poor people when asked how they manage to live through those frightful months said, "We go to bed and cover ourselves with the coverlet." They drink brick-tea and a decoction of various herbs, and eat splinters of larch or pine, if they still have a stock of them. They cannot obtain them in winter. No axe could then split the wood, which is frozen to the hardness of stone. Where they plant grain, and the harvest is fair, the circumstances are less stringent. On the whole therefore, the dependence on chance is almost tragical. If things that must be purchased rise in price to the slightest degree, if one neighbour has deceived another, or the merchant has cheated in weight, or if calves have died, any of these incidents come as heavy blows upon the barely established equilibrium of the family budget. A few such blows throw the household into the abyss of debt, from which it rarely, or with great exertion, emerges. Two-thirds of the families are in debt; one half of them for small amounts which can be repaid, but the other half are hopelessly indebted, the debts consuming the income year by year. Even amongst those who are called rich, the expenditure rarely surpasses two or three hundred rubles per year, and this they cannot win without hired labour, because the care of the herds which are large enough to produce this net amount far surpasses the power of an average Yakut family; therefore, only a large one, with well combined forces, can get along without hired labour. There are but few such families, and any co-operative organisation is strange to the Yakuts. They prefer to work individually at their personal risk and chances. Even individual handicraftsmen do not organise regular *artels* on the Russian type.

[p. 436.] *Economic Bond of the Sib Group. Common Participation in Goods.*—The size of the *sib* group has always been determined by economic facts. By virtue of an economic shock only does the *sib* begin to split up, and then first do the notions about blood tie make themselves felt to an appreciable degree. This they do in the following manner:—Two brothers, and still more, a father and son, cannot fall into two different *sibs*; nor can grandfather and grandson, or uncle and nephew in the male line and the first degree, do so during the life of the elder. But grandsons in the male line may belong to different *sibs*, especially if the grandfather is dead. We have an especially good opportunity to observe the significance of economic motives in dividing up the *sibs*, and also to observe the insignificance of kin motives in the case of the *sibs* that are still complete, but in which new *sib* centres can already be perceived. These new centres are defined by the relations which are forming about them, although they have not yet acquired new names. They are all separated from each other by greater or less distances in space, and their territorial advantages vary. Also an important part of the property in these new group centres (house, garden, stock of hay, petty household wares and furniture), in case of the death of the owners, have no value except for members of the group in which they are. It is impossible, or not worth while, to transport them, and it is not possible to sell them, since there is no market.

In former times, when the chief wealth of the Yakuts consisted in droves of horses, the size and the conditions of subdivision or combination of the *sib* groups were entirely different. In that distant time we must believe that the consumption on the spot of products which had been obtained from the droves, or from hunting, served as the external condition of the existence and size of a *sib* group. Many traditions point to this fact. For instance, they tell us that if a Yakut slaughters an animal, the viscera, fat, and entrails are divided into portions of different size and worth, and distributed to the neighbours, who, having learned that the slaughtering was to take place, generally take turns in visiting the owner. To fail to give any neighbour a share is to make an enemy. To pass anyone over purposely is equivalent to a challenge, and will put an end to friendly relations between families. We are convinced of the antiquity of this custom by tradition, and by its dying out nowadays. In the places where civilisation has advanced the most it has lost much of its power. That it was a *sib* custom, we are convinced by certain usages at marriages and ceremonies of reconciliation. Distributions of meat are now a part of marriage ceremonies, and the chief dishes served at marriages consist of meat. The formulas of language employed in connection with this use of meat are reminders that the ceremony has created relationships between the participants.

The strength of this custom was proved by a case observed by the author, who saw the gladness of a good-for-nothing fellow, who up to that time had done nothing but receive large shares, but who suddenly, by chance, drove a fat wild reindeer into a swamp, and so in his turn was enabled to make presents to his

neighbours of portions of meat. No comparison would do justice to the self-satisfaction of this individual, when he at last served up the game which he had won. He reserved for himself almost nothing. Other things which are subject to immediate consumption, and can be distributed into small portions, are shared in the same way, especially dainties, like sugar, cookies, or other rarity. Vodka is always divided amongst all who are present, even the children getting a drop. Tobacco also is subject to this custom. It is not degrading but honourable to receive a gift of food from one who is eating, especially if he is an honoured person. It is a violation of etiquette to give little to a rich man and much to a poor man. The opposite is the rule. If one man's cow calves earlier than those of the others, custom requires that he shall share cream and milk with those neighbours who at that time have none. This explains the interest with which, in the spring time, when the cows give no milk, the Yakuts calculate and distribute information about anyone of the rich whose cow is about to calve. This also explains how the poorest people live through the starvation months. When the population is substantially equal, it is evident that these customs are not burdensome, and this is why they prevail especially amongst people of a middle class. The Yakuts would not believe the author when he told them that, in his country, there were rich and populous cities in which people sometimes died of starvation. They asked why anyone should die when he could go to eat with his neighbours?

The circumstances are in all respects more archaic in the northern provinces and more advanced in point of culture in the southern. In the latter the custom is already coming in to sell food to travellers, and even to neighbours, but in many parts of the north they consider it a shame to trade with food. Even the poorest think it an offence if it is proposed to them to take money for lodgings or food. Travellers in winter take hay from the stacks on the meadows, with which to feed their animals, and it is regarded as right. These customs all give some coherence and permanence to the petty groups of the Yakuts which wander in the woods. When travelling, so long as they are in inhabited districts, they need not fear hunger, though they take no provisions with them. The custom constitutes a system of mutual insurance against the misfortunes of life.

*Paupers.*—Care for the poor and unfortunate has always been regarded as an obligation of the *sib*. Impoverished families are cared for in their houses, while the helpless and paupers go about amongst the householders and take their places at the table with the members. Trifling tasks are given them to perform. The author found that the poor and middle class people treated them better than the rich did. According to the notions of the people, it is sinful to despise the unfortunate, who are, however, distinguished from professional beggars living on alms. The latter often are not poor, and it is the belief of the people that the beggars often beg out of greed. The provision for the poor, however, is of a very wretched kind, for the object of the *sib* is to organise persons of equal power and equal right, and not to provide charity.



*Philosophy of Common Participation.*—The custom of distributing fresh meat,<sup>1</sup> and other things, which has been described, was convenient and perhaps necessary in a certain state of the society. The groups remained in close neighbourhood in order to realise those advantages. (See note C, p. 108.)

The kumiss is spoiled in winter by the frost and in summer by the heat, and it does not bear transportation. The Yakuts have never known how to preserve meat by drying or smoking. Hence it was in the highest degree convenient for them to live in groups of such a size that the kumiss and the meat obtained from the cattle and horses could be used as soon as possible. They even have a tradition that horse thieves in ancient times tried to organise themselves into bands large enough to divide and eat up, in a night, the animals they had stolen. We must believe that in ancient times the fundamental grouping of the people consisted of bodies constituted upon the basis of a convenient consumption of the product of a proportionate number of animals. (See note D, p. 108.) Hence the distribution of kumiss and meat served as a symbol of peace, friendship, and union in the *sib*.

*The Notion of Property.*—Right of private property in the house evidently did not exist amongst the ancient Yakuts. Even now they are inclined to regard the dwelling as a common good. Anyone who enters may stay as long as he will. A traveller has a right, according to their notions, to enter any house at any hour of the day or night, and establish himself so as to drink tea or cook food, or pass the night. The master of the house does not dare to drive out, without some important and adequate reason, even one who is offensive to him. In former times they had scarcely any permanent dwellings. They were nomadic, and carried with them all of the house but the framework, which later comers, in their turn, might use. The land belonged to nobody. The herds were considered the property of each separate nomadic group. The nominal owner was the head of the group.

[p. 444.] When the Russians first came in contact with the Yakuts, the *sib* organisation had reached its highest development, and the headship of the *sib* was a dignity exclusively for war and the administration of justice. The groups were then just about what we now see. The elected government was even more nominal than it is now. All questions, as well economic as jural, were decided by a council of the elders. Even now the most independent individuals avoid making any important changes in their industry or sales or expenditures, without taking the advice of older relatives. Such conduct is approved.

*Limitations of horse-herding.*—The subdivision of property, and its consequence, the internal subdivision of the *sib* groups, became possible with the

<sup>1</sup> We are not surprised to be told that cases occur in which attempts are made to conceal the time of slaughtering, in order to escape from the custom of distribution. These are mentioned especially in the southern provinces, and are consistent with the advance of civilisation there.

gradual introduction of horned cattle, which could be kept independently and in small groups. A drove of two or three head of horses had no sense; horses must be united into droves which could roam about the neighbourhood. No distance and no care could prevent them from roaming. Therefore no Yakut family of four individuals, at the minimum, could tend a drove of ten horses, which we may regard as the minimum. Moreover, the time necessary for the constant changes of position, protection, and care of such a petty drove is not a bit less than for one, two or three times as large. We may take it as a rule that the larger the drove, the more the power of the group which owns it is set free for subsidiary occupations, hunting, fishing, and handicraft, and the better they are provided with food and implements. The social habits of the horses, which love to live in large droves, were a natural cause of the union of their keepers. The size of the droves depends at last on the size of the pastures, which vary much in these districts. Hence the differences in size of the *sib* groups amongst the Yakuts, as they are described in the traditions, consequences of which are now to be found, and which astonish us by their apparent arbitrariness. The case was changed when they moved from the grand and unbroken steppes to the small expanses broken by forests, their dwelling of to-day. In the latter places, the droves are comparatively broken up. Hence the unions of the men cannot endure. This difficulty is intensified by the necessity of speed in changing position, and of frequency in movement from meadow to meadow, when the herds are large. Consequently the economic arrangements come into strife with the traditional instincts of the *sib* and the community. We may take a drove of ten or fifteen head, consisting of five mares, one stallion, one two-year-old, one one-year-old, and two suckling colts, for the minimum unit herd of horses. We may take for the maximum herd, for a district amongst the Yakuts, from three hundred to five hundred head. The minimum would hardly suffice to keep from distress a family of four souls. The maximum would allow a community of fifty souls to live in comparative ease. Within these limits, the effort of the Yakuts to sub-divide and scatter over the country must be bounded. Some of their traditions and customs lead us to think that once there was a much greater concentration of people and accumulation of wealth amongst them than now, and that they were spread over the country even less regularly than they are now. In their legends, large expanses of territory are spoken of as being empty, while in others large numbers of people, with their cattle, are described as existing.

Out of the minimum unit drove of horses consisting of five mares, one stallion, one two-year-old, one one-year-old, and two suckling colts, only one grown horse could be killed per annum, and the kumiss would not suffice for four souls. The requirement of kumiss is from 15 to 20 litres per person per day; one mare gives that quantity only in summer, and then she is considered a very select specimen; a middling one gives only half so much. In winter many are for a time not milked, and older ones, even if the food is adequate, give in winter not more than 3 or 4 litres a day. Consequently each person needs in a year from



5,475 to 7,300 litres of kumiss. One mare gives in a year from 2,000 to 2,500 litres, if she is milked the whole year around. Hence there is needed for a grown person two and a half milch mares, and for the three grown persons in a Yakut family, seven and a half milch mares.

The largest number of settlements contain four or five huts, with twenty or thirty souls. Occasionally one is met with in which there are forty or fifty huts, and some hundreds of souls. The winter houses for the most part stand separately, and at some distance from each other, but near to the hay-stacks. In this detail the influence of the later economic system dependent upon hay is to be seen. The summer dwellings, on the other hand, seem to represent more nearly the ancient mode of life. The summer group consists of many huts which stand quite close together, although not apparently in order, but distributed according to the convenience of water and the pleasantness of the place. They are distributed so that the *sibs* stand together, which is probably an ancient feature.

In the populous nomadic settlements of ancient times, whether in the south or the north, the Yakuts arrived at the basis on which their civil existence is based. This basis was the breeding of horses. There their best instincts were nourished; arts and handicrafts took their origin; songs and legends were composed; the system of their group-life was developed and strengthened. There they acquired the custom of enduring misfortune and conquering hardships in friendship and in common.

In everything that they did in those times we seem to see a reflection of the character of the powerful animals which then constituted their chief wealth and the basis of their existence. The breeding of horses demands special qualities of mind and special knowledge, especially knowledge of geography and physiography, very careful power of observation, and sagacity in the selection of places and in the regulation of the wanderings, so as to secure good adaptation to the facts of climate, season of the year, distribution of water, and depth of snow. It demands of the drovers cleverness, courage, decision, and a knowledge how to execute quick and complicated evolutions, so as to direct, arrest, or drive on to the proper place the obstreperous herds. Hence the custom of discipline and of group-wise action, which is to this day observable amongst the Yakuts.

*War and Blood-revenge.*—In all their legends and traditions, the stealing of women and cattle is presented as the cause of war. Not less frequently the occasion was the obligation of blood-revenge. The blood of a man, if spilt, required atonement. The children of the murdered took vengeance on the children of the murderer to the ninth generation. (See note E, p. 108.) In ancient times the responsible person having been captured, was not killed at once, but horribly tortured.

The Yakut meeting, with ceremonies for reconciling quarrels, has to this day a *sib* character. Gifts are made for the entertainment of the blood relatives, a small part of which comes into the hands of the injured

party. Many surviving customs show how strong was once the solidarity of the *sibs*, and how deeply the feeling of responsibility for the conduct of its members had penetrated into the sentiments of the *sib*. The Yakuts are very zealous for the honour of their *sib* comrades. They like to hear the praises of their tribe, sub-tribe, or *sib*. When they hear blame of the same, they feel sorrow. Hence the wonderful righteousness of the Yakuts within the *sib*, which often excites the astonishment of the observer. A man who is entirely indifferent when he sees quarrelling, cheating, robbery, oppression and extortion, will take them very seriously to heart if he sees them happen within the *sib*, or so that a *sib* comrade is the victim, especially if the guilty person belongs to another *sib*; on the other hand, they will often shield evident wrong-doing by *sib* comrades. Their tribunals are comparatively just in *sib* affairs, but between members of their own and another *sib* they decide on behalf of their comrade. One of them explained this very easily by saying that, in a certain case, the thing at stake should have been divided equally, but that one of the parties belonged to another tribe: "Could we, for his sake, harm one of our own?" In modern times, however, in the same measure as the *sib* groups have broken up the convenience of tending herds, and have scattered themselves more widely, the active exchange of mutual services between the members has declined. The need of mutuality has disappeared; they have come in contact more rarely; their feelings have become hardened, and there remains only a dim reminiscence of a common origin.

[p. 464.] *Political and Civil Usages.*—Mass meetings, or popular assemblies, are held, in summer, in the open air, not far from the meeting-house of the *sib*. The oldest and most influential sit in the first rank, on the bare ground, with their legs crossed under them. In the second rank sit or kneel the independent but less wealthy heads of households. In the third rank are the youth, children, poor men, and often women, for the most part standing, in order the better to see and hear. In general it is the first row which decides affairs; the second row sometimes offers its remarks and amendments, but no more. The third rank listens in silence. Sometimes the passions are aroused, and they all scream at once; but the decision of the question is always submitted to the first rank. It conducts the deliberation. The orators come from its ranks. Oratory is highly esteemed, and they have some talented orators. The first rank are distinguished for riches and energy. They can submit or withhold questions; but decisions are never considered binding until confirmed by a mass meeting. According to their traditions, in ancient times, a prominent rôle in these assemblies was played by old men, who must, however, have distinguished themselves, and won prestige, by good sense, knowledge, and experience. They decided questions according to the customs, and gave advice when the *sib* was in any difficulty.

[p. 478.] The divisions of the Yakuts are the *Ulus*, the *Nasleg*, and the *aga-ussa*<sup>1</sup> (= *sib*). Taking into account three provinces or districts, the author shows

<sup>1</sup> *Aga-ussa* means in Yakut father (*aga*)—*sib* (*ussa*); *Rod* also means *sib* (*ussa*).

that two *Naslegs* consist of only one *aga-ussa*, fourteen of two, fifty-eight of three, fifty-nine of four, seventeen of five. The number of those that contain more *aga-ussa* is small, but there is one each containing thirteen, fourteen, nineteen, thirty-four, and forty-three.

[p. 485.] *Land-system.*—Re-allotments of land between the *Naslegs* within the same *Ulus*, occur frequently; between the *aga-ussa* of the same *Nasleg*, still more frequently; and between the allotments of the same *aga-ussa*, almost every year, with the purpose of equalisation. There is in every *aga-ussa* a sworn functionary, chosen for a number of years, whose name is a corruption of the word deputy. Anyone, rich or poor, may be deputy, if he is a just and sensible man. He must understand all about the advantages and disadvantages of land. He has the difficult task of equalising the allotments. If he is incompetent, he makes mistakes. Sometimes he cheats intentionally, whence arise quarrels and fights. Sometimes the deputies fight, if they meet to decide a question between the *aga-ussa* of a *Nasleg*. Each *Nasleg* selects an officer, who has the oversight over the deputies in order to allay their disputes. The Yakuts say that the allotments to the *Naslegs*, within a *Ulus*, ought to be readjusted every forty years. The allotment is made by an assembly of all the officers and head men. Within the *Naslegs* the re-allotment takes place at undefined periods, when some new necessity arises; for instance, from the necessity of setting off a glebe for the church, or when meadows have been spoiled by a freshet. Nowadays the deputies act only administratively to execute the decisions of the *sib* assembly. Individuals are constantly asking for a readjustment of allotments, upon all sorts of pleas. Leaving out of account the bits thus added or subtracted, it may be said in general that individuals dispose of their allotments without limit of time, and even give them in inheritance. In the north, a certain part of the meadows is apportioned to certain homesteads. These are regarded as the inalienable property of the householder. Only gores and strips which lie further off, or are purposely left for that purpose, are subject to division. By means of them equalisation is brought about.

[p. 489.] Pastures and woods almost everywhere are in the undivided use of all the inhabitants of a locality, without regard to the *aga-ussa* or *Nasleg* to which they belong. It is true that rich men in many places have divided amongst themselves separate cattle ranges out of the common lands, and have fenced them, but their *sib* comrades look upon such land-grabbing with disfavour, and if the rich man dies or loses influence, they try to break down his enclosures and throw open the land again. There is a strife of interest between cattle owners and tillers; the latter enclose their lands; the former drive their cows home three times in the day. The enclosures make this journey longer. In general the *sib* group reconciles itself to the individual disposal of a plot of land which has been won by clearing woods or meadows, or of mowing lands obtained by drying up swamps and ponds, when it has been established by prescription, and even if the appropriated land is made inheritable, provided that the plot is not large and is all utilised by the

owner. But if the size is great, or the owner rents any of it, the *sib* asserts its rights. The only question then is whether the owner has won back from the land a remuneration for the labour and capital expended by him upon it. Often they undertake large clearings or drainages communally. Those who have a share in the land thus won are, first, those who lived there before; then all the *aga-ussa* of a *Nasleg* in proportion to their share in the work, and their need of land.

## II.—MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY.

[p. 507.] *Ancient Type of the Family.*—It is established beyond a doubt that when the Russians came in contact with the Yakuts, polygamy existed amongst the latter. (See note F, p. 108.) They had a word for all the offspring of one man, and another for his offspring by a particular wife, if the interpretation is correct. If it is it would entail the inference that once the mother family existed amongst the Yakuts. This is confirmed by the tradition that many *sibs* with father descent, and even whole *Naslegs*, got their names from women. The Yakuts have no special word for the precise designation of a family group consisting of a man, with his wife and his children. The current word is *Kergen*, but this is an ambiguous word; most probably it means *dwellers*. In answer to inquiries, the most various statements were given. The author heard this word used in the sense of all those whom the head of a household was bound to maintain, including temporary inmates.

The son of the house was no longer considered a *Kergen* when he married and established a house of his own, but all inmates and labourers, no matter what their status or relationship, are considered *Kergen*. [The author so uses the word; he does not say members of the *Kergen*.] The marriage customs and legends in which there is reference to the stealing of wives in no distant past, seem to point to an origin of this house-group from slavery. There are even direct evidences of this, for an ancient word, synonym of *Kergen-Chahar*, meant slave or cowboy, and seems to have gone out of use on that account. In the *Kergen*, the younger are subjected to the elder, and all are subject to the head, whether it be a father, older brother, grown up son, or, in rare cases, a mother, if she is a clever and energetic widow. Custom does not seem to admit sisters or aunts. The head can give away and squander everything, if he chooses. He can even give away his children as labourers to outside persons.

*Exploitation of the Weak by the Strong.*—Such is the declaration of all Yakuts; nevertheless, at the present time, these statements describe only a fictitious system. In fact, the Yakut family presents now a different picture. The subjection of the young and of women comes under a more general law; the subjection of the weak to the strong, and of those-who-have-not to those-who-have. The author knows of many cases in which the father, older brother, or the uncle forced the younger members of the family into marriage, or put them out to work for others under very hard conditions, taking to himself all the payment, and also

other cases in which the father disposed of the property of the son, took away from him his axe and canoe, and sold hay, mown and saved by him, completely independently. The son complained of his hard fate, but could do nothing. He also knows of a case in which parents sold their eight-year-old daughter to a Russian official who was travelling through. He saw and heard of many cases in which elders cruelly beat members of the household, especially women and children, yet he knows of an equal number of cases of an opposite character,—cases in which younger brothers played a more important rôle in the family than older brothers, in which a wife, unrestrained by the presence of strangers, behaved rudely to her sick husband, even beat him, and openly kept a lover in the house; in which a daughter, knowing that she was the only one in the house able to labour, did not obey her parents, did whatever she chose, refused an advantageous marriage, and went about with the young men before the eyes of all; in which old people did not dare to sell a pound of butter or a load of hay, or to buy anything for themselves, without asking the consent of a grown son. All these cases were not considered by anybody unusual, and did not call forth from the community any more condemnation than cruel or unjust treatment of children.

*The Old.*—There is no such thing as any strictly patriarchal relationships, or any deep-rooted or cultivated feeling of respect for the old, amongst the Yakuts. A young Yakut said, “They not only do not feed, nor honour, nor obey, but they scold and often beat the old people. With my own eyes, I have more than once seen Yakuts, poor and rich, bad and good, beat their fathers and their mothers.” They behave especially badly with decrepit and feeble-minded parents. Their chief object in dealing with such is to wrest from them any bits of property they may still retain. Thus, as the old people become more and more defenceless, they are treated worse and worse. It was no better in ancient times. Force, the coarse force of the fist, or the force of hunger, rules in the modern Yakut family, and seems to indicate the servile origin of that family. Once the author saw how a weak old man of seventy beat with a stick his forty-year old son, who was in good health, rich, and a completely independent householder, who had just been elected to an office in the *sib*. The son stood quietly and did not dare even to evade the blows, but that old man still had an important amount of property at his disposition, and he ruled the family by the fear that he could deprive any recalcitrant one of a share in the inheritance.

*Antagonism between Parents and Children.*—In well-to-do families, where there is a great quantity of cattle, or where the right to large advantages from land, or the possession of well-established trade, provides an opportunity to win from hired labour, and so an important revenue is obtained, independently of personal labour the rule of the father and mother as proprietors, especially the rule of the father, is strengthened and maintained for a long time, namely, to the moment when the old people become decrepit and lose the capacity to comprehend the simplest things. Generally they die before that time. This state of things is maintained by the spread of Russian ideas and laws. In the old-fashioned Yakut



family, the economy of which is founded almost entirely on cattle-breeding, and in which constant personal supervision is required, thus making personal strength and initiative indispensable, the moment of the transfer of rule into the hands of the son is reached much earlier. It occurs still earlier in poor families which live exclusively by hand-labour and by the industry of the strongest and best endowed. The old people strive against this tendency in vain. The young people naturally strive to avail themselves as fully as possible of the results of their labour, and as soon as they feel strong enough, they begin to struggle for their rights. The parents are dependent on the sons, who could go away to earn wages. Hence they say: "It is more advantageous for us Yakuts, in this frozen country of ours, to have many children than to have much money and cattle. Children are our capital, if they are good. It is hard to get good labourers, even for large wages, but a son, when he grows up, is a labourer who costs nothing; nevertheless, it is hard to rear children." The author knew of cases in which wives put up with the presence of mistresses in the house, considering that an inevitable consequence of their own childlessness. The death of children is accepted coldly in populous districts, but in the thinly settled ones is sincerely bewailed. Sometimes they take to drink or to idleness when they have lost their children.

The greatest number of suicides are old people who fear a lonely old age. The treatment they receive fully accounts for this.

If the parents, on account of their own deficiencies, or the exceptional hard-heartedness of a son, have not been able to discipline him, then sooner or later a strife arises in the family. The women are in such cases more yielding. They are physically weaker and have scarcely any rights. As members of the *sib*, they have no rights to land, property, or independent existence. They surrender very soon. Most frequently they make no attempt to resist: there is no place for them outside of the family. It is another matter for the boys. They accustom themselves to form judgments on communal questions; they quickly acquire a knowledge of the rights of men, and become saturated with the communal spirit which refuses to acknowledge any privileges except personal superiority and work. In proportion as the quantity of labour accomplished by them increases, and in that way their cleverness and skill in the arts of life are proved, they demand more confidently and persistently that attention shall be given to their voices in the family, and that their wishes shall be fulfilled. If not they are not willing to perform the labour which is required of them, or do it so negligently, while tormenting their elders with constant reproaches, that the latter gradually yield. As soon as a father perceives this disposition in his son, he hastens to give him a separate allotment, if his own circumstances will possibly admit of it; otherwise the power inevitably goes over to the son. Sometimes the elders continue to hold a nominal authority: sometimes the son allows this consolation, as long as they live; but nothing is really done without the sanction of the actual sovereign of the family. The young man takes the place of the old one as the object of attention and obedience, and he makes himself master, as well of the



parents as of the labourers who are without rights or voice in the family. A man who was reproached for his behaviour to his mother, said: "Let her cry; let her go hungry. She made me cry more than once, and she begrudged me my food. She used to beat me for trifles."

[p. 517.] *Prerogatives of the Head of the Family. Women.*—In a family in which the rights and powers have been reduced to equilibrium, so that all the relations of the members are established, the dominion of the head, whoever he is, over the labour and the property of the members is unlimited. The organisation is really servile. Especially pitiful is the position of the women, who play no rôle in the *sib*, and therefore can expect no protection from anybody. The author advised a woman to appeal to the *sib*, when she complained that her husband exploited her labour and that of her half-grown son: that he was extravagant and wasteful, so that he was likely to reduce them to pauperism. "The head!" said she, "how often I have complained to him! he listens and says nothing, and after that my husband is still more quarrelsome and more perverse." Another woman said: "The man is the master; it is necessary to obey him; he works abroad and we at home." This work abroad consists for the most part in taking part in the village assemblies and in constant loafing from house to house. It is true that the man acquires information about wages and prices; but he also keeps to himself the monopoly of all external relations, and even for the absence of any of the housemates without his consent he demands a strict account. To acquire an extra gain, win food or money, or earn something by outside work is considered more desirable than to follow heavy daily labour which would maintain the life of the family from day to day. If the head of a household has grown-up children, the amount of work which he does is very insignificant. He works like the others only at the hay-harvest; the rest of the time he wanders about, looking out, it is true, for the external interests of the family to which his care is now restricted, although formerly it extended to the *sib*. Inside the house he is treated with almost slavish respect and consideration. His presence puts an end to cheerfulness, the excuse for which is that he must maintain respect.

It is a custom, the reason for which seems to be the desire of the father not to lose power in the house, that he often gives allotments to his sons and takes into the house in their place a grandson, or a nephew, or a hired man. These persons, after they have lived some years in the house, and worked in the family acquire the same right to a part of the inheritance as if they had been children. The Yakuts say that a father may deprive a son of his inheritance, but the author never knew an example of it. He knew of cases in which sons sued fathers, alleging that the allotments which they received after many years' labour were not as large as they should have been.

[p. 520.] *The Descent of Property.*—A Yakut declared that a father would give equal shares of his property during his lifetime to his sons and his daughters, or that he would give larger shares to his daughters because they need more, since they go as wives to live among strangers, where, if they bring little

they meet with little respect. In fact, however, it is most frequently the reverse ; the sons get more. Houses and land go to them. These cannot be alienated into another *sib*, and are therefore excluded from female inheritance. When the parents die, all which was reserved for them during life goes to the sons. The married daughters get no part in it. Unmarried daughters rank as little children, and pass, until they are married, under the tutelage of their brothers, uncles, or other relatives of the father in the male line. If there are none such, the *sib* becomes the guardian, but even near relatives on the side of the mother are in no case permitted to be guardians.

Wills were unknown amongst the ancient Yakuts. The wishes of a dying person were sacredly executed, but they consisted chiefly of directions how and where the grave should be made, and what horse should be killed in order that it might be buried with the dying man, and what chattels should be buried with him. Nowadays the rich make wills, but their validity is not recognised unless they are written by a functionary, the scribe or the clergyman of the *sib*. This costs not less than a horse or a cow.

From the point of view of the *sib*, uncles, nephews, and male cousins of all degrees have a better right to the inheritance than a married daughter. A widow, if she is married a second time into a second *sib*, loses rights even to her children. The author knows of cases in which fellow-members of the *sib*, in no direct relation to the deceased, inherited his property for lack of relatives of his in the male line, while his own sister, who had married into another *sib*, received nothing at all. He mentions another case in which a man, having paid the marriage price for a bride, died. His *sib* comrades demanded back a part of the bride-price and divided it amongst themselves, on the ground that the man had never been her husband. Even if a father has given property to a married daughter during his life, or by will, it has not been done without suits and reproaches, because the property went into another *sib*. If there is no collision between family affairs and *sib* right, the *sib* unwillingly interferes with the former.

[p. 525.] *Birth Rate. Infant Mortality.*—According to the assertions of the Yakuts, the fecundity of their women is, on the average, ten children for one husband ; sometimes they bear twenty, or even more, and that is by no means so rare as amongst the Russians. The author knew of one case of twenty-two births, another of twenty, and another of nineteen. In most cases the number varies between five and ten.

The author gives a case of a woman married at twenty, who lived with her husband thirty years. She bore nine children, of whom seven died in childhood, one was born dead, and one daughter grew up. Another woman had nine children, all of whom died ; another woman had eight and lost them all. Another woman, out of ten, brought up two ; another brought up five out of twenty ; another brought up seven out of nineteen ; another, one out of six ; another, out of five, brought up all. Another woman, eighty years old, who could not tell at what age she was married, but thought that it was at fifteen, bore twenty-two

children, the last one when she was sixty years old. Eleven of them died in childhood.

The men, especially the rich, marry very young. The author knew a man of fourteen, who had been married two years. The ceremony had not yet been performed, but he lived with his wife in the home of her father, because the bride-price had been paid for her. They think that early marriages are unfruitful. Infant mortality amongst them is frightful, as the above statements show. This is due to the misery in which they live, on account of which they cannot give care to their children, even when they are rich.

[p. 527.] *Childbirth. Infancy.*—According to the ideas of the Yakuts, the woman has the greater share in procreation. A man whose wife gave birth to a monstrosity refused any responsibility for it, saying that he had had twenty-two children by his seven wives; this was the first by his eighth wife.

An old woman takes a new-born child and carries it immediately before the blazing fire. She sprinkles it with water from her mouth, the water sometimes being warm and sometimes cold, and then quickly washes it. Then she smears it with fresh cream. Generally the child never receives any other bath. If it does, it is at long intervals. They think that bathing exposes the child to take cold. They are not in the habit of bathing themselves. They often smear a child with cream, thinking this very advantageous to it. The Yakut mothers have not much milk. Not a child grows up without using a sucking horn. The mothers suckle the children long. The author saw five-year-old boys who demanded the breast when they saw their little brothers enjoying it. Children are often suckled at night to keep them quiet, but in the daytime they lie cold, damp, and neglected, while their uproar fills the house, the mother being employed in her household work. Some mothers employ a means of putting their children to sleep, especially if they are fretful boys, which often causes spermatorrhea.

[p. 529.] When a child begins to sit up, which takes place at the end of three months, it is no longer called a baby, but has another class-name. In ancient times they gave it its first name at this point of time; it got a second one when it could draw a bow. Their babies creep at six months, and stand and walk at a year. So after they are six months old, they crawl all over the floor of the house. The Yakuts think that a child which does not yet understand human language understands the talk of the fire, the singing of birds, the language of beasts, lifeless objects and spirits; but that he loses this gift when he acquires human speech. This superstition may be due to the habit of children to stay about the fire, the warmest and pleasantest place in the house, and also the most interesting, where a child stands staring at the flames with his big black eyes and listening to the hissing and snapping of the fire. Their children look the prettiest to Europeans when they are from five to ten years old, because then they are most like our children; but then they are by no means sprightly or enterprising, and they are excessively obedient. Even when playing, they do not make half the noise and movement which our children make. When there are several in a

family, you may not notice their presence for a long time. They hide themselves away in the corners, or sit in a ring on the floor, busy with something or other, talking, quarrelling, telling stories, singing,—but all of it only half aloud. They are hardly ever so far carried away as to cry aloud or to sing aloud. At a threatening shout of a grown person, they come to silence and scatter. Only when they are alone do they become lively. This happens in summer, in the woods and groves, and in the fields. They are very fond of assembling to play there.

[p. 536.] *Wedding Ceremonies.*—On the occasion of a wedding at which the author was present, the bridegroom's procession arranged to reach the house of the bride at dawn of day. At that hour the guests were assembled at the house. The groom and the go-between each led a horse loaded with fresh meat. A lad on horseback, without saddle, galloped out at full speed to meet the groom's procession; but when he was about forty fathoms from them, he suddenly stopped his horse, turned, and rode back again. One of the groomsmen followed him, but not being able to overtake him, turned and rejoined his own party. When the groom's party rode into the court, the father of the bride held the stirrup for the father of the groom; the others of the bride's party, according to rank and order, performed the same office for the members of the groom's party. The young people carried into the house the meat and other things brought by the groom's party, but the groom remained at the gate, turning his face to the east, and looking at the spreading dawn. He crossed himself zealously and made obeisance. When all had taken their places, the cousin of the groom, with a whip in his hand, which he had not laid aside at all, went out and conducted the groom into the house. The latter came in with his head bent down and his eyes covered. He was very young, and deep emotion was visible on his face. The father and mother of the bride met him with the sacred images in their hands. They blessed him. At the same time the one who was conducting him, seized him by the neck from behind and bent him down three times at the feet of the parents of the bride. After that, the groom with his cousin brought in still more packages of meat and laid them there before the fire. The groom uncovered one of the packages, in which was enclosed the head of a horse cooked whole; he picked out from beneath the eyes three bits of fat and cast them one by one on the fire. After that they carried the horse's head away and laid it in the chief corner on the ground; but they led the groom into the corner on the right, where they caused him to be seated with his face to the wall, and his back to the people, on what they called the last bunk to the right. On the corresponding one to the left, behind a curtain, sat the bride. They both remained in these places the whole time, in their best garments, including cap and gloves, and he even never laid his whip out of his hand. All the groom's party in like manner kept on their best out-of-door garments, in spite of the heat of the blazing fire. The parents of the bride were dressed in the same manner. The rest of those present a little later laid aside their out-of-door garments.

The entertainment began. The feasters were all seated in an established order which never varied to the end of the entertainment. A distant relative of the

bride, in full out-of-door dress, acting as servant, gave to the father of the groom a wooden cup full of kumiss; then he gave one to each of the companions of the groom. Having held the cups a little while, they gave them back to him, that he might pour out a little on the fire. Then they received the cups again and drank a little. The father of the groom then gave his cup to the father of the bride, who drank a little and gave it to his wife, who passed it on to their other relatives. Then the uncle of the groom gave his cup to the father of the groom. He gave it to the father of the bride, and so it went the rounds. Then they served breakfast of cold boiled meat and tea with milk and sugar, and a piece of rye bread for selected ones amongst the guests. Soon after that they killed an ox and a horse. While some of the young people dressed these, others prepared the kettles, and brought wood and water, and melted ice in the neighbouring hut. They boiled the meat in the presence of the guests, in big iron kettles; then they laid it on trestles before the fire. First of all, of course, they boiled the viscera, the entrails infused with blood, the heart, the stomach, etc. In cutting up the animals, they took care that the shin bones should remain unbroken. (See note G, p. 108.) When the meal was ready, the young people of the *sib* of the bride, although they were persons of entirely independent position, undertook the service of the guests. They spread hay on the ground before the visitors, and spread on this the skins of the mare and ox which had just been slaughtered. "Such was the table of the ancient Yakuts," they said in explanation.

The author, when he saw the immense pile of fresh meat, which was laid before each one, asked, "Do they expect them to eat all that themselves?" He was answered with a merry laugh.

Women were not admitted to the table at all. They took their portions off into the corners, where they ate them. At the beginning of the meal, the master of the house gave to each one a glass of vodka. The young and the poor got less, sometimes very little indeed, but the intention was to pass by nobody. Then at a signal given by the master of the house, each one drew his knife and set to work to eat; which they did with a uniformity of movement as if they had been drilled to it. After a while, the father of the groom, rising with a choice bit of meat in his hand, made an appropriate speech and gave the meat to the father of the bride. This he repeated a little later with the mother of the bride, then with her other relatives, and then with the most important members of her *sib*. Then the other companions of the groom complimented the parents and relatives of the bride in the same manner. The point of all the speeches was, "We are now related to each other; we will hereafter live in friendship and concord." This exchange of compliments became noisy and irregular. The meat which they could not eat was made into packages by the women, to be taken home as gifts for those who had not come to the wedding. In the evening, the supper was conducted in the same manner. Pieces of meat were exchanged with speeches and good wishes. After supper, the ceremony with the kumiss was repeated. Before supper, they drank vodka together. One would drink a little from his cup and then give the



rest to another whom he desired to compliment. On the second day, all was repeated. They slaughtered a cow. All was the same except that at supper a blind singer sang, whereupon one and another made gifts to him of pieces of meat just like the treatment of a bard, of which we find a description in the *Odyssey*. Then the young people played games and practised feats of strength and skill.

On the third day the dinner was served early. The bridegroom's party had thrown open their out-of-door garments, on account of the stifling heat produced in the hut by the number of persons, the blazing fire, and the steam from the kettles. They had not been invited to do so, but the circumstances fully excused them. They now re-fastened these garments and went away. The bundles of meat were brought in, cut up, and divided amongst the relatives of the bride so that everyone should have at least a small portion. This was the meat which the groom's party had brought with them, and which had been stored in the store-house. It was carefully examined and valued. In the evening the groom's companions came back. During this absence they had been entertained in a neighbouring hut to which the mistress of the bride's house had previously sent the necessary supplies. They were met in the court upon their return with the same ceremony as at first. After supper games were played again by the young people, and at last a long legend was recited by the blind bard.

It was not until the fourth day, after dinner, that the relatives of the groom prepared to depart for good. When they had mounted their horses, a big wooden cup of kumiss was served to each one of them, and then the whole *cortège*, in the same order in which it had arrived, the father of the groom at the head, and the groom last, were escorted by the relatives of the bride around the three hitching posts for horses, which were set in the middle of the court. They went about these posts three times in the course of the sun. Each time, when they had completed a circuit, they stopped, and each horseman poured out kumiss from his cup on the mane of his horse. When they had drunk the remainder of the kumiss and returned the cups to the escort, they departed at a gallop through the open gateway. The solemn ceremony was then considered ended, yet this was only half of the wedding. It is true that from that time the bride and groom considered themselves man and wife, but not until the whole bride-price had been paid, *i.e.*, sometimes after two or three years, did the husband conduct his wife to his own house. Then they again celebrated the same feasts three days long, in the same manner, the groom sitting again for the whole time in one corner, with his face to the wall, and the bride in another, behind a curtain of soft leather.

A Yakut wedding nowadays strikes us as remarkable on account of the silence, and the poverty of the ceremonies. There is no singing, no allegorical representation, and no dancing. They say that formerly a shaman was present, who invoked on the pair the blessing of the heavenly spirits. In the southern districts the wedding has undergone Russian influence. The elements that were connected with horse-breeding have disappeared. Among the poor, the mare's



head, which in old times was worshipped by the young people, has disappeared also the kumiss and all the ceremonies connected with it. Brandy and vodka have taken its place; tables have taken the place of the skins spread on the floor; instead of the exchange of meat, they touch their drinking cups and kiss. In some places they even try to bring out the bride and groom from their corners to sit at the table. This last feature as yet makes way slowly, and one of the most characteristic features still is the non-participation of the bride and groom, as if the others wanted to forget them. A share of the food is served to them, but the others do not talk with them, do not mention their names, and the bride is carefully shut away, while the groom tries to escape attention as much as possible.

*Bride-price.*—The greatest part of the expense of a wedding falls on the groom. It is an essential part of the payment for the bride. The expense varies from a few rubles to two thousand rubles; the average is perhaps one hundred rubles. This expenditure would be beyond the means of the majority, if it were not that a large part of it comes back under the form of the bride's dowry. If the total payment made by the groom be divided into its parts, the part spent for entertainment is spent by the groom without return; but the payment to the parents of the bride, and the gifts to her relatives, are restored in the gift with her. She brings household furniture, garments, silver articles, the stipulated number of mares and cows, corresponding to the number of animals contributed by the groom. She also brings colts and calves voluntarily contributed by her parents and not mentioned in the contract. She also brings gifts in the shape of meat and butter. Each wooden cup which she brings ought to contain a little butter. She also brings one fox skin and nine ermine skins, or at least one ermine skin. This is hung up over the bed where the unmarried women sleep. Later it is carried into the store-house, where it is carefully preserved until the first child is born; then they carry it into the wood or give it to the shaman. At any rate it disappears.

Either under pretence of getting ready the bride's outfit, or on account of her youth and inexperience, the parents do not give their daughter to her husband immediately after the marriage, even if there has been a religious marriage, and the bride-price has been paid, and they have agreed to do this soon. Formerly the delay was often four or five years, and the custom of marrying children, even when very young, existed still earlier. During all the delay, the husband visits his wife at his leisure, but every time he ought to bring a gift to the wife's parents, a quarter or two of meat, a fox skin, or some other present. These gifts are a very unwelcome addition to the bride-price. When the time comes for the bride to go to her husband's house, she is very coldly received by his relatives if she brings less than was expected. If she brings less than was agreed upon, quarrels arise. Often there is a complete rupture, if the marriage has not taken place in church. In the latter case, they boycott her and she suffers all kinds of petty household persecutions which poison her existence.

[p. 549.] The bride-price is shared by the parents, older brothers, uncles, and guardians of the bride, and, in the case of orphan working girls, by the master. Each gets something, be it ever so little, as a recognition of surrender by him of a claim on the woman. Not a single well-bred Yakut girl would consent to go to her husband without a bride-price. She would be degraded in her own eyes and according to the views of her people. It would mean that she was not worth any price, was friendless, or an outcast. It can be understood, therefore, that the Yakut women look down upon the Russian women, who, as they say, pay somebody to take them. Even young widows who have returned to their families are paid for, though at a lower rate than maidens. Older widows who have lived for a time independently with a minor son, or as work-women, marry without a bride-price; but the Yakuts have an original comment on this. They say that "she wanted to exploit herself," or they say that she has been paid for once, and that if she marries again, nobody loses anything. The author asked one of them, "Who lost anything when a maiden was married?" "The parents," said he. "They had the trouble and expense of rearing her. They ought to obtain an equivalent for that. Besides that, they lose a worker out of the house. How is it that you Russians do not understand that?" "But," said the author, "if a son is married, they get nothing, and even give him something." "The son is another thing," was the reply. "In the first place, his labour produces more for his parents before his marriage, and then he doesn't go away; he remains in the same *sib*; he is our man; he will bear his share of taxes and burdens." This presents the current view of this matter amongst them. "We fed and reared," they say, "and others are to get the benefit. We will take something for the expenditure."

### III.—MARITAL USAGES. THE STATUS OF WOMEN.

[p. 552.] *War Captives and Stolen Women as Brides.*—In ancient times, the Yakuts had a name for a man whom a defeated hero gave to his conqueror as a compensation for sparing his own life. Such persons later were in fact slaves and were included in the gifts with a bride. If they were females, they became concubines of the master. Such a slave person was called an *enne*, and this word has now come to be used as an adjective for whatever is given with a bride. In the legends, the ancient heroes are represented as coming home, after their adventures, with a wife and a rich dower (*enne*); but this dower took its origin probably in very ancient times, when the present system of exogamic marriage began first among the Yakuts. All the evidence goes to show that foreign-born wives were originally captives in war, in connection with whom, of course, there could be no dower. Their own tradition is that formerly, if a man who was hunting in the forest with others saw a handsome woman, they watched to see where her husband went to hunt. Then they fell upon him, killed him, and took away his wife. If they could not take her by force they took her by stratagem, enticing her out of her house by a call to help her husband bring home his game.

Then they carried her off by force, in the same manner in which they brought home war captives. In their epic poetry, the stealing of women appears as a constant motive. The heroes help each other to find women outside the tribe, and they obtain them as payment for their heroic deeds, or for help given to others. In all the narratives about wars, maidens fall to the victors as prize or ransom (*enne*). A legend is mentioned in which three Yakuts, being offended by Tunguses, undertook war against them. The latter begged for mercy and offered a choice of three maidens. The Yakuts came to terms with them and made a wedding. The author thinks that in the wedding ceremonies of the Yakuts we must recognise a survival of a line of conduct which was once a completely consistent and well rounded ceremony for the conclusion of peace. Whether the stealing of women was the cause of the preceding hostilities, or the relatives gave the woman voluntarily in compensation for a man who had been killed, or for stolen cattle, is immaterial. In any case she was regarded as *booty*, and the wedding resembled a *peace negotiation and conclusion*. To this day, both the parties who come into relations with each other at a wedding behave to each other during the feast with respect, yet still with a certain concealed distrust and jealousy. They are constantly on the look-out lest the others get the better of them in the gifts, or cheat them. The groom's party do not move at all; their horses are saddled, as are also those of the bride's relatives who have come to the wedding. A Yakut who was asked why he did not unsaddle his horse at a wedding answered, "Differences are apt to arise at a wedding."

The more unequal are the powers of the families, or more properly, the *sibs*, which are united by a wedding, the more the material interests of the weaker party suffer. The payment to overcome the opposition of the bride, that is to say, her love to her blood relatives, is increased. It is noteworthy that during the wedding, custom strictly forbids the bride and groom to see each other. The bride is permitted, indeed, being hidden herself, to look at the groom when he goes to water his horse; but it is regarded as improper for the groom to even make an attempt to see the bride. Neither ought his companions and blood relatives to see her.

If the wedding has much in it that is parallel to the conclusion of a peace, the demand in marriage, and the "investigation" which precedes it, remind us at all points of a military recognisance. A man who goes about looking for a wife keeps silence, and enters into no relations, even of conversation, with those he visits. The girls laugh at him and the young men (her friends) treat him with jealous satire.

In ancient times, the parents often paid a bride-price for a girl three or four years old to be the wife of a son. They took her and brought her up that she might become accustomed to the family of her husband. Sometimes they became attached to her and the couple lived happily together. They slept together from childhood, considering each other husband and wife; but often they regarded each

other "like the devil." If either one died before the marriage, an endless quarrel began about the return of the bride-price. The Russian clergy now refuse to celebrate these marriages.

*Betrothal.*—To accomplish a betrothal, three male relatives of the groom go on horseback to the house of the desired girl. Upon entering this, they sit down in the place of honour, where they sit talking about indifferent matters, and watching what goes on in the house for one or two days. Then they pack up their things and place them on their horses, and when quite ready to leave on their journey, they return into the house. If the groom has come with them, he now stays outside. The go-betweens sit down again and wait awhile. Then the oldest of them, in silence, throws upon the table the skin of a fox. Then the father of the bride puts on his cap and sits down behind the table in the place where he sits at the wedding, and asks them what they want. They in turn, calling the bride a young mare, or a valuable beast, conduct a negotiation, asking whether she is for sale. When they get an affirmative reply, they agree upon the amount of the bride-price, the dowry, the time of the wedding, the time when the groom shall have his wife, the mode of paying the bride-price, and all the details. All is negotiated with great pains in order to avoid future disputes. Then the guests speedily depart. Sometimes fox skins, vodka, and money are left on the table when they go out for the first time; and if, when they return, they see that these things have been taken away, they proceed to negotiate the terms. The bride has a very small share in this negotiation. Sometimes they ask her whether she is willing, but this is a modern innovation. If a man meets with a refusal of the girl he asks for, he usually insists that another shall be given to him in the same house, if there is another there. The Yakuts consider it an injury to meet with a refusal, and especially in the case of a proposal of marriage. They think it improper to send the go-betweens, under any circumstances whatsoever, within a year to a girl who has given a refusal to a man.

[p. 558.] *Exogamy.*—A wife is always taken from another *sib*. Even in the south, until the present time, this custom is strictly observed. In the north, the author knows of but one case of a marriage within the *sib*; but all condemned that marriage, and when the new-made wife, after the wedding, became blind, they ascribed this calamity to the breach of the ancient custom. Well-to-do men will not take a wife even within the *Nasleg*. Custom is even unfavourable to the arrangement when the brother of the wife is near at hand, even though he belongs to another *sib*. They say, "A girl, if she lives in her own birth-place (after her marriage), is not happy;" also, "A happy daughter marries far away from her birth-place;" also, "It is well to have water near by, but relatives far off." If we may take it for established that the first wives from abroad were war captives, then the custom to take wives from afar is easily understood. Wives could not well be stolen within the circle of connected *sibs* within which the ancient nomadic wanderings took place. The author thinks that the notion of any peaceful evolution of exogamic marriage amongst the Yakuts, out of a more primitive

form, must be absolutely rejected. Their sayings and traditions, and the survivals of wedding ceremonies, agree in proving the closest relation of marriage with war and the stealing of women. Yet whether the effort to find wives outside arose as a contingent consequence of war, or was a cause of war, or a thing which arose independently in its own good season, under the influence of physiological or economic motives, is hard to decide. The Yakuts engaged in breeding animals could observe in their animals the advantages of crossing with females of another blood-group. Such unions were more fruitful and the progeny were stronger. Besides that, the stallions, when they chased out of the herds the young rivals born there, and very eagerly introduced into the herds mares from outside, must have incited the Yakuts to imitation. The economic motives, such as the gratuitous labour of slaves, and the introduction of horned cattle, which made possible the existence of smaller societal groups with a denser population at particular spots, encouraged the tendency to maintain exogamy.

*Ancient Endogamy.*—The author is convinced by all his means of information that there was formerly an altogether different organisation of the family and system of marriage, from those which he at present finds in existence. It is possible that both forms existed for a long time, and the more ancient one disappeared so recently that the people have still a fresh recollection of it. A Yakut said, "In ancient times the Yakuts had many wives, and long before that, your younger sister was your wife; your mother possibly; the wife of your brother possibly."

Some, when asked, knew nothing of this; others asserted that sisters formerly were wives, but mothers never. Other testimony also was obtained that formerly marriages took place, not only within the *sib*, but even between very near relatives. They say that when God made Adam and his wife, the latter bore seven girls and eight boys. Each man, except the youngest, had a wife. The latter asked God what he should do for a wife. God answered, "If you cannot get along without one, sleep secretly with the wives of your brothers." This is a current legend amongst them, and agrees with other current sayings and notions. We may suppose that, even if it is borrowed, it took root in the memory of the people because it corresponded with dim reminiscences out of their own antiquity. They say, "When the migration took place from the south, the Yakuts took their own sisters to wife, since there were no women of other tribes at hand." "The ancient Yakuts took wives in this way: if one of two brothers had a daughter and another a son, the children became man and wife." "In ancient times, when a youth was able to draw the bow, he took one of his younger sisters to wife and went afar off, where he built a house." "In ancient times, if a sister, whether older or younger, was married to a man of another *sib*, her brothers never let her depart as a virgin. If she went away as a virgin, they considered that they had lost their 'luck.'" The expression which they use here for the treatment accorded to the sister is the one now in use in the sense of sex-intercourse, but it means exactly "to make one a mistress of the house."



Incest, which according to the notions of Russians, is such an abominable thing, rather causes laughter than horror amongst the Yakuts. Cases of such unions are met with more frequently amongst them than amongst Russians. The author knows of two cases in which brother and sister lived together in wedlock, about which everybody knew. The authorities of the *sib*, frightened by the outcry about another case, made it known to the local Russian clergyman. In one case, children were born. He also knows of a case of wedlock between mother and son, and of another in which two brothers lived with the same wife. In their legends and folk tales, we see that in ancient times the feeling of attachment in the brother and sister tie was far more strongly developed than in the marriage tie, or even in the parent and child tie. The first of these prevailed over all others. They often call the wives of the legendary heroes "sisters," using a distinct name for older sister, and another for younger sister. Almost every hero, whether good or bad, has by his side sisters, who act as his protectors and comrades. The folk tales contain many cases of the devoted service of sisters to brothers. It is a custom of long standing, which still exists, that two brothers of one *sib* marry two sisters of another. It is noteworthy that now at a wedding the sister of the bride keeps her head carefully covered all the time. It is considered a great impropriety that the groom or one of his comrades should see her hair.

[p. 562.] *Terminology for Family Relationships.*—Among the many difficulties of describing the ancient marriage system, one arises from the fact that the ancient words for family relationships had different senses from what the same words have now.<sup>1</sup> For instance, the Yakuts have no word for the general sense of brother or sister. If they must have such a word, they use the Russian word. They have special names for older brothers, younger brothers, older sisters, and younger sisters. These words, with some attributives which are generally omitted in vituperative speech, are used to address uncles, nephews, aunts, grandchildren of different grades, and even step-fathers and step-mothers, although the two latter are commonly called father and mother. It follows from this that the family falls into two groups—those who were born earlier and those who were born later. These groups form the background of the terminology for family relationships. The majority of other words for relationship are constructed out of these. As far as the author has observed, the names derived from the denominatives for the younger group are given only to blood relatives and *sib* comrades. For the relatives by marriage, there are special denominatives, amongst which the division into those born earlier and those born later is not so strictly carried out. He thinks that in the beginning, the Yakuts had no words at all for brother or for sister, and that the words now used for younger brother, younger sister, etc., were terms, not so much for family relationships, as for *sib* relationships, and meant simply older or younger *sib* comrades. It is impossible now to determine whether a certain word ought to be translated "older brother," "older uncle" or "older nephew," and so of the others. If now a certain

<sup>1</sup> See the note on p. 109.



denominative may be interpreted in the sense of a *sib* comrade of earlier birth, then the tradition that brothers married sisters, with especial emphasis on the fact that they were younger sisters, loses the apparent preciseness of its meaning. The tradition would then refer, not so much to incest as, in a general way, to endogamy. It would then indicate that at a certain moment in the development of endogamy, the custom existed that men should marry women born later than themselves. We have no hope of finding out in view of the uncertainty in the sense of the terms of relationship, whether there was any limitation in respect to sisters or daughters of the full blood. In many denominatives, we seem to find indirect evidence that such further limitations existed.

Boys ten or twelve years of age do not eat with their sisters; they do not lie down to sleep with them on the same bed. The boy is given a separate bed, which involves a special expense. They do it apparently not from modesty, but in obedience to an ancient prohibition in the nature of a taboo. These very sisters, however, may go completely naked, entirely untroubled by the presence of their grown brothers, and they carry on with the latter sometimes conversations and jests which would cover with embarrassment the most cynical European man. It is possible that these restrictions arose later, for the sake of protecting virginity, the loss of which, when exogamy came to be established, began to have influence on the amount of the bride-price. However that may be, they prove that a necessity was felt, at a more or less remote time, of adopting this with other measures to establish a physical separation between brothers and sisters, so that we must regard any union of the two, which may at one time have existed, as a passing phenomenon. It is needless to speak about youth of the same *sib* but another family. Irregular unions between these are even now an ordinary phenomenon.

An analysis of the terms of relationship amongst the Yakuts does not show who might, or who might not, under endogamy, be husband and wife. It would be interesting, with a view to this question, to examine the mistakes in the application by the Yakuts to *sib* comrades of the denominative which means those persons whom one might marry. Some of them said that this denominative could not be employed within the *sib*; others would not allow it any place in the genealogical schedule, although they admitted that such a term of relationship began to be applicable, as some said, in the ninth generation, and others, in the fourth. Others of them constantly confused this term with another, by which they indicate the third degree of blood relationship, corresponding to our grand-child. The Yakuts employ the term "child" or "my child" not only to their own proper children, but also to the children of brothers, or of sisters, or even to brothers and sisters themselves, if they are very much younger. They have not, therefore, in their genealogical terminology any words for son and daughter which testify directly to a blood relationship between specific persons. The word which we translate "son" strictly means "boy," "youth," "young person." It was formerly used as a collective for the body of warriors, or the young men of the

tribe or *sib*. With the addition of the possessive “my,” this term is addressed vituperatively by old men not only to their own sons by blood, but also to any young males who stand in any relationship to them. In a narrow sense, it may be addressed to one’s own son, or, with a prefix, to one’s grandson, and then with other proper prefixes, to grandnephews of the second and third degree. The terms for females are entirely parallel in sense and use.

The lack of words to distinguish between “son” and “boy,” “daughter” and “girl,” is not due to the poverty of the language; on the contrary, their genealogical terms astonish us by their abundance and variety. Not only do they distinguish those of earlier and later birth, but they have a special denominative for younger brothers, which is used only by women. They have a special name for the wife of a husband’s older brother, and another for the wife of the husband’s younger brother, and other similar peculiarities which seem incomprehensible, not only to us, but also to the Yakuts of to-day.

In view of the great abundance of the denominatives for relationships which we should regard as relatively remote, of the lack of special terms for “son” and “daughter,” and of the confusion of these with more remote degrees of relationship and likewise with the expressions “boy” and “girl,” which they use to indicate especially sex and point of growth, we infer beyond a doubt that, at the time when the present system of genealogical relationships took its origin amongst the Yakuts, *the precise genetic connection of any given boy with his parents had no especial denomination.* All the old people in the *sib* called all the young people in the *sib*, up to a certain point of growth, by the same denominatives. The notion of the immediate relationship of the children of a given pair to that pair was not sharply defined until a later point of time; then first was there a denominative for it. It is impossible that this was a consequence of the education in the same place and in the same manner, by the whole horde or *sib*, of all its children; and also that it proceeded from, or accompanied, the extremely unsettled and unclear marriage relationships. In favour of the former conjecture is the fact that the *sib* still considers itself in some sense the proprietor of its children. For instance, it does not allow the immediate parents to alienate a child, especially a boy, into another *sib*, without its express consent; also, when a widow marries a second time into a second *sib*, the grandfathers, uncles, and even more remote relatives take away her boy, if not at once, then at least when he grows up and becomes able to labour, and still again, the strange custom of a fictitious stealing of children in these families in which several successively die, and of giving them to others to bring up, seems to manifest a notion as if the appropriation to one’s self of one’s children was an unlawful act, worthy of punishment.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The stealing of children is accomplished with certain ceremonies. The mother, although she herself asks her friends to do the stealing, ought not to know the moment when it is executed. In the place of the stolen child they put a puppy or a doll. It is required that the child should be taken out through a window, and that the story should then be set afloat that he was stolen by passing travellers. (See table of relationships in the Polish edition.)

[p. 567.] In favour of the explanation of the vague relationship between a child and its parents by the vagueness of the marriage relationship is the analysis of the terms "father," "mother," "husband" and "wife," and also some ancient customs and existing *mores*. There is no name for "father" amongst the Yakuts, which admits of a natural and simple explanation, like the word for "mother." The word for "mother" means "the procreatress," but the word for "father" should be translated "older man." When the author asked questions to clear up this point, the persons inquired of asked him to indicate more precisely whether the person he meant was born earlier or later than the one named; and this they did with respect to women as well as men. They explained that the word in question meant "father," but that in some phrases it was necessary to understand it as "elder." They have a corresponding word for "older sister" or "older aunt"; yet when the phrase refers to the point of growth, this word means only "a woman who was born earlier." The lack of a special name for "father" is the more strange because the Yakuts have special terms for more remote relatives up as far as the great grandfather, although even then the female origin is more clearly expressed than the male origin. This vagueness in regard to the male blood tie, side by side with the definiteness of the female connection with the offspring, is very significant. If, in connection with this, we also remember that the *familia*, in the Latin sense of the word, bears a name which means "mother-*sib*" (*ye-ussa*), and that many "father-*sib*" (*aga-ussa*) of the present time, and even *Nasleys*, according to tradition, take their origin from women, and that one of the favourite motives of the Yakut folk tales, on a line with the search for a wife, is the search for a "father," then we have reason to devote particular attention to this class of facts. It is a current fact in the legends that the heroes do not know who their fathers were.

The author does not venture to draw more positive conclusions with respect to the ancient marriage institution, but he thinks it safe to assume that it was, in its origin, entirely different from the present one, not only by virtue of the fact that endogamy then prevailed, but also on account of the peculiar relations between the sexes. Unions between them, inside of the *sib*, were exceedingly free and non-permanent. The children could know only their mothers, and they could know them only up to a certain point of their own age; after that they forgot this relationship. It was supplanted by a feeling of belonging to a certain group. Within that group there were only "men" and "women," older or younger than the person in question. There are out-of-the-way places amongst them now where the current word of the language for "wife" is unknown; they meet it with laughter. The words they use mean "woman" or "old woman" or "mistress of the house." A word for "husband" exists nowhere amongst the Yakuts. The current word means properly "man." They have no words for "divorce," "widow," or "widower." The first is entirely unknown to them. They have adopted the Russian word for "widow," but they apply it to every bereaved person. One of their proverbs is:—"A woman without a man is the same as a herd of cattle

without a master." A widow with her property and her little children passes over to the brothers, uncles, or nephews of the husband, and in all probability, in ancient times, she not infrequently became the concubine of one of them. There is proof in the customs that there was a time when, even during the life of the husband, it was demanded that measures should be taken against eventual claims of the nearest relatives of the men upon wives who had come from abroad.

*Relatives-in-law.*—There was a well known custom according to which a bride should avoid showing herself or her uncovered body to her father-in-law. In ancient times, they say, a bride concealed herself for seven years from her father-in-law, and from the brothers and other masculine relatives of her husband. The young people lived in the left, or women's half of the house, and behind the screen, which was always found in the ancient houses. Looking through a crack in this, she watched until her husband's male relatives were busy, and then, concealing herself carefully behind the chimney [which stood free in the middle of the house], she went out into the yard, rarely through the door of the house, more frequently through the stable. The men also tried not to meet her, saying, "The poor child will be ashamed." If a meeting could not be avoided, the young woman put a mask on her face. Sometimes she died before her father-in-law had seen her face. Not until then was it proper for him to look at her so as to know whether she was pretty or what she was like. Nowadays the young wives only avoid showing to their male relatives-in-law the uncovered body. Amongst the rich, they avoid going about in the presence of these in the chemise alone. They put on a short gown. In some places, they lay especial emphasis on the fact that it is a shame for young wives to show their uncovered hair and feet to the male relatives of their husbands. On the other side, the male relatives of the husband ought to avoid showing to the young wife the body uncovered above the elbow or the sole of the foot, and they ought to avoid indecent expressions and vulgar vituperatives in her presence. Nevertheless, the author heard nothing amongst them about the status of the daughter-in-law. That the whole custom which has just been described is not a manifestation of respect for the husband's relatives, but a prudential device, is to be seen from the fact that nothing of the kind is observed in presence of the mother-in-law and old women. Also that those observances are not the result of a specially delicate modesty is proved by the fact that even young girls constantly twist thread upon the naked thigh, unembarrassed by the presence of men who do not belong to the household; nor do they show any embarrassment if a strange man comes upon them when uncovered to the waist. The one thing which they do not like, and at which they show anger, is that such persons look carefully at their uncovered feet. The former custom of peculiar behaviour towards male relatives-in-law is gradually being abandoned. Also the former simplicity of their *mores*, with lack of shame in uncovering the body, is disappearing.

In all probability, endogamy did not at once give way to exogamy. Both forms long existed and competed with each other for exclusive validity. It may

be that the first captive or slave wives were a violation of some customs of the *sib*, and that they concealed themselves in the beginning from all the *sib* relatives of the husband, since these only endured them and did not recognise them. Unfriendly behaviour toward the wives within the bounds of the *sib* undoubtedly occurred.

*Reasons for Polygamy.*—The Yakuts gave up polygamy at the beginning of the last century on their conversion to Christianity. They petitioned the government against the abolition of polygamy in the following terms: "Rich Yakuts had many wives for oversight of the numerous houses and cattle which ordinarily were in different places; for wives took more zealous care of property than indifferent hired persons. Hence the housekeeping was improved and the property was increased under polygamy." The Christianised Chukches gave a similar justification for polygamy. They said that they could not get on without a plurality of wives, because, for fear of contagious diseases, they were compelled to break up and scatter their herds of reindeer. [A wife was required for the care of each sub-division.]

According to the official figures of 1889, there were amongst the Yakuts 110,982 men and 110,221 women. Hence polygamy was impossible for the great mass of the people.

The price of a bride was formerly not less than ten head of cattle. Midden-dorf says that in his time the price was ten head of cattle of each kind, ten mares, ten cows, ten stallions, and ten bulls, from 500 to 5,000 rubles in value. Hence to have more than one wife was a privilege of the richest.

*Status of Women.*—A wife, according to the notion of the Yakuts, is above all things a household labourer; she guards and increases the property; she has no rights in the family; she can punish a disobedient child, and that is all. She has no property; her husband has the right to squander even her dower to the last head of cattle and the last chemise. They more often beat women than children. Outside of the family, the rights of the wife are still less than in it. Civil right she has absolutely none. In ancient times the husband has the right of life and death over her. Once a war captive, she is now a purchased slave. Exogamy and permanent marriage have completely put an end to the independence of the Yakut woman. Those customs have excluded her from membership in the *sib*. Outside of the family, there remains no place for her, and at the head of the new form of the family stands her husband. If a Yakut woman is not married, her position after the death of her parents becomes still harder; she is delivered over to a permanent inferiority; to the reproaches and the exploitation of all her relatives, brother, uncles, nephews, and, worst of all, their wives and children. This is why the Yakut women are very anxious to be married, and sincerely mourn in case of the death of even ill-natured and cruel husbands. An orphan girl, or a young childless widow, is compelled to run about from one guardian to another, or to live with some one of them in the capacity of a permanent and unconditional labourer. Her possessions such a guardian considers as his own property, and if she should marry, it is rarely the case that



she can recover them at his hands. No one has any desire to take her part, or to enter into a quarrel with her guardian, who is sure to be a man of importance in the *sib*. The men zealously guard their own privilege of exclusive participation in the meetings of the *sib*. Women who cannot endure the cruel usage of their husbands rarely complain to the *sib* of the husband, but prefer to take refuge under the protection of their own; the latter generally sends them back. Nevertheless, the flight of a wife brings so much unpleasant experience upon the husband, and gives occasion for so much ridicule, that husbands avoid provoking their wives to this point. Cases in which wives ran away from their husbands were especially numerous just at the time when Christianity was preached amongst the Yakuts. Conversion to Christianity and marriage with Christians freed the women from prosecution by the authorities of the *sib*. Great numbers of women took advantage of this. After Christianity had been established, the device ceased to be available.

A wife can expect no protection in the *sib* of her husband, and in his immediate household all unite heartily against her, since she is an outsider from another *sib*. The maiden sisters of the husband enjoy an especially bad repute amongst Yakut women. Evidently there is here a traditional enmity, but often it is founded in the nature of things. The author gives a case known to him, in which a woman of exceptional merit and ability was persecuted by the maiden sisters of her husband, who spoke ill of her to him and stimulated him to harshness against her. He also knows cases of suicide by young wives under the persecution of the husband and his relatives. Neither law nor customary right offers any protection against these persecutions. If anything restrains them, it is the trouble and expense of buying another wife. In this way the protection of the *sib* of the woman, translated now into a large ransom, has done the women a good service. It has softened the family *mores*, and taught their masters to give them some protection. Their position has been little changed up to the present time. Of course there are exceptions. There are women who rule their husbands as European women do; there are disobedient daughters, and there are energetic widows, who keep large households in terror; but this can be the case amongst the Yakuts only when the circumstances are favourable to a far greater degree than amongst Russians. Everything is against the women; the conditions of labour, which require a family organisation, and the land tenure which recognises the men only as having a share; and traditions and education.

A boy almost from the cradle hears that he is the master, the worker, the future support and hope of the family. They feed and clothe him better than they do the girls; they compel his sisters to give way to him in a quarrel; and they inspire him with contempt for his sisters and in general for feminine occupations. Amongst their proverbs are: "A woman's mind is shorter than her hair"; "Women, though they have long hair, are narrow-minded." Amongst their sayings are: "We consider our daughters as outsiders; they will be obliged to go away to other people." "Whatever work a woman may do, there is no profit from



her." "If a woman passes between me and my fire, she can spoil for me both my handicraft and my luck." "We Yakuts in old times despised women. We thought them unclean." Various epithets for "womanish," in a contemptuous sense, are met with at every step. In the folk tales women are objects of ridicule, and in the traditions the heroes call each other "women" in vituperation.

Women, especially when they are pregnant, are forbidden by custom to eat some dishes and to touch some things. They are considered in some sense unclean. They spoil the gun of a hunter, and lessen the good fortune of a handicraftsman. All this has brought the women to recognise from childhood their own worthlessness and rightlessness, and has made them servile and cringing. Yakut women are in general far more obedient and humble than Russian women. You will hear any well-bred Yakut woman say with conviction: "The husband is our lord; he feeds us; he gets us what we need, and protects us." This is the current opinion. The author has more than once heard hard-working women express it, although they did not only their own work, but that of their husbands; and also clever women, who far surpassed in cultivation their stupid husbands. When such a husband beat such a wife, she was asked why she did not give him a good thrashing, and then he would let her alone. "It's impossible," she answered with a smile, "he is the husband. If I should beat him, people would cease to respect him, and that would be bad for both of us, and for our children."

[p. 578.] *Sex Mores.*—The Yakuts see nothing immoral in illicit love, provided only that nobody suffers material loss by it. It is true that parents will scold a daughter, if her conduct threatens to deprive them of their gain from the bride-price; but if once they have lost hope of marrying her off, or if the bride-price has been spent, then they manifest complete indifference to her conduct. The time which young wives spend with their parents after the wedding is the merriest and freest time they ever know. The young men hover about them like flies, but the parents pretend to take no notice, and even in most cases take advantage in their household work of the serviceability of these aspirants. They only strive that these connections may not be long continued, and may not become notorious; for this might bring upon them unpleasant consequences from the family of the husband, and might lessen the quantity of gifts which they might expect later. Maidens who no longer expect marriage are not restrained at all, and if they observe decorum, it is only from habit and out of respect to custom. The young women of the community in which the author lived, in autumn, with the knowledge of the old people, went out to live in a separate house, on the bank of a lake, where every evening young men of the neighbourhood went to join them. They spent the evening in singing, story-telling and witty conversation. The author having chanced upon them one evening, they entertained him with food and tea, and when he started to leave, the twenty-two year old sister of the man with whom he lived, who at home was ordinarily very modest and reserved, openly proposed herself to him for the night. At the time of weddings, and at the festivity of the *sib* (*esseah*) the oversight over the maidens is exceedingly weakened.

The current opinion does not approve of mothers who take their young daughters with them to those places. In games the young men are free with their hands and the girls do not especially defend themselves. The author was a witness of proceedings which fully confirmed the statement above made that sisters are never allowed to depart in marriage as virgins. [This shows that exogamy cannot be due to horror of incest.] The birth of an illegitimate child, and illegitimacy, are not regarded as a disgrace. If such children are vigorous and active they are treated in the family with the same affection as lawful children, or even with more.

[p. 581.] *Love in Marriage.*—The author devoted attention to the question, what place is occupied in marriage, and in the life of the people, by love? Evidently in marriage they consider it superfluous. They esteem more highly a peaceful status, founded on friendship, esteem, and recognition of the solidarity of interests, than any passionate attraction. Previous acquaintance between bride and groom is regarded as superfluous. Most marriages are brought about without the participation or consent of the young people. Only an extreme repugnance to each other on the part of the two, as a consequence of which a passionate and stubborn protest is manifested, may *sometimes* win attention. If such a protest is made by the man, it more frequently is respected, but they compel daughters, even grown women and widows, by force, and without discussion, to enter into marriage against their will. For this purpose they beat them, or threaten to drive them out destitute from the house. The author mentions a case in which a man compelled the widow of his brother to take as her husband a man whom she did not like, by the threat to take away her children and property from her. She was living at the time in open union with the brother of the husband who was forced upon her. It must not be understood that the feeling of love is unknown to the Yakuts, or that they do not know how to value it. In their popular songs, which the boys and girls sing under their voices when sitting at work, there is manifested a well-defined ideal of beauty. In these songs, just as in European love songs, black eyebrows, an erect figure, rounded hips, flashing eyes, silvery tones of the voice, etc., are praised. Sometimes they also speak in honour of mental and moral qualities, such as a pure heart, cleverness, accessibility, industry on the part of men, and on the part of women, tenderness, self-sacrifice, and modesty.

[p. 614.] *Notion of the other World.*—The Yakuts feel the joy of life, but trouble themselves little about the morrow, especially about the morrow of death. The notion of the purpose of existence, and of the futurity of all living things, of the end of the world, and of all that which happens to men after the end of life is very weakly developed amongst them; and even that little about these subjects which they borrowed with Christianity from the Russians has faded into the background of their minds. With the exception of some shadowy conceptions of the Biblical paradise and hell, they have scarcely any beliefs about the connection between this life and the other life, in the way of rewards and punishments. The author quotes a description of Hades and of the souls living there as follows:

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“Beyond the eight grades of heaven, on the west side, where there is no day, but constant, gloomy night, where there is no summer, but only the winter wind whistles, with a reversed, wretched, and irregular course of the gloomy, nocturnal sun turned upside down, with a reversed circuit of the crooked moon, with maidens who never get husbands, with youths who never take wives, with stallions whom the mares never accept, with bulls whom the cows never accept, consisting of a house of stone and iron, so built that the top part of it is narrow, the bottom part flattened out, and the middle bulging.”

*Mortuary and Funerary Usages.*—The Yakuts have a custom of making presents to their acquaintances before death. They give away cattle, chattels, and more rarely, clothing and money. They think that washing the corpse is obligatory; but they put it off till the last thing in order to avoid superfluous trouble and busying themselves unpleasantly with the corpse. The dying person is often dressed in his grave-clothes while still alive. These clothes, even amongst the poorest people, are kept in store for this purpose; so that they are new or scarcely worn at all. One thing about which the dying Yakut really cares is that some domestic animal may be slaughtered immediately after his death, in order that, riding on it, or with it, he may accomplish his journey into the lower world. With this purpose for men, they slaughter oxen and horses, and for women, cows, young ones if the wealth of the deceased admits of a choice, and of course they select by preference beasts of burden on which one can ride, and above all, fat ones. The spirits of the dead will have to drive before them cows and calves with a switch; or to lead them by ropes tied around the horns, which is attended with some inconvenience. Poor people kill the most worthless of the animals which they have. In the north, they often kill reindeer, but whether they kill sledgedogs, the author does not know: he thinks not. The labourers who make the coffins and dig the graves, the literary persons who read the Psalter over the deceased, and the neighbours who visit the house at this time, are fed with the meat of the slaughtered animals. In the north, where in general all their customs have been better preserved, and where now they are observed with greater accuracy, even the very poorest families try to provide for the funeral feast of a member some animal, even if it is only a sucking calf. Sometimes they sacrifice for this purpose the last miserable cow. A Russian soldier at a military station wanted a monument set up on the grave of his brother who had died at that place while on a journey. “If you want to hire us for that purpose,” said the Yakuts to him, “then you must kill an animal, a calf or a reindeer. No blood has been poured out on the grave of your brother, and we are afraid.” If a well-to-do householder dies, and his relatives offer only a miserable funeral feast, then in the other world, the demons will pursue and torment his spirit, saying to him: “Is that your cattle? It is miserable. Is that your funeral feast?”

When the soul, in spite of the feast before death, and the expected funeral feast, and the other consolations, does not want to depart, and the dying man is tormented in a prolonged agony, then they place by the bed a cup of water, in

order that the soul before its departure may have the possibility of bathing itself. The corpse, when dressed, is placed in the chief corner of the house, on the bench, where it lies three days. The rites of the Russian church are performed over it, reading the Psalter, burning candles, incense, etc. The grave should be dug down a fathom or more to the ground which never thaws, in order that the body and the clothing may remain intact as long as possible. If there is not upon the grave elevation a cross and monument, then the angel of the resurrection will not know that a human being is buried there. The angel does not like a bad odour, and would avoid the place. It would be a mistake also to make the grave too deep, for the voice of the angel cannot be heard more than three fathoms down. All metallic ornaments are carefully removed from the grave clothes. Strings of leather or fibre are used in place of buttons and clasps. They leave only the cross hung from the neck and the betrothal ring, and in the case of women, the ear-rings; but these must in no case be of silver, but of brass. Poor people even make them of wood.

When the coffin is ready, they put the body in it and cover it over with white cotton cloth. In the left hand they place a passport [they use this word], in order that the ghost may be received into paradise, where it will live as it did on earth. If it had no passport, those of the other world would say to it, "Friend, you have gone astray," and it would have to go on beyond the forty-four lands where the demons live. On the third day, in the morning, they either carry the coffin, or place it on an ox, never on a horse, in order to bring it to the grave. Nobody accompanies it but the bearers and the grave-digger, and these make haste to finish their task as quickly as possible and hurry away home. When returning they would not for anything look backwards, but when they come into the gateway of the enclosure, or the door of the house, they themselves go, and they lead the beasts by which the corpse was carried, across a bonfire, lighted by them, built of the chips and shavings left over from the coffin, and also of the straw on which the corpse had lain. The spades, sleigh, and in general all that which was used in any way whatever for the interment, they break up and leave on the grave elevation. If they bury a child, then they hang up there on a tree his cradle, and they leave there his playthings. Formerly they left on the grave food, furniture, tools, dishes, and other objects indispensable in life. Now that custom has died out. In the north, on ancient graves, the author often found rusted and broken kettles, knives, spear-points, arrow-points, stirrups, and rings from harnesses and saddles,—all broken, punctured, and spoiled, with the purpose, as the natives explain, that the dead might not be able with them to harm the living.

*Shamans* and *shamanesses* are buried in just the same manner as ordinary people, but without the ceremonies of the church, somewhere in a remote nook in a grove or in a forest opening, which latter place is especially beloved by spirits and *shamans*. On a tree near the grave, they hang up the drum and magical dress of the deceased. They bury those persons with great haste by night, or at evening, and always afterwards carefully avoid the places where they are buried.

*Superstitions about the Dead.*—In general, the remains of a deceased person, wherever buried, inspire a Yakut with great fear. Such remains cause great interferences with nature, arousing winds, blizzards, and bad weather. The remains of a *shaman* produce all these phenomena in a very extraordinary degree. If, after a burial, the wind blows, that is a good thing, because the wind blows away all traces left by the deceased; otherwise upon these traces it is possible that many more living souls might go away into the lower world. In ancient times the Yakuts disposed of their dead on the branches of trees, or on narrow wooden platforms raised upon two posts. Even now such structures may be found in places in the woods. This was a foreign custom borrowed by the Yakuts from the Tunguses and the Yukagirs. In some districts the people who are a little well-to-do, in the case of a death, at once abandon the house, if not forever, at least for a time. They say there (in the Kolymsk district) that in ancient times, when anyone died, the inhabitants fled from the house, leaving in it the corpse with all the goods which belonged to the person when he was alive.

[p. 621.] *The Old and the Helpless.*—A local tradition is met with that in ancient times, if an old person became extremely decrepit, or if anyone became ill beyond hope of recovery, such person generally begged his beloved children or relatives to bury him. Then the neighbours were called together, the best and fattest cattle were slaughtered, and they feasted for three days, during which time the one who was to die, dressed in his best travelling clothes, sat in the foremost place and received from all who were present marks of respect and the best pieces of food. On the third day the relative chosen by him led him into the wood and unexpectedly thrust him into a hole previously prepared. They then left him together with vessels, tools, and food, to die of hunger. Sometimes an old man and wife were buried together; sometimes an ox or horse was buried alive with them; and sometimes a saddled horse was tied up to a post set in the ground near by, and left there to die of hunger. This tradition is met with on the Aldan River.

A fine tree attracts the attention of the Yakut. A Yakut will charge his friends to bury him under such a tree. Gmelin (II, 447) says that formerly they burned their dead, or placed them in trees, or left them in the huts where they died, and which all others left. There was also a custom to burn, on a separate fire, a beloved slave of the deceased, in order that he might serve his master in the other world. This custom was brought to an end by the Russian conquest.

*Goblinism and Demonism.*—During the time that the corpse is unburied, now not more than three days, the spirit does not leave the earth; the demons drive it about in all the places where it was accustomed to be during life, which makes it hard for anyone who had travelled much while alive. During that time, the ghost makes its presence known to the living by different knocks and sounds. Sometimes it can be heard to weep and complain; sometimes it is possible to see how it is trying to carry on its former household tasks. It gives hay to the cattle, or washes dishes, or handles straps, or rummages in the boxes in the store-room.



Once in a house in which the author was, all with the exception of himself heard the rustling and knocking of the ghosts of two old people recently deceased, in the walls. When the head of the animal which had constituted the funeral feast was eaten, the old people went away and became quiet. Some ghosts never come to rest; such a ghost is called a *yor*. Any ghost may become a *yor* if, when he is asked in the other world what he left on earth, he answers, "House, cattle, husband or wife, children, father, mother, relatives," and, when asked if he wants to go back to them, answers "Yes." That is why a *yor* most frequently torments his own nearest relatives. He hinders them from living their own lives, and from taking any pleasure, by constantly reminding them of himself. The relationships which surrounded the deceased during life also have influence on the question whether he will turn into a *yor*, but the most frequent case is that some ceremony has not been accurately performed; that some piece of meat or fat has not been completely eaten up. In a certain case they said that on the day after a wedding, the deceased brother and sister of the bride began to torment her by the pranks of a *yor*, because the wedding party had forgotten to make a libation of vodka, and to cast a bit of the fat or butter or meat on the fire. It was necessary then to call a *shaman*, or the bride would suffer from the *yors* all her life.

An aged Yakut woman told the author that when she was a child, she once became very ill. Her father called in a *shaman*, who went through his performances for seven days, calling on all the demons; but they all answered, "We are not the ones,"—and her life was despaired of. Then by chance there came to the hut a person who saw predictive dreams; he lay down and dreamed. When he awoke, he told that he saw in his dream how the deceased grandfather of the child, on the mother's side, sat by the chimney, and having put his feet on the hearth, warmed them while he stirred up with his stick the ashes and talked to himself, saying, "They do not see me with their eyes; they do not hear me with their ears; from the beloved child I will never depart. I will sit here to get something; to eat something." As soon as they knew this, the *shaman* began his arts again, and finally compelled the old man to acknowledge his presence. He was stubborn for a long time, saying, "I will not go. I will not go. I will not eat the child. I love her very much. That is why I caress her, but she does not endure that." Finally the mother and father begged the old man to go away, and he went. The child recovered.

All who die in childhood, all who do not live out their appointed term, all who are murdered or die suddenly, suicides and drowned persons, all who are buried and go to eternity without the rites of the church, become *yors*. In ancient times everyone who died became a *yor*, but with the introduction of Christianity, their number has been greatly diminished. The souls of *shamans* and *shamanesses*, of witches and sorcerers, of evil and envious persons, and of those who are hot-tempered, or are out of the ordinary kind, by virtue of something or other, become *yors*. They serve the higher powers as labourers. Having entered into living

persons, they cripple their bodies, spoil their eyes and their entrails, break their bones, make them hysterical, throw them out of their senses ; but sometimes endow them with magical powers and so make *shamans* of them.

*Shamans and Shamanesses.*—A *shaman* whose name meant “The-man-who-fell-from-heaven,” told the author about his career as a *shaman*. He was sixty years old, of middle stature, a dried up, muscular old man, although it was evident that he had once been vigorous and active. Even when seen, he could still perform shamanistic rites, jump and dance the whole night through without becoming weary. He had travelled from the northern to the southern extremities of the Yakut territory. His countenance was dark and full of active expression. His features resembled the Tungus type. The pupil of his eye was surrounded by a double ring of a dull green colour. When he was practising his magic, his eyes took on a peculiar, unpleasant dull glare, and an expression of idiocy, and their persistent stare, as the author observed, excited and disturbed those upon whom he fixed it. Another *shaman* who was observed had the same peculiarities of the eyes. In general, there is in the appearance of a *shaman* something peculiar, which enabled the author, after some practice, to distinguish them with great certainty in the midst of a number of persons who were present. They are distinguished by a certain energy and mobility of the muscles of the face, which generally amongst the Yakuts are immobile. There is also in their movements a noticeable spryness. Besides this, in the north, they all without exception wear their hair long enough to fall on their shoulders. Generally they braid it behind the head into a queue, or tie it into a tuft. In the south, near the city of Yakutsk, where the clergy and government persecute them, and where they are compelled to hide, long hair is rare. “The-man-who-fell-from-heaven” declared that he did not like long hair because the little *yors* frisk about in it and torment him. He could not get rid of them without cutting it off. Some *shamans* are as passionately devoted to their calling as drunkards to drink. This man had several times been condemned to punishment ; his professional dress and drum had been burned ; his hair had been cut off, and he had been compelled to make a number of obeisances and to fast. He told the author, “We do not carry on this calling without paying for it. Our masters (the spirits) keep a zealous watch over us, and woe betide us afterwards if we do not satisfy them ! But we cannot quit it ; we cannot cease to practice *shaman* rites. Yet we do no evil.”

The amount of payment given to a *shaman* differs. He is paid only in case his sorcery produces the desired result. Then he sometimes gets twenty-five rubles, or even more. Generally he is paid one ruble and his entertainment. Besides that he eats, and in some places takes home with him, a part of the meat of the animal sacrificed at the ceremony. The shamanistic gift is not hereditary, although there are some popular sayings which indicate a notion of some blood relationship between *shamans*. His guardian spirit is believed, at the death of a *shaman*, to seek a new residence in one of his blood relatives. This guardian spirit is essential to every *shaman*. Even the greater *shamans* must have a tutelary spirit

(*amagat*). This animal form is the one which the *shaman* assumes in the spirit-world. It may be compared with the Manito of the Red Indian, and is known in Yakut as *ye-keela* (= mother-animal). All *shamans* hide their *ye-keela* carefully. (See the Polish edition, p. 396.) Only once in the year, when the last snow melts and the whole ground becomes black, do these animal forms of the *shamans* show themselves on earth. Then the spirits of the *shamans* embodied in them rush hither and thither. Ordinary people do not perceive them, but only the eyes of the sorcerers. The strong and bold *ye-keela* fly about with noise and with zealous activity, but the weak ones creep about timidly. The *ye-keela* of the *shamanesses* are remarkable for excessive jealousy and quarrelsomeness, and if a real sorceress is found amongst them, she will give way to no one. Inexperienced or jealous *shamans* often get into fights. The consequence is disease or death for the one whose familiar spirit has been slain.

It does not depend on the will of the *shaman* whether he will obtain a guardian and protecting spirit (*amagat*) and *ye-keela*, that is to say, the qualities which belong to such. It either comes to pass accidentally, or is predestinated from above. "The-man-who-fell-from-heaven" told how he got a guardian *amagat* as follows: "Once when I was travelling in the north, I had gathered on the mountain a pile of wood. It was necessary for me to cook my dinner at once, so I set fire to the pile of wood. It happened, however, that a distinguished Tungus *shaman* had been buried beneath the place where the wood pile was. His spirit took possession of me." When this man performs his rites, the Tungus origin of his *amagat* is shown by the fact that he mutters Tungus words and makes Tungus gestures. Different spirits come to him when performing; for instance, a Russian devil, the daughter of a demon, with a demon youth, as well as the Tungus spirit. The first shows Russian characteristics. He asks for vodka, and a maiden. The second and third behave themselves in an extremely free and easy manner, and, without ceremony, they ask those who are present whether they have *pudenda*. It will not do at all to answer these questions affirmatively. He who does so will become impotent. The demon youth mutilates the females, and the girl demon the males.

The mightiest sorcerers are those whose guardian spirits are sent by Ulutoyon, the great deity himself. Of such there could be, they said, in the whole land of the Yakuts, only four at a time, corresponding to the four *Uluses* of the Yakuts which were first formed. In each of these *Uluses* there are special *sibs* which are distinguished for strength in sorcery, in the midst of which, from time to time, a great *shaman* appears.

[p. 631.] The further north we go, the greater ability do the *shamans* manifest. The *shamanesses* have greater might than the men. In general the feminine element has a very prominent rôle in sorcery amongst the Yakuts. In the Kolmyck district the *shamans*, for want of any special dress, put on women's dress. They wear their hair long and comb and braid it as women do. According to the popular belief, any *shaman* of more than ordinary power can bear children

like a woman. It is narrated of one of them that he gave birth several times ; amongst the rest, to a fox. Another gave birth to a raven, and the birth was so difficult that he nearly died. They give birth also to gulls, ducks and puppies. The whole proceeding, in sorcery, has a fantastic character. The songs are richly embellished with suggestions and parallels chiefly borrowed from the domain of sex functions. The dances constantly pass over into indecent gestures and movements.

*Smiths.*—*Smiths* stand in a close and peculiar relation to *shamans*. Popular sayings are ; “*Smiths* and *shamans* come out of one nest.” “*Smiths* and *shamans* stand on the same plane.” “The wife of a *shaman* is to be respected ; the wife of a *smith* is worthy of honour.” *Smiths* also are able to cure diseases, to give counsel and to make predictions ; yet their dexterities lack any magical character ; they are only clever men who know a great deal, and whose fingers are expert. *Smiths*, especially in the north, generally transmit the craft from father to son. In the ninth generation a *smith* obtains almost supernatural qualities, and the more of a man’s ancestors were *smiths*, the more real these qualities are. In the legends, mention is often made of *smiths* ; they are called an honoured band. Spirits are, above all, afraid of the clink of iron and of the roar of the bellows in activity. In the Kolymsk *Ulus*, a *shaman* was not willing to perform until the author should take out from the hut his box of instruments, and after the *shaman* had failed, he explained to the bystanders that the spirits are afraid of the *smith* (the author), and therefore will not come at the call. Only in the ninth generation can a *smith* without danger for himself forge the iron ornaments of the *shaman’s* professional dress and drum, or the brazen breastplate with the figure of a man, which represents the tutelary spirit of the *shaman* and is put on when he is about to perform. The saying is : “If a *smith* who has forged the decorations of a *shaman* has not enough of the qualities of his own *smith*-ancestors, if the sound of their hammers and the flash of their fires do not surround him on every side, then birds with crooked claws and beaks will tear his heart.” Amongst such venerated hereditary smiths, the tools have acquired souls, so that they can give out sounds of themselves. On a fine professional dress of a *shaman*, there will be from thirty to forty pounds of iron. The dress costs from three to fifteen rubles. [p. 635.] According to the common belief, the metallic attachments of the *shaman’s* dress have the peculiarity that they do not rust ; they have a soul.

*Leechcraft.*—The *shamans* cure all diseases, but especially such as are mysterious, being nervous affections, such as hysterics, mental derangement, convulsions, and St. Vitus’ dance ; also impotence, sterility, puerperal fever, etc. ; then diseases of the internal organs, especially such as cause the patient to groan, scream, and toss about ; then also wounds, broken and decayed bones, headache, inflammation of the eyes, rheumatic fever ; besides these also all epidemic diseases and consumption ; but this last they treat only with a view to alleviation, considering it incurable. They refuse to treat diarrhoea, scarlet fever, measles, small-pox, syphilis, scrofula, and leprosy, which they call “the great disease.”

They are especially afraid of small-pox, and take care not to perform their rites in a house where a case of it has recently occurred. They call small-pox and measles "old women," and say that they are two Russian sisters dressed in Russian fashion, who go to visit in person those houses where they have marked their victims. All diseases come from evil spirits who have taken possession of men. Methods of cure are always of the same kind, and consist in propitiating or driving away the uninvited guest. The simplest method of cure is by fire. A boy whose wounded finger became inflamed, came to the conclusion, which the bystanders shared, that a *yor* had established itself in the finger. Desiring to drive it out, he took a burning coal and began to apply it around the place while blowing upon it. When the burned flesh began to blister, and then burst with a little crackle, then the curious group which had crowded around him flew back with a cry of terror, and the wounded boy, with a smile of self-satisfaction, said:—"You saw how he jumped out." A man who had the rheumatism had his body marked all over with deep burnings. As soon as he had any pain, he applied fire to the seat of it.

[p. 637.] *Exorcism.*—In order to drive out demons which torment people in sleep, it is a good plan to put any iron cutting instruments under the bed; or to put near by any iron rod, axe, or other tool. The most trustworthy thing of all, although not always applicable, is fire, placed between the victim and his tormentor. An expiring fire-brand cast down by the threshold of the house door is often used by the Yakuts to prevent evil spirits from getting into the house. Often when they first bring into the stable beasts which they have newly obtained, they lead them through fire. Not only sounds and objects, but people possess the power, some of them temporarily, others permanently, without exertion, to infuse terror into the invisible powers. For instance, a man who has killed a bear can cure some diseases.

Observation justifies the division of *shamans* into great, middling, and petty. Some of them dispose of light and darkness in such a masterly manner, also of silence and incantation; the modulation of the voice is so flexible; the gestures so peculiar and expressive; the blows of the drum and the tone of them correspond so well to the moment: and all is intertwined with such an original series of unexpected words, witty observations, artistic and often elegant metaphors, that involuntarily you give yourself up to the charm of watching, this wild and free evocation of a wild and free spirit.

In the northern part of the Yakut territory, when the *shaman* is about to perform under the auspices of some householder, the latter having selected the best straps he possesses, ties a kind of double noose, which is then put around the shoulders of the *shaman* in order to hold him by the free end of this strap while he is dancing, so that the spirits may not steal him away.

[p. 645.] The dance of the *shaman* figures the journey to heaven in company with the spirits and the sacrificed cattle. In ancient times there were *shamans* who actually went to heaven and saw those who were there. There were some



even who were so clever that instead of real cattle they took to heaven a fictitious "shadowy" mare; but such *shamans* are not received in heaven. A cow offered in sacrifice is tied to the first of a series of posts; a rope is tied to this post, and then to each of the others in the series, rising higher and higher from the ground as it goes on. A rag is tied to this line between each pair of posts.

[p. 654.] *Deities.*—Ai-toyon is the personification of existence in general. That part of existence which is manifested in each living thing is personified in a special deity called Ulu-toyon. The latter manifests himself sometimes as a powerful, and angry chastiser. Then he gives commands to his subordinates, or himself, incarnated in an animal or something else appears on the earth. All calamities, torments, and unhappiness, all diseases and sufferings, are gods of his household, and related, subordinates of his mighty hand. However he by no means wishes the annihilation of the living; on the contrary, by his mighty power he restrains all these calamities, which if he did not do so, would submerge the earth and in a moment wash away everything living from its face.

*Superstitions about Fire.*—The spirit of fire is a grey-haired, garrulous, restless eternally fussy old man. What he is whispering and shuffling about so perpetually few understand. The *shaman* understands it, and also the little child whose ear has not yet learned to distinguish human speech. The fire understands well what they are saying and doing round about it; therefore it is dangerous to hurt the feelings of the fire, to scold it, to spit upon it, to urinate on it. It will not do to cast into the fire rubbish which adheres to the shoes, for that would cause headache. It is sinful to poke the fire with an iron instrument, and the wooden poker with which they do stir it up must be burned every week, or there will be bad luck in the house. A good house-mistress always takes care that the fire may be satisfied with her, and she casts into it a bit of everything which is prepared by its aid. No one ever knows what kind of a fire is burning on the hearth in his house; therefore it is well to conciliate it from time to time, by little gifts. The fire loves, above all, fat, butter, and cream. They sprinkle these often upon it. They told the author, in the northern region, about a people who were said to live on the islands of the Arctic Ocean and who had no knowledge of fire.

[p. 665.] Fire is often presented as a protector and as a symbol of the family and the *sib*. A youth who comes to find a wife dare not pass beyond the strip of light, which falls from the household fire, to go over on the women's side of the house. This would be improper. The same is true for any other person who does not belong to the family. A betrothed man, until he has paid the whole of the bride-price, has no right even to light his pipe at the fire of his affianced; but a wife brought home to the house of her husband, and taking her place in his family ought first of all to go around behind the fire and cast into it a little butter or fat, to put three splinters into it, and to blow them to a blaze. In general women ought not, as far as they can avoid it, to pass over the strip of light in front of the fire-place; their domain is behind it. In the southern districts the cultus of the

fire is dying away year by year ; but in the north it is in full force. Besides the domestic fires, there are also wild and wandering fires. If these are lighted by the spirit of the place, when enjoying itself, then they are good fires ; but if they are the work of the devil, then it is a bad sign to meet with them. There are also heavenly fires, such as the lightning, which was formerly considered a symbol of *Ai-toyon*, but this notion is undergoing change and cannot now be defined.

*Shadows.*—The shadow thrown by objects is considered a peculiar, real, and inseparable part of the object. It has some connection with the soul of the object, and also some connection with fire as a spirit. (See note H, p. 108.) In the incantations, phrases are often met with of this kind : “The shadow of the fire.” “The fire shadow.” “The shadow of the spirit,” etc. The *shaman* in one of his rites says : “Cast all thy diseases into the shadow of the fire.” It is possible to lose one’s shadow. Then misfortune threatens the man. They say : “A man has three shadows ; it is possible to lose the first two, although then a man becomes inactive, diseased, and flaccid. When he loses all three, he perishes.”

Every object may have at its disposition a soul (*ichchi*), as well as a shadow. All objects which bear traces of human handiwork have souls (*ichchi*). Cliffs, mountains, rivers, and woods have souls (*ichchi*). The wind is also a spirit. It sleeps in the mountains ; it is not hard to call it from thence by a whistle. (See note H, p. 108.)

Some of them think that the milky way is a seam in the heavens. The heavenly bodies in general influence the fate of men and the changes of the weather. They foretell the future.

When a man dies it is not permitted to his household to execute any work until after the next new moon. The moon itself has a soul and human attributes. It stole an orphan girl who was tormented by her step-mother, who sent her for water in winter bare-footed. This girl is now in the moon, with a shoulder yoke and pails on her shoulders, and around her grow sand-willows which were stolen at the same time with her. As she grows the moon grows.

*Divination.*—They have a system of divination as follows. They draw two concentric rings on the table, and mark the north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, and west points on the exterior circle. The northern point is called the chief road ; the north-eastern point, being the point of the summer solstice, is the road for getting horned cattle ; the east is the road of good luck ; the south-east, the winter solstice, is the road for obtaining horses ; the south is the chief road ; the south-west is the road into the woods, and means death ; the west is the dark road of the devils. The diviner sits down at the table, rests his elbows on it, and his forehead on his hands. A string with a weight on the end hangs from his little finger. Having recited an incantation, he waits until the pendulum comes to rest. After a time it begins to quiver and wave, and falls into a line of movement corresponding to one of those in the figure. They are very eager to discern the future, and have a number of methods for it. They divine by the falling of a spoon. A *shaman* does it by the falling of his drumstick. The

girls do it by the falling of a coal. They split a stick and insert in the split a splinter lengthwise, so that it holds the split open. They set fire to the splinter in the middle. When the coal flies off, on account of the pressure of the split stick, then the person finds out whether his wish is to be fulfilled or not.

NOTES BY THE AUTHOR, M. SIEROSHEVSKI, embodied in the Polish edition : *Twelve years in the land of the Yakuts*, Warsaw, 1900, F. Karpinski ; (*Dwanas'cie lat w kraju Yakutan*, Warszawa, 1900, nakladem F. Karpinskiego.)

A. Selon toute probabilité, les Yacouts menaient autrefois une vie nomade dans la Mongolie et faisaient part des tribus qui dans les premiers temps de notre ère formaient les grands états turaniens nomades, connus aux historiens chinois sous des noms différents : Hum-nu, Goa-giu, Tu-qui, Uj-gur, etc. (Voir l'édition polonaise, page 90.)

B. Dans les *Ulus* du centre, où l'agriculture ne s'est pas encore développée, les conditions sont aussi défavorables à la pêche et les animaux pouvant faire l'objet de chasses fructueuses sont presque totalement exterminés.

C. C'étaient des coutumes très anciennes provenant sans doute du temps, où le *sib* commençait à s'organiser. Pendant les migrations des Yacouts du midi au nord la perte du petit bétail (moutons, chèvres) ainsi que l'amointrissement des troupeaux de bêtes à cornes furent la cause d'une rétrogradation économique, du retour aux troupeaux de chevaux. Les Yacouts jusqu'à l'arrivée des Russes, ne savaient pas sécher le foin et le tasser en meules. Les chevaux du pays n'en ont pas besoin même en hiver. Ils savent trouver leur nourriture en écartant la neige avec leurs sabots. Mais, par contre, ces troupeaux exigent un changement continu de place et donnent une nourriture de qualité inférieure, facilement gâtée et impropre à conserver.

D. Les groupes qui se développaient le mieux étaient ceux, qui pouvaient manger à la fois toute une bête tuée. Leur facilité de mouvement était plus grande, car ils n'avaient pas besoin de traîner avec eux des fardeaux et la nourriture n'était pas exposée à se gâter.

E. Le code moral des Yakouts n'avait pas prévu le meurtre au dedans du *sib*. On doit supposer, que le meurtrier était obligé de quitter le *sib*, la vengeance cessait en cas de paix conclue entre les *sibs* avec paiement du *wergeld*.

F. Chez les Yakouts nous trouvons un groupe familial encore bien mal connu par les savants : on le nomme *ye-ussa* (*ye* = mère, *ussa* = *sib*). Maintenant c'est la dénomination du groupe déduit de la ligne mâle et qui a quelque ressemblance avec la *familia* romaine. Autrefois il semble, que *ye-ussa* était le nom général donné à tous les descendants d'une même femme. (Voir l'édition polonaise, pag. 293.)

G. Les Yakouts emploient l'os du péroné comme symbole de la concorde, de la vénération et de la paix pendant la célébration des mariages, pendant les meetings du *sib* et les pratiques des *shamanes*. "Partageons entre nous les os des animaux comme la *vodka* (= l'eau-de-vie)" disent-ils. Des os semblables ne doivent pas être cassés. Celui qui l'a reçu, le casse lui-même et en mange la graisse. (Voir l'édition polonaise, pag. 242.)

H. Mais l'âme élémentaire de l'objet en général (*ichchi*), qui, à ce qu'il semble, exprime tout simplement son action d'exister, diffère de l'âme des objets vivants (*sur*). La vie commence où commence la respiration (*ty*). Les objets vivants auraient donc comme une double âme ; (1) l'existence (*ichchi*) et "le mouvement" (*sur*) ; les animaux morts ou souvent malades perdent leur *sur* et conservent seulement leur *ichchi* qui disparaît aussi en cas de mort. L'homme et parmi les animaux le cheval seul ont une âme triple : le *ichchi*, le *sur* et le "*kut*." La *kut* humaine est petite, pas plus grande qu'un petit morceau de charbon. Quelquefois le chamane évoque de par-dessous la terre dans la partie gauche (féminine) de la maison la *kut* des malades. Elle s'agite posée sur la main et est très lourde. La *kut* abandonne quelquefois l'homme pendant son sommeil et erre au loin. Si par hasard il lui arrive malheur pendant son voyage, son propriétaire tombe malade. La *kut* est comme l'image indecise, comme l'ombre. Comme l'ombre a 3 parties : une grande et pâle, une petite et plus foncée et le centre tout sombre, ainsi l'homme possède 3 âmes. Quand il en perd une il souffre de malaise, deux il est malade, trois il meurt. (Voir l'édition polonaise, pag. 382.)

## ADDITIONAL NOTE BY W. G. SUMNER.

The passage on terms of relationship and address having been entirely re-written in the Polish edition, a literal translation is here appended.

The most primitive and strictly defined term of relationship is *ie*, "mother," the exact sense of which is, "case," "matrix," "place of birth." The term for "father," *aga*, is not so distinct. It means "an elderly man," *i.e.*, an adult. When a Yakut wants to know whether a certain person, without regard to sex, was born before or after himself, he asks whether that person is *aga* or *balys* (French, *ainé* or *puîné*). The term for "child," *ogo*, is entirely indefinite. Its sense is "young one." It is employed for the young of beasts, birds, and even trees (sprigs, sprouts, offshoots). *Ogom*, "my child," which is formed by adding the possessive pronoun *m*, does not imply at all that the person addressed was procreated by the speaker. It is addressed equally to grandson, son, or even younger brother. In the current vernacular, older persons use *ogom* in addressing younger persons without regard to blood relationship. "The ancient Yakuts, even when very angry, did not address young persons otherwise than 'my child.'" *Uol*, "lad," and *kys*, "maid," express primarily "male" and "female," but they are used nowadays, with the possessive *m*, for "son" and "daughter." The Yakuts have no special terms for son and daughter. Nor have they any term to express "husband," since *erim* (*er* man, and *im* the possessive) means properly "my man." For "wife" they always say, in the current speech, "my woman," or "my old woman," although they have a special term, *ojoch*, for "wife." From all this we may infer that when, amongst the ancient Yakuts, a number of related persons were living together, the relations of "mother" and "wife" were the first ones which called for expression, "mother" meaning a woman who had children. This inference would support the belief that the matriarchate once existed among the Yakuts. The children belonged to the whole horde. Any one of the adult men might be the father of a certain child since the sex relations were undefined and perhaps unregulated. It is a curious circumstance that the heroes in the ancient folk tales often set out to find their *fathers*. We see, further, that the terms of relationship amongst the Yakuts express, first of all, the distinction between *younger* and *older* than the speaker. There is one word for older brother and another for younger brother; one word for older sister and another for younger sister, but there is no general term for brother or sister, since all were brothers and sisters within the compass of a *sib*. Hence nowadays *ubaj* means not only "older brother" but also "older male cousin," "older nephew,"—in short "older member of the *sib*" than the speaker. *Ini* expresses not only "younger brother," but also "younger male cousin," "younger nephew," and in general "younger member of the *sib*." The case was the same as to female relations. In current speech, especially in personal address, the Yakuts use no other terms than these. Yet the proper terms exist, for the Yakuts have a nomenclature of relationship

which is even very rich and complicated. For some degrees they have two names, one used by males, the other by females—a feature of what Morgan calls the Turanian system. Thus: the younger brother whom males call *ini*, females call *surus* or *surdzja*; the wife of a younger brother is called by his brothers *kinit*, but by their wives *badzja*; similarly younger brothers and their wives have different names for the wife of the former's elder brother. This shows that the jural relations between these classes of persons were once different from what they are now, since we find that terms of relationship are indications of jural relations. The last mentioned terms of relationship have now lost their special signification. It would be too bold to build inferences on these terms only, since there is no tradition of any conjugal relation between brothers and sisters, and since special terms for father and husband are not lacking. It is a noteworthy detail that the older sisters and female cousins of one's father bear the same name, *sangas*, as the wives of one's older brothers; and that the older brothers of one's father bear the same name as the father of one's mother and his older brothers, *obaga*. Consequently the (older) sisters of one's father together with the wives of one's (older) brothers form one group, but one's paternal uncles (older than one's father), and one's mother's paternal uncles form another. The division into such groups is characteristic of the narrower man family, and the confusion of sisters and wives, maternal great uncles and paternal uncles in one concept is a proof of the relation of affinity between those groups. Therefore before the Yakuts went over to the man family based on pair marriage or polygamy, they practised, for a time, group marriage of sisters and brothers allotted according to age strata.

[In an Appendix to the Polish version the author gives a list of Yakut terms of relationship with definitions.]