

## **Vasily Nikitich Protodyakonov (to 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth)**

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Vasily Nikitich Protodyakonov (1934-2017) – was an Honored Worker of Education of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Honorary Worker of Professional Education of the Russian Federation, laureate of the State Prize of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) named after P. A. Oyunsky. He was also awarded the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) medals “Civil Valour” and “Teacher of Teachers”. Protodyakonov dedicated his life to higher education in the Republic of Sakha, serving for 55 years as a faculty member at Yakutsk State University and subsequently at the North-Eastern Federal University. During his tenure, he mentored numerous scholars, teachers, and writers specializing in Yakut language and literature.

The main academic disciplines of Vasily Nikitich at the university were the teaching methodology of Yakut literature and the history of Yakut literary criticism. As a methodist, he lectured to students and was supervising their pedagogical practice in the schools of the Republic. He has published methodical manuals “Study of P. A. Oyunsky’s works in the 8th grade” (1982), “Yakut writers (winged words)” (In the Help for teachers, students, 1994).

The discipline “History of Yakut literary criticism” was taught at the university for 50 years only by Vasily Nikitich Protodyakonov. He studied in details the complex processes and origins of endless disputes and discussions in the history of Yakut literature and criticism. As a student in the 1950s and 1960s, then as a young specialist, he became interested in the problems of criticism and was inspired by the historical events of his time: the debunking of the “personality cult”, the onset of the Thaw Period in society, and especially by the Resolution of the CPSU Central Committee “On the restoration of justice in relation to repressed Yakutians during 1920s-1930s” (1962). But 1970s and 1980s were tough years for the creative and scientific intellectuals, when party control and censorship appeared to be harsh. Under these circumstances, when ‘nationalism’ was suspected, it was difficult to work for V. N. Protodyakonov. He was even suspended from teaching the History of Criticism for three years, and his dissertation on this subject was not allowed to be completed. Therefore, he remained a scientist without a scientific degree, working as a senior lecturer, then as an associate professor of the Department of Yakut Literature. Nevertheless, he awakened the consciousness of Yakut youth with his lectures, interesting topics and his irrepressible spirit of struggle for truth. Today, his grateful students work in various leadership positions and remember their Teacher with adoration. He published a textbook on the history of Yakut literary criticism titled “History of Yakut literary criticism (1917-1945)” (2017). Moreover, he systematised the history of the development of Yakut literary criticism and established its periodisation.

Vasily Nikitich mentioned in his lectures the names of representatives of the creative community, undeservedly forgotten: critics V. Leontiev, S. Potapov, G. Baishev–Altan Saryn and others. The restoration of the repressed writers’ names: K. O. Gavrilov–Tyia Uol, G. V. Baishev–Altan Saryn and others. This is a special merit of Vasily Nikitich. In 1998 he compiled and published the book “Baishev G. V.–Altan Saryn. The Song of the Nine Heavens”, providing it with an introductory article. In addition, he wrote the article for the book “Kuzma Osipovich Gavrilov” (1993).

V. N. Protodyakonov considered that his main task was to return the names and works of the Yakut literature classics and to restore historical justice to them. His motto was “Forward – to Kulakovsky”. He believed that the talent of the first Yakut founding writers

will never be surpassed. Modern Yakut literature needs to learn from them and continue the traditions. He believed that only then literature would not lose its national spirit. Protodyakonov wrote countless number of articles concerning the works of A. E. Kulakovsky–Oksokuleeh Oloksoy, A. I. Sofronov–Alampa, N. D. Neustroev, P. A. Oyunsky. He published a fascicle of A. E. Kulakovsky's poem "The Dream of the Shaman" (1994). He wrote an article on the history of the creation and publication of the poem, analysed the criticism of the work and gave extensive comments on it.

V. N. Protodyakonov was a prominent literary critic whose published works include "Let Our Native Word – Creative!", "Time – Literature – National Traditions" (2009), and the posthumously published "There is Such a Thing – To Defend the Truth: Research, Articles, Reports" (compiled by E. A. Arkhipova and L. P. Grigorieva, 2019). In own criticism V. N. Protodyakonov followed sustainable principles:

- restoration of historical justice in the assessment of the works of the classics;
- return of the names and works of repressed writers;
- study and continuation of national traditions in literature;
- objective assessment of literary phenomena and works of contemporary Yakut writers;
- love to the native language and the nation as whole.

He reviewed performances of works by classic writers including A. I. Sofronov, N. D. Neustroev, P. A. Oyunsky, Suorun Omollon and others on the stage of the P. A. Oyunsky Yakutsk Academic Theatre. He also created the screenplay "My Name Will Not Disappear..." (1983), which received wide acclaim beyond the republic and began a new period in the history of Yakut theatre.

V. N. Protodyakonov was known as a comprehensively talented person. He was a poet, melodist, artist and athlete. Collections of his poems were published: "Songs... Thoughts..." (2004), "Burn love, not fading away!!!" (2009), melodies written by him on the poems of Sien Cholbодук "Snowdrops", Alampa "Song of the Sakha" became favourite songs of the Yakut people. In his younger years, he was the town's boxing champion. At the same time Vasily Nikitich was a surprisingly modest man.

He also asked contemporary writers to be mindful about literary traditions and language. He said, "I am delighted by the beautiful and vivid language of our young poets Umsuura and Saya". The expression of V. N. Protodyakonov "The strength of the people's spirit is in their wisdom, and wisdom is in their language" became a winged word, widely spread among creative intellectuals and students. He admired of his native language and Yakut literature created based on the Yakut language. It has deep roots and great traditions. Vasily Nikitich Protodyakonov was indomitable fighter for historical Truth and great Teacher to the native people. His name is inscribed in history together with such teachers and scientists in history with the greats as G. P. Basharin, M. S. Ivanov–Bagdaryyn Syulbe, M. A. Alekseev and others.

Work is continuing to immortalise the name and memory of V. N. Protodyakonov. His students E. A. Arkhipova, L. P. Grigorieva worked with the scientist's archive and published his books. The book of reminiscences about him "The Teacher Vasily Protodyakonov Lighting Hearts" (2018) was published. In 2024, he was honoured with a monument in his homeland, Tattinsky ulus (district).