

# Yukaghir



# History

- Yukaghir people are considered aboriginal inhabitants of the Northeastern Siberia. Their original homeland bordered on river Lena to the West, river Anadyr to the East, Arctic Ocean to the North and Verkhnoyansk mts. to the South.
- They succumbed to the Tungus people when these came to the NE Siberia back in 12. or 13. century AD and their numbers greatly diminished during the tsarist colonisation in 17. – to 19. century AD due to epidemics and tribal warfare. Today their number is slowly increasing.



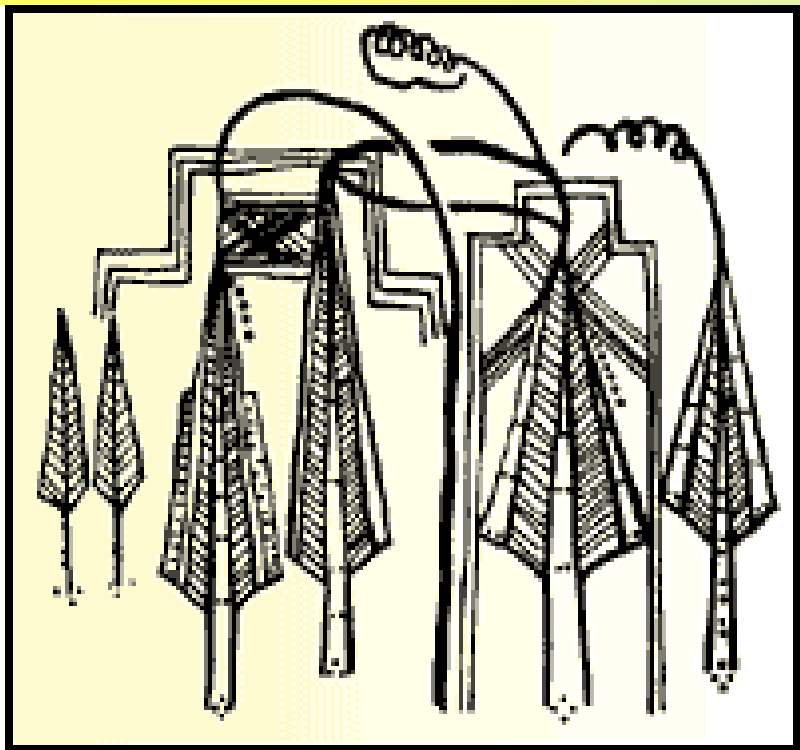
# Self-designation

- Once, there were probably many Yukaghir tribes in the region. However, up to present, their numbers are greatly reduced. Ca 1000 people present themselves as Yukaghir, and only ca 30 – 40% of them are actual speakers of Yukaghir languages.
- Yukaghirs have no common designation; so-called Tundra Yukaghirs design themselves as Vadul and Taiga Yukaghirs call themselves Odul. Both words have the meaning „Mighty“.
- There are notes that about 40 Yukaghirs from tribe Dutke/Buguč still live in the region Indigirka.

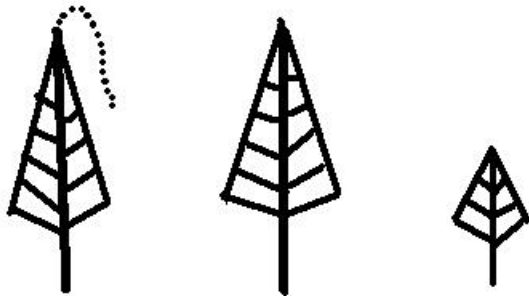
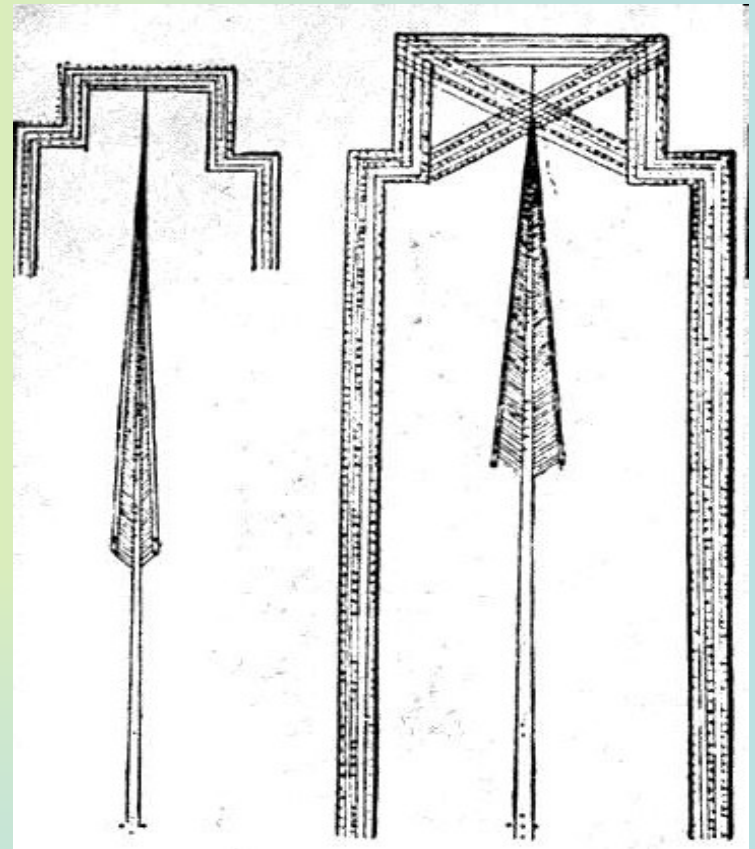


# Language&Alphabet

- In the present, there are 2 Yukaghir languages: Vadul and Odul; Odul language has been seriously influenced by Tungus Even language, and thus two Yukaghir languages are not mutually intelligible.
- Odul had in the past their own communication system based on the leaf-like pictographs called Tos; today, they use Cyrillic transcription invented by Gavril Kurilov.



A wordless Yukaghir love letter.



# Culture&Lifestyle

- Yukaghirs did not use metals; instead, until 1920s, they made their hunting tools solely of wood, bone and chipped stone industry. Only when it started to be somewhat economical, they shifted from bows to guns.
- This tradition made them perfect reindeer hunters; perfect by meaning that they mastered it to a near perfection.
- They also fished along the rivers and seasonally gathered berries.
- In the soviet era, they managed to adapt to the „earning for living“ scheme and were employed also as farmers and cattle breeders.



# Spiritual culture and customs

- Yukaghir still hold on shamanic traditions; their shamans are called *almu*. When deceased, shaman's body was kept within the tribe in belief that he had become their guardian spirit
- Their belief is animism, including worshipping game, the sun, the earth, the water and the forest
- Yukaghir believe in existence of several worlds: The Upper, Middle (earth) and Bottom (*abidzi* – world of the dead) worlds



# Spiritual culture and customs

- One tenet: do not take from the nature more than you need
- Matrilinear society and matrilineal marriage
- They had 2 traditional houses: *čum* (wooden tent with circle construction) and *jaranga* (tent with arc constructions)
- Settled Yukaghirs build also ground pins with wood, moss and dry grass
- Most common music instrument is drum; however, Yukaghir often sing and also have rich oral tradition.
- Basic dance genre is a „ring dance“ called *longdol*



# Spiritual culture and customs

- Traditional clothing comprises of winter and summer jacket made of animal skin; summer jacket is hairless.
- Boots and caps are also made of animal skin. All parts of clothing are decorated with embroidery.
- Yukaghir kitchen consists mostly of meat; then wild onions and mushrooms. To conserve food, Yukaghirs either smoked or dried it; in summer, fish meat was thrown into a pit with leaves, where it fermented.
- Their specialties are *Kulibaha* and *Anil kerile* (meals of fish berries and fat/venison blood



# Summary

- Yukaghirs are indigenous peoples of NE Siberia; today their number is slowly increasing
- They have unique languages (language isolates) and developed pictographic form of communication
- They had been hunter-gatherers and for greatest part, still are
- Yukaghir technology was until recently very old-fashioned
- Their cultural-social practice include shamanism and animistic worship, singing, storytelling and dancing
- Their meals and fashion are simple, oriented towards what can they find and process

Thank You for Your attention