

Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic natives in Siberian Letopises Rumyantsev Letopisets

Siberian Letopises constitute a special category in Russian historical literature. The conquest of Siberia started with Yermak's expedition in 1581. The family members of the Cossaks who had taken part in the campaign preserved the stories and passed them on. Naturally, these stories were corrupted and fleshed out as time passed. Written records were probably taken already during the military campaign. The first summary was possibly written in 1586, which is referred to as the Rumyantsev Letopisets (Румянцевский летописец) today. The other early source of the Siberian Conquest is The Book of the Dead of Yermak's Cossaks (Синодик Ермаковым казакам) written in 1622. Data published in these books served as the basis for the letopises that belong to the category of the Yesipov Letopis and the Stroganov Letopis, and also of the later Siberian letopises, including the Remezov Letopis, which was illustrated by the author. The first manuscript of the Rumyantsev Letopisets was discovered in the first half of the 19th century by P. I. Nebolsin. As of today, more than twenty manuscripts of the same work are known. The Rumyantsev Letopisets begins by a short description of the land and fauna in Siberia. The compiler of the text was familiar with the water system of the River Irtis and its tributaries. The description proceeds from the lesser rivers to the larger ones: at first, the tributaries of the River Tura are listed, then it is mentioned that that Tura flows into the Tobol, the Tobol flows into the Irtis, and finally the Irtis flows into the River Ob. In addition to the geographical description, the peoples of Siberia are also listed and described shortly. The following peoples are mentioned in the introductory part of the letopisets: Voguls, Tatars, Kolmaks (Kalmyks), Mungals (Mongols), the Piebald Horde (Пега́я о́рда), Ostyaks, Samoyeds. The area between the Rivers Tura and Ob described in the Rumyantsev Letopisets is actually identical to the Ugric Original Homeland or at least the southern part of it. The Hungarian language became independent in this area. The letopisets contains ethnographic information on the original Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic inhabitants of Siberia. It discusses the worship of idols, the offerings, describes the clothes made of fish and reindeer skin ornamented with various furs, and details the eating habits. These descriptions are identical

to the ethnographic descriptions of the same ethnic groups from the past one or two centuries. The author of the text mentions Ostyaks several times during the discussion of Yermak's campaign. The description of the deciding Battle of the Chuvash Cape (Чувашский мыс) says that the Ostyak allies of the Siberian Tatars left the battlefield. After the battle, Boyar Ostyak ruler wanted to please the Cossaks with presents. Another troop from Moscow was provided with food by the local Tatars and Ostyaks, which saved the soldiers from starvation. Two years after Yermak's death, Captain Ivan Mansurov and his men defended their fortification built at the interflow of the Rivers Ob and Irtis from the attacks of the native peoples. On the second day of the battle, the Ostyaks set up an idol opposite the fort, and offered sacrifices there. The soldiers blew up the idol with cannons. The Ostyaks living along the Ob did not know the strength of firearms before. The thunder of the cannons and the disintegration of their idol made them escape in panic. The Rumyantsev Letopisets is concluded by the description of events in 1586.

Keywords: Conquest of Siberia, Yermak, Chuvash Cape, presents from the Ostyaks, shooting the Ostyak idol into pieces.

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