

Singing Sakha Songs

by Dave & Kay Henry

When we moved to the city of Yakutsk, Russia, we had already completed a career of missionary service in the Alaska interior. In fact, we were already *babushka* and *dedushka* (grandmother and grandfather). But we believed God had a ministry for us among the Yakut (Sakha) people; and we were ready, and praying, for Him to show us what that would be.



Kay Henry [right] spends time with friends in Yakutia.

Our previous missionary service, with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Alaska, had given us experience in translation and publication of Athabaskan-language materials, including some songs. During those years we could not have known that God was planning to use that experience in a new church-planting movement in Siberia.

As our Alaska ministry was finishing, the gospel was coming to the Yakut

people through Russian believers. As has happened in many mission fields around the world, the new churches adopted the hymns of their missionary



Kesh and Budimir [playing the bayan] compose Yakut Christian songs and melodies.

friends; Yakut Christians translated their favorite Russian hymns into their own language.

When we began traveling throughout the Republic of Yakutia to new churches, the believers gave us their Russian-melody songs. From the beginning, we encouraged them to write their own songs using original Yakut melodies.



Valentin [left] composes music and melodies; Kirill wrote the words for one of his melodies.

This process really took off when the first Christian book in the Yakut language was released in 1994. At the public ceremony, a famous Yakut singer sang a Yakut Christian song. People were thrilled to hear one of their own praising God in their own language. The enthusiasm for Yakut songs escalated as believers began singing them at their weekly Bible study led by two Yakut men.

The first compilation included only seven Yakut songs, but it was a beginning. These songs were distributed through the Yakut Christians and, of course, we started receiving more songs. We kept reprinting a limited number of trial edition songbooks as we added more and more songs and tweaked existing ones.

The first formal printing of the Yakut Hymnal *Praise to God* was published in 2002 with 120 songs. We are nearing the end of that first-print run of 3,000. This

paperback songbook is the only Yakut Hymnal, and is commonly used all across the Republic of Yakutia.

People have been asking when the new hymnal will be ready. In fact, we anticipate its release by fall of 2008. This new, hard-cover edition will be printed on good quality paper and will include 200 hymns, of which more than a third are original songs. It also includes



Luda helps prepare the Yakut hymnal for publication.

songs for children, which are needed for Sunday schools and summer camps.

We deeply appreciate the backing of the Tyndale Foundation for this hymnal project.

The Yakut believers continue to grow numerically and spiritually. They are actively evangelizing among their own people, who number about 450,000, plus neighboring national groups, who also speak Yakut. There are currently more than 500 Yakut believers.

God wants the Yakut people to make His name great, starting among their own, and then spreading to other tribes.

For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the nations ... saith the Lord of hosts. ~Malachi 1:11



Kay and Dave Henry live in Yakutsk and minister throughout the Republic of Yakutia, Russia.