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Descendants of Eleudei: The Problem of Oirat-Buryat Ethnic Contacts

Eleuths (Ölöts) played an important part in the ethnic history of the Mongol peoples of Inner Asia, in particular of the Oirats, being the dominant group of the Oirat union at the early stages of its history. In this study, an attempt was made to fill in one of the gaps in the ethnic history of the Turko-Mongol peoples, using the ethnonym “Ölöt”. The major limitation in studying the Oirat ethnic history is the insufficiency of sources. Much can be gained from using Buryat and Sakha (Yakut) folklore, specifically epics, genealogical legends, and tales. The reason is that the Ölöts, according to one of the hypotheses, took part in the formation of those peoples. This idea is supported by the reconstruction of protoforms of certain Buryat and Yakut ethnonyms and eponyms. Their comparative and historical analysis indicates ethnic ties between the Buryats and the Yakuts, and their participation in the ethnic history of the Mongolian stratum. These facts open up a wider perspective on Turko-Mongol ties. The Ölöt ethnic history shows them to have been distributed across vast territories of Inner Asia and Siberia, eventually becoming a component of various Turkic and Mongolian groups, while preserving their identity and featuring prominently in ethnogonic legends not only of Dörben-Oirats, but of the Buryats and Yakuts as well. The findings of this study attest to the complexity of ethnic processes among the Mongolian and Turkic speaking nomads of Eurasia. Also, they contribute to the understanding of the ethnic composition of Mongolia, Buryatia, and Yakutia, thus widening the scope of studies on the Altai.

Keywords: Inner Asia, Turko-Mongol peoples, ethnogenesis, phonetic reconstruction, ethnonyms.

Introduction

In-depth studies into ethnic names of the Turkic and Mongol peoples expand our knowledge on the ethnic history of the Eurasian steppe belt. Using the example of the ethnonym *oliot/eliut/eliut/ölöd/ööld/öölöd/ögeled/ügeled/ögälät/öliyed*, this study attempts to establish participation of one of the branches of the Oirat community (the Ölöts and, in a wider sense, Oirats) in ethnogenesis of the Yakuts and Buryats. The Ölöts played an important role in the ethnic history of the Oirats, especially in the early stages of the development of the Oirat community, since according to the generally accepted opinion of scholars, after the collapse of the Mongol Empire, they became the

dominant group among the Oirats. Changes in the status of the ethnic names “Ölöt” and “Oirat” have been observed in different periods: at one time “Ölöt” was expanded to all Oirats, while at another time the Ölöts became a part of the Oirats. Such dynamics in the hierarchy of ethnic communities makes it necessary to clarify the events that led to these changes. Partial evidence is provided by written sources, although their information is inconsistent. In the studies of ethnogenesis and ethnic history, written sources are not always the key testimonies. This does not exclude their use with a certain degree of caution.

The history of the Oirats is covered in sufficient detail in the surviving chronicles. Unfortunately, the information of chronicles concerning the Ölöts is rather

scanty, since most of the authors (Batur-Ubashi Tümen, Gaban Sharab, etc.) belonged to other branches of the Oirats. In Á. Birtalan's article (2002) on the ethnogenesis of the Ölöts, only two written sources are indicated, while evidence from oral folklore (genealogical traditions, legends) is almost completely absent from that study. Therefore, the source base needs to be expanded. This study will focus on the ethnic history of the Ölöts and geography of their settlement, in order to reconstruct the ethnic map of Inner Asia in various periods. The identity of the Ölöts is of particular interest.

Methodologically, this study is supported by historical-comparative and historical-linguistic methods used in research on ethnogenesis and in the study of ethnonyms and eponyms. The long period from the fall of the Yuan dynasty in the history of Northern Mongolia (including the Baikal region, Tuva, Khakassia, and Western Mongolia) is known as “dark”, because of the lack of written sources. The texts of the 18th–19th centuries, which have survived to this day, are compilations of non-extant works. The situation is aggravated by the loss of written traditions among the Western Buryats and Yakuts, who also incorporated the Ölöts. Despite the presence of the appropriate terminology, no books of that time have been found in their possession. To a certain extent, this gap can be filled by the rich oral folk tradition, which includes a wide range of epic works, as well as genealogical legends and narrations. The proposed hypothesis is based on the evidence recorded in the first half of the 18th century by Y.I. Lindenau (1983: 18) among the Vilyui Yakuts and in the late 19th century by M.N. Khangalov (1960: 107–108) among the Qudai (Kuda) Buryats. The term “Ölöt” is mentioned in the Oirat chronicles.

Complex ethnic processes occurred in the history of the Oirats in the late period of the Yuan dynasty, the Ming period, and the times of the Manchu domination: voluntary and forced migrations, and mixing and division of the Oirat community. All this triggered the emergence of a multi-level system of the Oirat identity. At different stages of the development of the Oirat community, the ethnonym “Ölöt” united most of the Oirats and lost its relevance (for more details, see (Terentiev, 2017)). This justifies the interest in the ethnic history of the Ölöts. An important task is to study their role in the ethnogenesis of the Buryats, who inhabited the northern periphery of the Mongolian world.

Dispersed settlement of the Ölöts (along the Ili, Qarashar, Alashan, Kobdo, and Hailar Rivers) was due to a number of reasons: conflicts with other peoples, strife among the nobility, and forced migration in the Qing period. According to G. Lijee (2008: 12–14), they were one of the groups of the Mongolian population of Xinjiang, and amounted to twenty-one *sum* units. At the present, we know groups of the Ölöts such as the Kobdo (Erdenebüren *sum*) and Arkhangai (Khotont and Ölziit

sums) in Mongolia (Disan, 2012: 107); the Mongol-khure, Emel, Khutagtyn-khure, and Khara-us (Xinjiang) (Lijee, 2008: 12–14), as well as Hulunbuir (Hulunbuir Aimag of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region) in China (Tsybenov, 2017); and the Sart-Kalmaks in Kyrgyzstan (see (Nanzatov, Sodnompilova, 2012)). In addition, small groups of Ölöts widely appear almost throughout the entire territory of Mongolia (for more details, see (Ochir, Disan, 1999: 11–13)); and they are present among the Tuvinians, including the Oyunnars and Khomushku (Dulov, 1956: 130, 134). Among the Darkhats, they were noted by G.D. Sanzheev (1930: 12). Among the Western Buryats, the Ölöts, also known as Segenuts, along with the Bulagats and Ekhirits, comprise one of the oldest tribal associations. They include such units as the Ikinat and Zungar (Khangalov, 1890a: 88; 1960: 107–108).

Written sources

According to a version of the ethnic history of the Oirats, the Ölöts are the ancestors of the Choros on their maternal side. Oolinda Budun-Tayishi, the daughter of the Ölöt Boo-Khan, married a Khoyd prince and originated the Choros clan (Okada Hidehiro, 1987: 210). According to the written sources, the ethnonym “Ölöt” became known only at the turn of the 15th–16th centuries. For example, one of the sources narrates of the separation of the subjects of Khamag-Taishi (grandson of Esen-Khan) from the community of the Choros (*čoros*), which was larger at the time; they had the ethnonym *ügeled/ööld* (Oyirad *teüke-yin...*, 1992: 9). The “Tale on the Dörben Oyirad” says that “three hundred eighty-two years have passed since the time when the Kalmyks wearing a red thread on their hats (*ulan zalatu xalimaq*) received the nickname ‘Oyirads-Elyots’ (*oyirad öyilöd*) until this year of the ‘earth-hare’” (Pozdneev, 1907: 24; Skazaniye..., 1969: 17–18; Sanchirov, 2016: 21). According to the calculations of V.P. Sanchirov, this event occurred in 1438, when the Oirat ruler Togon-Taishi from the noble family of Choros (Tsoros) utterly defeated the Eastern Mongolian Supreme Khan Adai and became the head of the first union of the Dörben-Oirats (Pismenniye pamyatniki..., 2016: 21).

The text of Batur-Ubashi Tümen (2003: 127) informs us about migration of the Ölöts to the Kizilbash; migration beyond the Mankhan River is mentioned in the “History of Khoo-Orlug” (Pismenniye pamyatniki..., 2016: 31). B.U. Kitinov (2017) researched the migration of the Ölöts to the west in the context of the religious situation among the Oirats in the 15th–early 16th centuries. In his opinion, the reason for desintegration of the Ölöt community was the marriage of Ash-Temur (Amasanj-Tayishi) and the daughter of the ruler of Moghulistan; its main condition was the adoption of Islam by their children. Subsequently, a conflict started between father and his sons Ibrahim

((亦卜剌因 Yiboláyīn) and Ilyas (亦剌思 Yilāsī)* caused by their religious differences. Owing to the conflict, first Amasanj-Tayishi went to Moghulistan (but subsequently returned), and later his sons did. According to “Tarikh-i Rashidi”, all this occurred from 1469 to 1504–1505 (Serruys, 1977: 375; Khaidar, 1996: 115), and according to V.V. Bartold, in 1472 (1898: 81–82). Kitinov (2017: 378) believes that the events following the marriage of Ash-Temur (Amasanj-Taishi, Esmet-Darkhan-Noyon) led to the destruction of the majority of the Ölöts and their ruling clan Choros.

In the first half of the 18th century, most of the Ölöts settled in the Dzungar Khanate. After its fall in 1757–1758, important changes occurred (for more details, see (Ochirov, 2010)). At the final stage of the history of the Dzungar Khanate, the notion of the “Dzungars (*jūnyar/züüngar*)” included the entire Oirat population. This is confirmed by the presence among the Kalmyk Zyungars of large independent units such as the Torguts, Khoyds, Uryankhuses, and Telengits (Mitirov, 1998: 142; Shantaev, 2009: 142; Bakaeva, 2016: 87). However, after the fall of Dzungaria, the ethnonym “Dzungar (*dsungar/jüünyar/züüngar*)” was officially banned, and the ethnonym “ölöt (*eleuths/öölöd*)” became the official name for most of its Oirat-Mongol population (Fang Chao Ying, 1943: 11). Thus, in the Qing period, the Züngars began to be called “Ölöts”, as before. At the same time, Torguts, Khoshuts, Derbets, Chakhars, Uriankhai, and Zakhchins were officially recorded in Xinjiang (Dzungaria and Eastern Turkestan) (Lijee, 2008: 8–18). Consequently, the population there of the Ölot *khoshun* and *sum* units was composed of closely related Ölöts and Zungars, while other groups of Oirats lived separately. The fact that the Ölöts began to be called the Dzungars from 1437 is mentioned in the essay “The History of Kho-Urlyuk”: “...yool dumda ni Qoşud çerig, jегün bey-e-dü Ögeled-ün çerig-i jегün yar-un çerig geјü nereyidbei... Tegün-eče ekileged, Ögeled-tü Jегünyar gedeg nere şinggebei, Toryud-tu barayun yar gedeg ner-e qadaydabai gedeg” (Pismenniye pamyatniki..., 2016: 27), which translates as “...the army of the Khoshuts was in the center; the army of the Ölöts, which was called *züüngaryn tsereg* (‘the army of the left wing’), was on the left flank (*züün biide*)... They say that since that time the name ‘dzungars’ (*züün yar*) has been attached to the Ölöts, and the name of *baruun yar* (‘right flank’) – to the Torguts” (Ibid.: 33–34). Another example of how the ethnonyms “Oirat” and “Ölot” were related, is the Oirat written source “Iletkhel Shastir”, where these names are interchangeable (Sanchirov, 1990: 45–46).

The history of the Ölöts, who remained in Outer Mongolia, is described in detail by O. Oyunchargal (2009, 2015) in a monograph that was later published in Russian

translation. After analyzing the events leading to the emergence of the Ölot Chuulgan (League) on the basis of the “Iletkhel Shastir” and archival sources, Oyunchargal (2009: 53–74; 2015: 63–83) came to the conclusion that the Ölot Chuulgan (League) included six *khoshuns* (‘banners’), including those of the Ölöts, Khoyds, and Khoshuts. However, there is another opinion on the issue of the ethnic composition of the Ölot League. Instead of the Khoshut *khoshun*, Ts.B. Natsagdorj (2015a: 183; 2015b) indicated the Torgut Mergen Tsorji. In any case, the Ölöts, whose name was given to the Chuulgan, were the most numerous.

The evidence from the written sources presented above, which reflects the stages in the development of the early Ölot community, is still controversial. Notably, considering the objectives of the present study, the problem of the relationship between the Choros and Ölöts is not crucial. Studying the complex settlement of several enclaves of the divided Ölot community is of interest in terms of participation of one of its branches in the consolidation of the Bargu-Buryats.

Evidence and discussion

Ethnonym. As Okada Hidehiro observed, the Manchus used *Ölöd*, transcribed in Manchurian as *Ület*, as a synonym for *Oyirad*. The term *Ölöd* was Chineseized as *E-lu-t'e*, from which the European version of *Eleuths* is derived (Okada Hidehiro, 1987: 197). Notably, the Manchu called the Oirats “Urüt” (Crossley, 2006: 80).

The presence of the Ölot League in the Qing Empire before the conquest of Dzungaria makes it possible to solve the problem of correlating the terms *oirat/oyirad* and *oliot/ölöd* in the Qing period. In our opinion, the latter term replaced the concept of “oirat” in the eyes of the Manchu administration in connection with the formation of the first Oirat Chuulgan within the Empire. The League, named after the largest Oirat unit, became the starting point for identification of the entire Western Mongolian population.

One of the first European written sources about the Oirats was the book by I. Bichurin, published in 1834, indicating the discrepancy in the ethnonym: “Prince *Eliutei* was so famous in Mongolia that the name Elyut was given by his name to his entire generation. According to the Chinese pronunciation, the word *Eliutei* is *Olotai*; according to the Mongolian pronunciation, one should write *Eliutei*, and from this Eliut, the name of the generation” (Bichurin, 1834: N. 20). It is possible that this statement was based on a phrase from the manuscript by V.M. Bakunin (1995: 20), published much later: “But this is certain that in the 16th century, the Kalmyk people were called ‘oirot’ in their language and ‘oliot’ in the Mongolian language”. As an official and translator from the Kalmyk language, Bakunin (1700–1766) accompanied

*On Ibrahim and Ilyas, see (Serruys, 1977: 375).

the Chinese embassy to the Kalmyks in 1731. Precisely this event could have influenced the perception of the exoethnonym *Oyirad* as *Ölöd*. For a long time, there was no unambiguous position on this issue in Mongolian Studies, and some scholars believed that the Chinese 厄魯特 (*O-lu-te/Ēlütè*) is a distorted *oirot/Oyirad* (Uspensky, 1880: 127; Bretschneider, 1888: 168).

The seeming phonetic affinity of the ethnonyms 卫拉特 (*Wèilātè*) – ‘oirat’, and 厄魯特 (*Ēlütè*) – ‘olot’ in the Chinese language of the Qing period seems to be a difficult problem. The presence of hieroglyphic terms denoting the Oirats (幹亦剌惕 (*Wòyilātì*) in the Yuan period (Yuan-chao..., 1936: 58) and 瓦剌 (*Wǎlǎ*) (Míngshǐ (s.a.); Pokotilov, 1893: 32; Hambis, 1969: 93; Pelliot, 1960: 6) / 衛拉特 (卫拉) (*Wèilātè*) in the Ming period (Míngshǐ (sì kù quánshū běn), (s.a.); Pelliot, 1960: 8)) on the one hand, and absence of such hieroglyphic terms for the concept of “olot” on the other hand, makes it possible to assume that Chinese historiographers transmitted the latter concept at that time by the term *oirot/oyirad*, the spelling of which was changed in the course of phonetical development of the Chinese language. We agree with the opinion of P.K. Crossley (2006: 80–81) that it is impossible to consider *olot/ölöt* as a reverse construction of the Chinese *elete/weilete*.

The question on the etymology of the ethnonym *Öölöd* remains important for our discussion. There is a hypothesis of the Chinese scholar Altanorgil (1987: 145) about its origin from *öölīy* (‘large, powerful’). A. Ochir believed that this ethnonym went back to the root *öge*, citing the examples of names from “The Secret History of the Mongols”: *öge-lün* (eke), *öge-lei* (čerbi), *öge-dei* (qayan) (Kuribayashi, Choijinjab, 2001: § 13, 55, 93, 191, 214, 226, 255, 270). Further, he proposed to connect the development of *ögeled* in *elēd* with the meaning “ikh, ugan, naszhuu” (‘big, senior, tall, elderly’), allowing for a possibility of *öleged* > *eleged* (Ochir, 2008: 150–151; 2016: 148). However, this contradicts the hypothesis on the root *öge*, since the transition VgVIV > VIVgV has not been observed. G.O. Avlyayev connected the ethnonym “Ölöt” with the verb *ogulekü* (*ööleḡü*) – ‘to be offended, to be dissatisfied with something’. Accordingly, he believed that the ethnonym had the meaning of ‘offended’, ‘aggrieved’, or ‘dissatisfied’ (Avlyayev, 2002: 55, 192, 194).

In our opinion, the most reliable hypothesis was proposed by Japanese scholars, who suggested that the ethnonym *Öölöd* originated from *ögelen* with the meaning ‘maternal brother, but from another father’ (Haneda Akira, 1971: 561–565; Okada Hidehiro, 1987: 210). In the Mongol-French Dictionary by A. de Smedt and A. Mostaert, Haneda Akira discovered the combinations *ögelen köbegün* – “fils d’un autre lit” (‘stepson’), *ölön aḡa dū / ula aḡa diū* – “frères nés de la même mère, mais de pères différents” (‘brothers born of one mother, but from different fathers, half-brothers’), *ula k’adzi diū* – “soeurs

nées de la même mère, mais de différents pères” (‘sisters born of the same mother, but from different fathers, half-sisters’) (Smedt, Mostaert, 1933: 469; Haneda Akira, 1971: 562). Okada Hidehiro expanded the argumentation and used another work by A. Mostaert, where several phrases with *ögelen/ölö* were mentioned: *ölö k’ū* – “fils d’un autre lit” (= *daḡawürk’ū*) / *ögelen köü* – ‘stepson’, *ölö k’ū^{kh}et* – “enfants d’un autre lit” (= *daḡawürk’ū^{kh}et*) / *ögelen keiked* – ‘stepchildren’, *ölön e’ṣ’ige* – “le second mari de la mère” (‘the second husband of the mother’) / *ögelen eḡige* or *qoyitu ögele* – ‘stepfather’ (Mostaert, 1942: 531; Okada Hidehiro, 1987: 210). In addition, he suggested understanding the term *ögele(n)+d* as kinship of the Khoys and Baatuts with the Choroses. One of the confirmations of the hypothesis proposed by Japanese scholars is the text “Oyirad teüke-yin durasqal-ud”, which directly says that the three princes, great-grandsons of the Oirat Esen-Taishi, the sons of his grandson Khamag-Taishi, were called the *Ölöts*: “...the second son of Esen is Ongotsa; his son is Khamag-Taishi. Out of the three sons of Khamag-Taishi, the eldest is Ragnanchinsang; the second is Nuskhanai, and the third is Onggoi (Ongui). These three princes are called *Elots*. Taking charge of the Oirats, they migrated away at the instigation of Shara Shulma...” (1992: 9; Pismenniy pamyatniki..., 2016: 195–196). The problem of the relationship of the root stem *ögele(n)* in Mongolian languages with *ög*, *oq*, or another stem in Turkic or other languages has not yet been resolved and is the subject of a separate study.

Eponym. The solution to the problem of the origin of the *Ölöts* in Mongolian historiography is usually limited to a search among forest tribes and indicating their being mentioned among the Dörben-Oirats, for example, in Batur-Ubashi Tümen and Gaban Sharab (Skazaniye..., 1969: 19; Batur-Ubashi Tümen, 2003: 127; Gaban Sharab, 2003: 84). Unfortunately, neither “The Secret History of the Mongols” (Mongyol-un niyuḡa tobḡiyan), nor the Collection of Chronicles by Rashid ad-Din (Jāmī al-Tawāriḡh), mention the ethnonym *Ölöd/Öyilöd/Ögeled*. The absence of the term in such important written sources makes it possible to admit that the *Ölöts* might have settled together with the Dörben-Oirats within the Sekiz-Mören and Barqujin-töküm, known from the same sources (Kozin, 1941; Pelliot, 1949; Rashid ad-Din, 1952; The Secret History..., 2004).

Unfortunately, scholars have overlooked one of the most important sources of ethnogenesis—oral ethnogenic legends and traditions. The legendary ethnic genealogy of the Buryats is associated with the history of Barqujin-töküm. In the 19th century, Khangalov (1890b) recorded and published the legend about Bargu Bator. The fragment about his eldest son is quite remarkable: “According to the Qudai legend, the ancestor of the Buryats was Bargabatur, who lived near Tobolsk and had three sons; the eldest had the name Iliuder-Turgen; the middle son was

Gur-Buryat, and the youngest son was Khoredoi-mergen. Subsequently, Barga-batur and his two sons Gur-Buryat and Khoredoi-mergen moved to the east from Tobolsk, and left his eldest son, Iliuder-Turgen, in Tobolsk, telling him, ‘You will be the king of these lands! Your happiness is in the old place!’ So Iliuder-Turgen remained in the old place. The present-day Kalmyks living in the Astrakhan, Stavropol, and Saratov governorates originated from him. The Buryat tradition does not know how the descendants of Iliuder-Turgen moved from Tobolsk to the west. Apparently, some descendants of Iliuder-Turgen later came to the east; at least the Buryat Zungar and Ikinat clans from the Balaganskoye Vedomstvo are considered to be from the Kalmyk tribe, in Buryat: *ölöd* or *segenut*” (Khangalov, 1960: 107–108). The manuscript “Bodonguudyn ügiin bichig” (“Genealogy of the Bodonguts”—the Agin Buryats who migrated to Mongolia), published by Sumyabaatar (1966: 179), mentioned *Ölidei*, the son of Bargu-bator (Baryu bayatur), the older brother of Buriyadai and Qorudai. This form is the closest to the Yakut *Eldei*, which will be discussed below.

Notably, the image of Prince Eleutei, first mentioned in the work of I. Bichurin, probably did not come out of nowhere. According to V.P. Sanchirov, the author of the foreword to the edition of 1991, a mistake was made in transcribing the name of Arugtai (Bichurin, 1991: 17). The legitimacy of this opinion is confirmed by H. Serruys (1959: 217; 1977: 358), who thoroughly investigated the history of the Mongols of the Ming period and managed to find a real historical person, a representative of the Mongol nobility with the name Aruytai (阿魯台 A-lu-t'ai). We believe that the cause of Bichurin's mistake could have been the genealogical legends known to him, according to which some of the *Ölöts* were taken by the “yellow shulmus” to the south, and the other part went north, leaving the lands of Northern Mongolia, and settled in the Cis-Baikal region. Perhaps, the image is associated with the latter group. This image entered the Buryat oral tradition and by the 19th century underwent some phonetic changes: *Öölödei* > *Elüdei* > *Ilüder(-Türgen)*. This word could only have come from the *Ölöts* who happened to be among the ancestors of the Buryats. The list of the *otok* administrative units of the Dzungar Khanate indirectly testifies to the possibility that the ethnonym might have existed in the form of not only *Ölöd*, but also *Ölödöi*, since the ethnonym in the list is indicated as *Öölödei* (Atwood, 2006: 627). Another possible proof of the movement of the *Ölöts* to the north is the eponym “*Ellei*” among the Yakuts (Istoricheskiye predaniya..., 1960: 57–86), more precisely, its archaic form recorded in the 18th century by Y.I. Lindenau: “When she grew up, a refugee named Ersogotorh, or, as they also call him, Elei, or Eldei-Bator, came to them. Omogon gave him his adopted daughter, and they had eight sons and four daughters: Antantüik, Barkutai,

Kordoi, Kogosuk, Bolotoi, Katamaldai, Tscheriktei, Artbudai. <...> They use the word Elei, or Eldei-bator for denoting a warlike man and legislator (Gesetzgeber). Names are given to people according to their qualities. These sons of Eldeei-bator eventually became the ancestors of various widely branched clans” (1983: 18).

In our opinion, there is a parallel with the Buryat eponym *Oboyon* in the case of the eponym *Omogon* in Lindenau and *Omoyoi* in oral traditions (a Buryat who came to the Tuimaada Valley in the Middle Lena region) (Ibid.; Ksenofontov, 1977: 29). According to the legend, the Bulagat group of tribes known as the *Obogoni Olon*, which descended from an ancestor with the same name, indeed settled in the valley of the Angara and its tributaries, the Osa, Obusa, and Unga Rivers. This means that in the case of *Omogon*, a real tribal group can be identified (Nanzatov, 2017a, b). By the same token, it is very likely that the tribe *Ölöd*, represented by the eponym *Eldei/Eldeei*, the phonetic form of which corresponds to one of the stages of development *Öölödei* > *Elüdei* > *Ilüder(-Türgen)*, participated in the ethnogenesis of the Yakuts. The form *Ellei*, used by the majority of the Yakuts, reflects the widespread process *ll* < *ld* (for more details, see (Grammatika..., 1982: 67)).

The phonetic transformation of the ethnonym *ügeled/öölöd* into *Öölödei* > *Elüdei* > *Eldei* (Yakutian) or *Öölödei* > *Elüdei* > *Ilüder(-Türgen)* in the Buryat environment remains an open question. Ochir proposed a version of development *öleged* > *eleged* and touched upon the topic of transformation of the ethnonym into the eponym known among the Buryats and Yakuts. In our opinion, this transformation could have occurred under the influence of phonetically close, but semantically different root stems. The word *elæde* (*eleede*) with the meanings ‘significant, large; more than sufficient, abundant; senior’, recorded by B.K. Todaeva (2001: 471) could well have been the basis of the eponym representing the *eldest* son of Bargu-bator, the elder brother of Gur-Buryat and Khoredoi. It is also possible to assume the influence of another phonetically close word *ilden* (written Mongolian, *ildeng*, Chinese 伊尔登 *yī ér dēng*, cf. Mongolian *ilde*, ‘without occupation, without official position’) (Kowalewski, 1844–1849: 306), which in the 15th–18th centuries was an epithet in titles (Urangua, 2000: 55), for example Dorji-ildeng-noyan (Daičing ulus-un..., 2013: 34), and was also widely used in personal names.

For the replacement of the initial sound *ö* > *e* > *i*, one can refer to the work of B.Y. Vladimirtsov (1929: 185–190), who established the following parallels: *e* : *ö* = *i* : *o* ~ *u* = *i* : *ö* ~ *ü*. The eponym is formed as follows: the ethnonym *Ölöd* and the noun-forming gender affix *-tai* (for more details on *-tai*, see (Kempf, 2006)). As for the suffix *-dar/-der*, a suggestion concerning its use in the Buryat-Mongolian ethnonymy as a derivational formant, most often denoting the color of horse has already been

suggested (Nanzatov, Sundueva, 2017). The epithet Turgen (“fast”) is paired with Iluder. According to our suggestion, the transformation –dei > –der in the name, that is, (ö/e)l(i/e/ü)dei > (e/i)luder, together with the emergence of this epithet, may indicate the transformation of a character into a horse in the Buryat worldview. The preservation of the Yakut form Eldei > Ellei indicates that the eponym came to the ancestors of the Yakuts even before the change in the Buryat Ölidei. A detailed justification of the transformation into Iluder and Eldei requires a separate historical and phonetic study.

The closeness of the Yakut Eldei (Ellei) to the eponyms that have clear parallels with the Buryat ethnonyms indicates Buryat-Yakut ethnogenetic ties and participation of the Mongolian stratum in the ethnogenesis of the Yakuts, including the Barga-Buryat (cf. Barkutai < Barqutai < Barqu/Baryu, Kordoi < Qoridoi < Qori, Bolotoi < Bolot) and Oirat (Katamaldai < Qatāmal) elements. The ethnonyms “Bargu” and “Khorī” are widely known in the Mongolian world; they are mentioned in “The Secret History of the Mongols” and in Rashid-ad-din (The Secret History..., 2004: 136; Rashiduddin..., 1998: 57). Bolot (Bolotoi) is an eponym in relation to the ancestor of a group of the Bulagat tribes (Olzoi, Murui, and Khulmeenge) (Khangalov, 1958: 102; Baldaev, 1970: 161, 163). The clan Khataamal exists among the Kobdos Khoshuts (Dorj, 2012: 13; Bakaeva, 2017: 97). The term “čerik” is widespread in the Turko-Mongol environment. The ethnonym “Kogosuk”, later appearing as Khordokoosuk/Kordoi-Khogosuun (Ksenofontov, 1977: 37), and possibly related to qo’a~yo’a~qoha or quba~qou-a~quu-a~uquv-a~qu-a (for more details, see (Rybatzky, 2006: 47, 448)) > uwas/qoas among the Merkits (The Secret History..., 2004: 39), and quasai/quasai among the Buryats (Rumyantsev, 1962: 241–242).

Segenuts. The Oirat stratum in the ethnogenesis of the Buryats, which is also based on the Ölöts, is of particular interest in the light of the Ölöts’ ethnic history. The Segenut, or Ölöd, is the first in the list of the Buryat tribes, compiled by Khangalov (1890a: 88; 1960: 101). He attributed the Zungar and Ikinat administrative clans to this tribe (Khangalov, 1960: 107–108). The Buryat folklorist and ethnographer S.P. Baldaev, who collected genealogical legends and traditions of the Buryats throughout his entire life, significantly expanded the list of the Segenut (Ölöt) units. For example, according to the legends, such Buryat tribes as Ikinat (Ikhinad), Zungar (Züünger), Bukot (Bukhed), Durlai, Tugut, Khaital, Torgout, Noirot (Noyod), Mankholyut (Mankhalyud), and Barungar (Baruungar) were related to the Segenuts by the kinship ties. Through marriage, the Segenuts are related to the Kurumchi (Khurumshi) and Tolodoi (Tolöödöy), while the Ikinats are related to the Narat (Naratai/Narad) (for more details, see (Baldaev, 1970: 333)). Here one may notice such Oirat-Buryat parallels

as the names of large Oirat associations Züünger/Zungar, Torguud/Torgout, as well as small tribes: Noyon among the Kobdos Ölöts and Noyot (Noyod) among the Buryats, and Bukhunut (Bükünüt, Bükhnüüd, Bügünüd) as a part of the Ölöts, Derbets, and Zakhchins (Mongol Ulsyn..., 2012: 46, 109, 430; Pelliot, 1960: 124), and Bukot (Bukhed) among the Buryats.

An interesting Buryat term is *ikinat*, which was the name of the largest unit of the Ölöt-Segenuts. The analysis of the Khakass ethnonym *iyi* (the Igins) has shown that its probable development was *iq- > *iqi > *iyi* ~ *ayī*. Parallel development of the initial ethnonym in the Khakass and Buryat environment: *-qi- > *-ki- > *ixli* > *ixli* + nA + d (Nanzatov, Tishin, 2019: 124) is quite possible. Be that as it may, the ancestors of both groups could have been the indigenous population of the Vosmirechye, from which the ethnonym came to the Khakasses and Buryats.

Regarding Ölöt-Buryat relations, we can mention such parallels as *boroldoi* (Nanzatov, 2018: 38, 135, 143), *khar barga*, and *tolton barga* (Ochir, Disan, 1999: 81) among the Kobdos Ölöts and Buryats. The ethnonyms *chonos/shono*, *avgas/abaganad*, *darkhad/darkhat*, *küöküi/xüüxet* (*küüked*), which are widespread among the Mongols, also occur among the Kobdos Ölöts and Buryats (see (Ochir, Disan, 1999: 34, 43, 56, 61; Nanzatov, 2018: 29, 39, 43)). The presence of a common motif (feeding a baby by an owl) in the legends about the origin of the Oirat Choros and the Buryat ethnic group of the Uliaba (Avlyayev, 1981: 64) may also be evidence of Oirat-Buryat ties.

The origin of the ethnonym *segenut* (Buryat *Segeenüüd/segeened*) from *segeen* ‘light blue, light’ has been suggested (Nanzatov, 2005: 55) (cf.: Oirat *cegen*, Khalkh. *cegeen*, Buryat *segeen*, Ordos *čigēn*, Kalmyk *cege:n* ‘light, bright, transparent, white’. Mongolian > Yakutian (Kałużynski, 1995: 258–259)). D.V. Tsybikdorzhiev connects it with the ethnonyms “cingnüt (čingnüt)” and “chike”, mentioned in the Khorī chronicle of the 19th century by S.-N. Khobituev and “Altan Tobchi” by Mergen Gegen (Buryadaai..., 1992: 95; Baldanzhapov, 1970: 141; Tsybikdorzhiev, 2012: 140–143), respectively.

Conclusions

The discovered parallels between the Buryat Ölöt-Segenuts and the Oirats, Mongolian Ölöts, and Buryats testify to deep Oirat-Buryat ties. The main conclusion of our research is that the Oirats took an active part in the ethnogenesis of the Buryats. The Oirat stratum, reflected in Buryat ethnogenic legends, represents the older branch of the early Bargu-Buryat community. A group which had a significant impact on ethnogenesis of the Yakuts separated from it. The Oirats who left for the north, have lost their ethnic name, but retained the eponym thus

leaving a trace of their presence. Thus, the traditional theory on the southern origin (Cis-Baikal region) of the ancestors of the Sakha (Yakuts), discussed in detail by G.V. Ksenofontov (1937; 1977), who took the first steps in discovering Buryat-Yakut parallels, and supported by A.P. Okladnikov (1955), has received new confirmation.

Participation of the Oirats in the ethnogenesis of the Buryats and Yakuts expands our view on the problem of interaction between the Turkic and Mongolian peoples. The revealed evidence can be used for compiling maps of the ethnic composition of Mongolia, Buryatia, and Yakutia. The ethnic history of the Ölöts, who were divided, became a part of other peoples, yet retained their identity and took key positions in the ethnogenic legends of not only the Dörben-Oirats, but also the Buryats and Yakuts, reflects complex ethnic processes among the Mongolian and Turkic nomads of Eurasia.

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