

## The Valley of Death

In north-western Yakutia, in the basin of the Upper Viliuy River, there is a hard-to-reach area that bears the marks of some tremendous cataclysms —toppling of the entire forest cover that took place some 800 years ago and stone fragments scattered over hundreds of square kilometres. Distributed across this area are mysterious metal objects located deep underground, in the permafrost. On the surface their presence is revealed only by patches of weird vegetation. The ancient name of this area is Uliuiu Cherkechekh which translates as “the Valley of Death”.

For many years the Yakut people have given a very wide berth to this remote area that has played and still plays a special, powerful role in the fate not only of civilization, but of the planet as a whole.

After having systematized a large quantity of reports and material of various kinds, we decided to inform you of something that may change perceptions of the world around us and our place in it, if humanity can take heed of what is stated here.

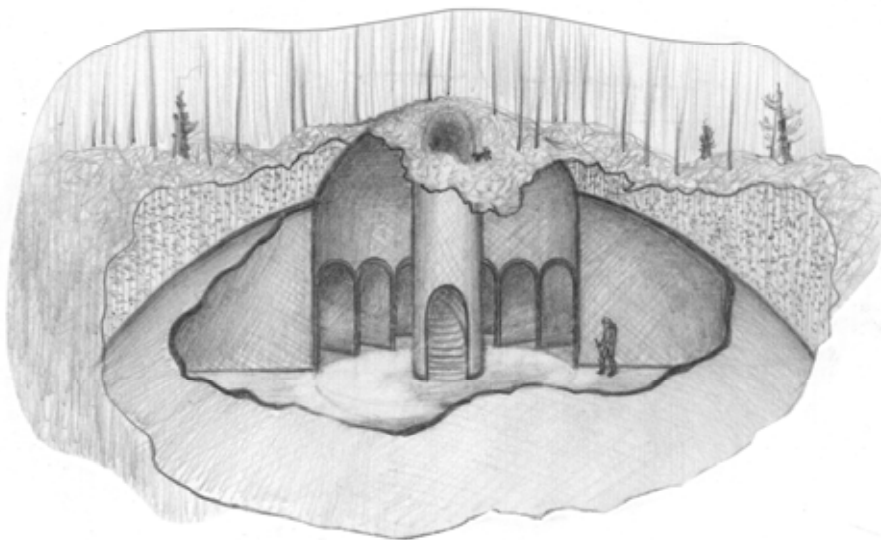
In order to present the fullest possible picture, we have divided our account into three parts. The first contains the facts and eye-witness reports in the form in which they reached us. In the second we present the ancient legends of peoples living in this region and the epic poetry of neighbouring peoples who observed strange phenomena. This is important so that you can carry out your own investigation and appreciate for yourselves every detail of the narrative. Finally, we shall write about what lies behind all this.

### **Part 1**

The area in question can be described as a solid mass of swamps alternating with near-impassable taiga covering more than 100,000 square kilometres. Some fairly curious rumours have become attached to it regarding metal objects of unknown origin located across it.

In order to shed light on whatever it was that, existing barely perceptibly alongside us, gave rise to these rumours, we had to go into the ancient history of this region, to discover its beliefs and legends. We managed to recreate certain elements of the local paleotoponymy and these matched in an astonishing manner the content of the ancient legends. Everything indicated that the legends and rumours were referring to quite specific things.

In ancient times the Valley of Death was part of a nomadic route used by the Evenk people from Bodaibo to Annybar and on to the coast. Right up until 1936 a merchant named Savvinov traded on the route, but when he gave up the business the inhabitants gradually abandoned those places.



Finally the aged merchant and his granddaughter Zina decided to move to Siuldiukar. Somewhere in the land between two rivers that is known as Kheldyu (“iron house” in the local language), the old man led her to a small, slightly flattened reddish arch, where, beyond a spiral passageway, there turned out to be a number of metal chambers in which they then spent the night.

Zina's grandfather told her that even in the harshest frosts it was warm as summer in the chambers. In days gone by there were bold men among the local hunters who would sleep in these rooms. But then they began to fall seriously ill, and those who had spent several nights running there soon died. The Yakut said that the place was "very bad, marshy and beasts do not go there"! The location of all these constructions was known only to old men who had been hunters in their youth and often visited these places in their day. They lived a nomadic life and their knowledge of the peculiarities of the area, where one could go, and where one couldn't, was a matter of vital necessity. Their descendents had adopted a settled way of life and so this knowledge from the past had been lost. At present all that points to the existence of these constructions is ancient place names that have in part survived and all manner of rumours. But each of those toponyms represents hundreds, if not thousands of square metres.



In 1936, alongside the Olguidakh ("place with a cauldron") River a geologist directed by elderly natives came upon a smooth metal hemisphere reddish in colour protruding from the ground with such a smooth edge that it "cut a fingernail". Its walls were about two centimetres thick and it stuck out of the ground roughly a fifth of its diameter. It stood leaning over so that it was possible to ride under it on a reindeer. The geologist despatched a description of it to Yakutsk, the regional centre.

In 1979 an archaeological expedition from Yakutsk attempted to find the hemisphere he had discovered.

They had with them a guide who had seen the structure several times in his youth, but he said that the area was greatly changed and they failed to find anything. It must be said that in that locality you can pass within ten paces of something and not notice it, so earlier discoveries have been pure luck.

Back in the previous century, in 1853, R. Maak, a noted explorer of the region, noted, "In Suntar [a Yakut settlement] I was told that in the upper reaches of the Viliuy there is a stream called 'Algy timirbit' (which translates as 'the large cauldron sank') flowing into the Viliuy. Close to its bank in the forest there is a gigantic cauldron made of copper. Its size is unknown as only the rim is visible above the ground, but several trees grow within it..."

The same thing was recorded by N.D. Arkhipov, a researcher into the ancient cultures of Yakutia: "Among the population of the Viliuy basin there is a legend from ancient times about the existence in the upper reaches of that river of bronze cauldrons or *olguis*. This legend deserves attention as the areas that are the supposed location of the mythical cauldrons contain several streams with the name 'Olguidakh' — 'Cauldron Stream'."



And here is a passage from a letter penned by another person who visited the Valley of Death. Mikhail Koretsky from Vladivostok writes:

*"I was there three times. The first time was in 1933, when I was ten — I travelled with my father when he went there to earn some money. Then in 1937, without my father already. And the last time was in 1947 as part of a group of youngsters."*

*“The ‘Valley of Death’ extends along a right-hand tributary of the Viliuy River. In point of fact it is a whole chain of valleys along its flood lands. All three times I was there with a guide, a Yakut. We didn’t go there because life was good, but because there, in the back of beyond, you could pan for gold without the threat that at the end of the season you’d be robbed or get a bullet in the back of your head.*

*“As for mysterious objects, there are probably a lot of them there, as in three seasons I saw seven of those ‘cauldrons’. They all struck me as totally perplexing: for one thing there was their size — between six and nine metres in diameter.*

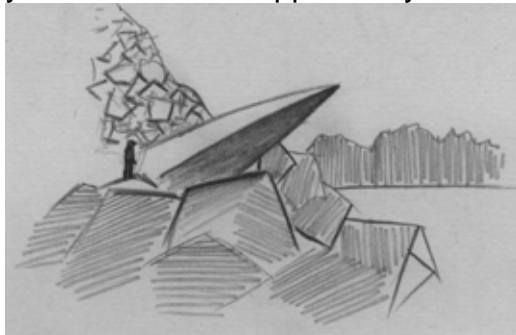
*“Secondly, they were made of some strange metal. Everyone has written that they were made of copper, but I’m sure it isn’t copper. The thing is that even a sharpened cold chisel will not mark the ‘cauldrons’ (we tried more than once). The metal doesn’t break off and can’t be hammered. On copper a hammer would definitely have left noticeable dents. But this ‘copper’ is covered over with a layer of some unknown material resembling emery. Yet it’s not an oxidation layer and not scale — it can’t be chipped or scratched either.*

*“We didn’t come across shafts going down into the ground with chambers. But I did note that the vegetation around the ‘cauldrons’ is anomalous — totally different from what’s growing around. It’s more opulent: large-leaved burdock, very long withes, strange grass, one and a half or two times the height of a man. In one of the ‘cauldrons’ the whole group of us (6 people) spent the night. We didn’t sense anything bad and calmly left without any sort of unpleasant occurrences. Nobody fell seriously ill afterwards. Except that three months later one of my friends lost all his hair. And on the left side of my head (the side I slept on) three small sore spots the size of match-heads appeared. I’ve tried to get rid of them all my life, but they still with me today.*

*“None of our efforts to break off even a small piece from the strange ‘cauldrons’ were successful. The only thing I did manage to bring away was a stone. Not an ordinary one, though: half of a perfect sphere six centimetres in diameter. It was black in colour and bore no visible signs of having been worked, yet was very smooth as if polished. I picked it up from the ground inside one of those cauldrons. I took my souvenir of Yakutia with me to the village of Samarka, Chuguyevka district, Primorsky region [the Soviet Far East], where my parents were living in 1933. I was laid up with nothing to do until my grandmother decided to build a house. We needed to put glass in the windows and there wasn’t a glass-cutter in the entire village. I tried scoring it with the edge of that half of a stone sphere and it turned out to cut with amazing ease. After that my find was often used like a diamond by all our relatives and friends. In 1937 I gave the stone to my grandfather, but that autumn he was arrested and taken to Magadan where he lived on without trial until 1968 and then died. Now no-one knows where my stone got to...”*

*In his letter Koretsky stresses that in 1933 his Yakut guide told him that “five or ten years before he had discovered several spherical cauldrons (they were absolutely round) that protruded high (higher than a man) out of the ground. They looked brand new. Later the hunter had seen them again, now broken and scattered.”*

Koretsky also noted that when he visited one “cauldron” a second time in the intervening few years it had sunk appreciably into the ground.



A. Gutenev and Yu. Mikhailovsky, two researchers from the town of Mirny, reported that in 1971 an old hunter belonging to the Evenk people had said that in the area between two rivers known as Niurgun Bootur (“fiery champion”) and Atadarak (“place with a three-sided harpoon”) there is poking out of the ground the very thing that gave the place its name a “very big” three-faceted iron harpoon, while in the area between two rivers known as Kheliugir (“iron people”) there is

an iron burrow in

which lie “thin black one-eyed people in clothes of iron”. He said that he could take people there, that it was not far away, but no-one believed him. In the meantime he has died.



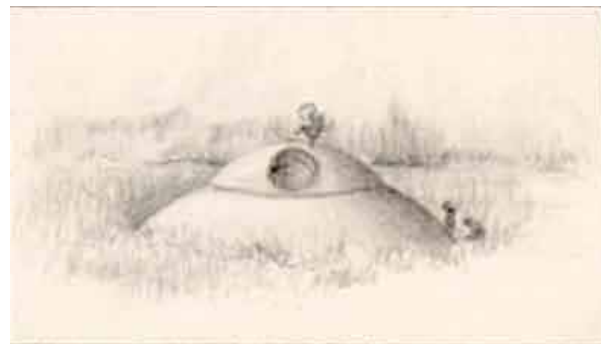
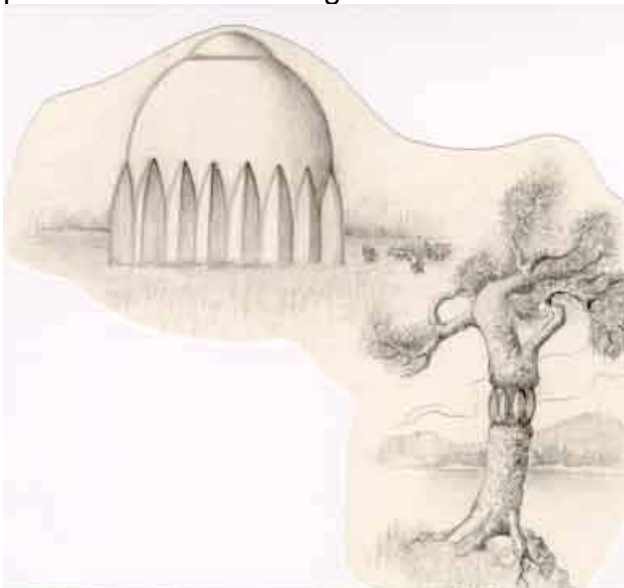
One more of these objects was, to all appearances, covered after the building of a dam on the Viliuy slightly below the Erbie. According to the account of one of the builders of the Viliuy hydro-electric project, when they constructed a diversion canal and drained the main channel, they discovered in it a convex metal “spot”. Deadlines were pressing and after a cursory inspection of the find the project managers gave orders for work to continue.

There are a host of tales from people who happened across similar constructions by accident, but without precise directions it is extremely difficult to find them again in the depressingly monotonous terrain.

Once some old men said that flowing in the place Tong Duurai is a stream called Ottoamokh (“holes in the ground”) and that around there are incredibly deep openings known as “the laughing chasms”. That same name also crops up in legends that state that this is the dwelling of a fiery giant who destroys everything around. Roughly every six or seven centuries a monstrous “fireball” burst out from there and either it flew off somewhere into the distance and (judging by the chronicles and legends of other peoples) exploded there, or it exploded directly above its exit point, as a result of which the area for hundreds of kilometres around was reduced to a scorched desert with shattered rocks.

Yakut legends contain many references to explosions, fiery whirlwinds and blazing spheres rising into the air. And all those phenomena are somehow or other associated with the mysterious metal constructions found in the Valley of Death.

Some of them are large, round “iron houses” standing on numerous lateral supports. They have neither windows nor doors, only a “spacious manhole” at the top of the dome. Some of them have sunk almost completely into the permafrost, with only a barely noticeable arch-like protuberance remaining on the surface.



Witnesses who are strangers to each other describe this “resounding metal house” in the same way.

Other objects are the metallic hemispherical lids scattered across the area that cover something unknown. But Yakut legends say that the mysterious blazing spheres are produced by “an orifice belching smoke and fire” with a “banging steel lid”.



This is also the source for the fiery whirlwinds that sound from the descriptions very similar to the effects of present-day atomic explosions. Roughly a century before each explosion or series of explosions a fast-flying fiery sphere emerged from the “iron orifice” and, without causing great damage, soared upwards in the form of a thin column of fire. At the top of this a very large fireball appeared. Accompanied by four claps of thunder in succession, it soared to an even greater height and flew off, leaving behind a long “trail of smoke and fire”. Then a cannonade of its explosions sounded in the distance...

In the 1950s the Soviet military cast an eye on this area, evidently due to the exceptionally sparse population of its northern fringes. They conducted a series of atomic tests there. One of the explosions produced a great puzzle. Foreign specialists are still speculating about it. As the German radio station *Deutsche Welle* reported in September 1991, in 1954 when a 10-kilogramme nuclear device was being tested, the size of the explosion for unknown reasons exceeded the calculations by a factor of 2,000–3,000, reaching 20–30 megatons, as was registered by seismic laboratories around the world. The cause of such a significant discrepancy in the power of the explosion remained unclear. TASS put out an announcement that a compact hydrogen bomb had been tested in airburst conditions, but it later emerged that this was incorrect.

After the tests there were restricted zones in the area. Secret work was carried out for some years.

## **Part 2**

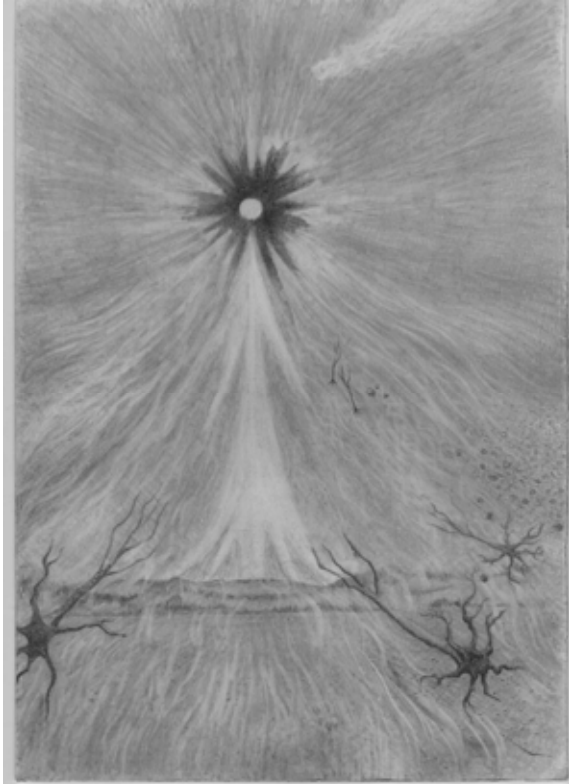
Let us try to look into the distant past as it is reflected in epic poetry.

As the legends passed on by word of mouth testify, in the remote period when everything began, the area was inhabited by a small number of nomads belonging to the Tungus people. Once their distant neighbours saw that their land was suddenly wrapped in impenetrable darkness and the surroundings were shaken by a deafening roar. A hurricane of unseen force arose and the land was riven by mighty blows. Lightning crossed the sky in all directions. When everything calmed down and the darkness dispersed, an unprecedented sight met their eyes. In the midst of the scorched land, glowing in the sun stood a tall vertical structure that was visible at a distance of many days' journey.

For a long period of time the structure gave out unpleasant, ear-splitting noises and gradually diminished in height until it had disappeared under the ground altogether. In place of the tall structure there was an immense yawning vertical “orifice”. In the strange words of the legends, it consisted of three tiers of “laughing chasms”. Its depths supposedly contained an underground country with its own sun that was, however, “waning”. A choking stench rose from the orifice and so no-one settled near it. From a distance people could see a “rotating island” appear sometimes above the opening and this then proved to be its “banging lid”. Those whom curiosity tempted to take a closer look never returned.

Centuries went by. Life went on as before. Nobody anticipated anything extraordinary, but once a small earthquake occurred and the sky was pierced by a thin “fiery whirlwind”. At the top of it a dazzling fireball appeared. Accompanied by “a succession of four thunderclaps” and leaving

behind a trail of fire, this sphere shot off along a shallow downward trajectory and, after vanishing beyond the horizon, exploded. The nomads were perturbed, but did not abandon the lands that were home to them, since the “demon” had not caused them any harm, but exploded over the hostile neighbouring tribe. A few decades later, things repeated themselves — the fireball flew off in the same direction and again destroyed only their neighbours. Evidently this “demon” was in some way their protector and they began to create legends about it, calling it Niurgun Bootur, “the fiery champion”.



But some time later, events occurred that horrified even the most distant surroundings. A gigantic fireball emerged from the opening with a deafening thunderous roar and exploded... right overhead. A tremendous earthquake ensued. Some hills were cut across by crack more than 100 metres deep. Following the explosion a “fire-raging sea” continued to swash about with a disc-like “rotating island” above it. The effects of the explosion extended over a radius of more than a thousand kilometres. The nomadic tribes on the edges of the area who survived fled in different directions, seeking to distance themselves from the fatal spot, but that did save them from death. They all succumbed to some kind of strange illness that was passed on only by inheritance. Yet they left behind them precise accounts of what had taken place, on the basis of which Yakut story-tellers began to compose beautiful, exceptionally tragic legends.

A little over 600 years passed. Many generations of nomads had come and gone. The precepts of remote ancestors were forgotten and people had again settled the area.

Then... everything repeated itself. The fireball of Niurgun Bootur appeared above a fiery whirlwind and again flew off to explode beyond the horizon. A few decades later a second fireball rent the air (now it was called Kiun Erbiie (“the gleaming aerial herald or messenger”). Then came another devastating explosion that the legends again anthropomorphized. It was given the name Uot Usumu Tong Dুরai, which can be roughly translated as “the criminal stranger who pierced the earth and hid in the depths, destroying all around with a fiery whirlwind”.

It is important to note that on the eve of the flight of the negative hero Tong Dুরai there appeared in the sky the messenger of the heavenly Dyesegei — the champion Kiun Erbiie who crossed the firmament as a “falling star” or “dashing lightning” so as to warn Niurgun Bootur of the coming battle.

The most significant event in the legends was Tong Dুরai bursting forth from the underground depths and doing battle with Niurgun Bootur. This took place roughly as follows: first a snake-like branching fiery whirlwind burst from the “orifice” on the top of which there again appeared a fireball of gigantic size that after several peals of thunder shot high into the air. He was accompanied in flight by his retinue, “a swarm of fatally bloody whirlwinds” that wrought havoc in the vicinity.

But there were occasions when Tong Dুরai encountered Niurgun Bootur above the place where he took off and following these the area remained lifeless for a long time.

The picture painted of these events varies quite considerably — several “fiery champions” might emerge from the opening at once, fly some distance and explode in one place. This

happened with the flight of Tong Duurai. Study of the soil layers indicates that the interval between explosions does not exceed 600–700 years.

The legends vividly reflect these events, but the absence of a written tradition means that they were not registered in documentary form. It seems, though, that this lacuna is compensated by the historical chronicles of other peoples.

## **The Chronicles of Other Peoples**

Altogether at approximate intervals of 600–700 years several explosions took place, or rather a whole complex of events, including the precursors.

All these occurrences were painstakingly recorded in epic poetry, traditions and legends. It is a curious fact that similar legends also arose in the equatorial zone of the planet where explosions or “giant fireballs” that suddenly appeared in the sky destroyed several centres of ancient civilizations.

Judging by the results of archaeological investigations carried out on the Upper Viliuy by S.A. Fedoseyeva, the intermittent, wave-like settlement of this territory can be traced back roughly to the fourth millennium B.C. In the first millennium A.D., the line of historical development is interrupted, which does not contradict the possible date for the last explosion of September 1380. The cloud it raised blotted out the sun over Europe for several hours. In several geo-active zones powerful earthquakes took place. This event was already recorded in written sources. In Russian chronicles it coincided with the Battle of Kulikovo Field: “the gloom dispersed only in the second half of the day. A wind of such strength blew, that an arrow shot from a bow could not fly against it...” This factor made a positive contribution to the Russian victory.

The explosions are described in Tungus legends far more vividly than in other sources. Judging by the accounts they were many times worse than modern nuclear weapons.

If we take 1380 as our starting date and go back into the past, we can trace such moments. In 830, for example, the culture of the Mayans who inhabited the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico was destroyed. Many of their cities were reduced to ruins by an explosion of monstrous force. Some passages in the Bible are akin to the Yakut legends: the description of the plagues of Egypt, the demise of Sodom and Gomorrah. In one of the oases of the Arabian peninsula an ancient town was destroyed and literally reduced to ashes. According to legend this took place when a huge fireball that appeared in the sky exploded. At Mohenjo-daro on the Indian subcontinent archaeologists discovered a devastated city. The marks of the catastrophe (melted stone walls) clearly pointed to an explosion comparable with a nuclear bomb.

Similar events are also described in Chinese chronicles from the fourteenth century. They say that far to the north a black cloud rose above the horizon and covered half the sky, scattering large fragments of stone. Stones also dropped from the sky in Scandinavia and Germany, where several towns broke fire. Scholars established that they were quite ordinary stones and conjectured that a volcano had erupted somewhere.

Perhaps the cause of these misfortunes was really Tong Duurai who has been bursting out from under ground for many centuries? While Niurgun Bootur blotted out half of the sky at his appearance, Tong Duurai considerably exceeded him in size and, ascending into the heavens, completely disappeared from view. We note that in the Valley of Death a rise in the background radiation is observed at certain intervals of time, something specialists have no explanation for.

**By Valery Uvarov**