

SUMMARY

The traditional culture of Ancient Scandinavia, as far as we know from written sources and archaeological data, was determined by mostly the traditional nature of the tribal society.

We know that the old Icelandic society was made up of patrilokal extended families, which governed relations between them by the customs of blood feud, provided compensation for the slain victim, descent group, as well as fostered care child as hostage-amanata and marriage (past usages are discussed in my book “Culture and society of the Viking Age Scandinavians”, Gubanov, 2004). The relationship of blood feuds do not create an atmosphere of total chaos, bloody war of all against all, there was the National Assembly-Ting, a collection of legally capable of armed men, which were important for the society, in particular, settled conflicts between rival tribal groups. Despite the fact that, as we can see, the judicial procedure for the Ting was a very important, battle took place here often hostile tribal groups. About all this detail tells the saga about Icelanders.

Based on the sagas can reveal characteristics of the custom of blood feud in ancient Icelandic society:

1. Revenge was the first, the sacred duty of the Norse Warrior. Sacral character of revenge perfectly illustrates the insight miracle with Amundi Blind (Njalssaga, Chapter. 106), to whom God has given sight for the sake of revenge for his father.

2. A debt of blood feud had priority over war duty, over the need to obey by the orders of the head of the leader of an armed detachment (for example, the murder of two people from his and hostile militia by Styr at the battle of Swan Fjord in Eyrbyggja, Cap. 44). Thus, the tradition of “horizontal” society relatives were stronger than the power of warlords, Scandinavian warriors even ignore their orders in the battle. It says about the weakness of the *chiefdom* trends in an ancient Scandinavian society.

3. Woman usually incited to revenge in sagas. She to revenge is the main role of the woman in the saga of Icelanders (as Hildiguð in *Njala*, Chapter 116). Probably this behavior of women reflected the social reality. Woman-she was protected by the law, it could not retaliate.

The Icelandic family sagas allow to reconstruct in detail the order of litigation at the Ting, common for the ancient Icelandic society:

1. First, the main party to litigation was pronounced the most important formulae, which until the Christianization of Iceland were given not on the Bible, but on the leader-priest's *Holy Ring* — on the *godi's* wrist bracelet (*Landnámabók* and *Brennu-Njálssaga*).

2. Often litigants groups relatives have delegated to the Thing of its influential allies in the College of arbitrators, comprising 12 persons (*Njala*, chapter 122–123). A panel of twelve had the power to make judgement on the case. Procedure of litigation on the Thing between kin of slain staff and between staff of the kin killer was carefully regulated. (*Njala*, Chapter 142).

3. The representative of the plaintiff twice, then the two witnesses charge explained it by the plaintiff. Following this preliminary decision in the case of the so-called «neighbors» (9 people, there were neighbors of murder place) took place. «Neighbors», first of all, should not be relatives of the claimant or dependent upon the prosecution. Otherwise, the Defense could request removal of Neighbours. The final decision took three dozen judges. The murderer, his relatives and supporters, i.e. the Defence, could demand to removal of these judges (*Njala*, Chapters 142–145).

4. More often at the Thing was awarded vergeld, which had to pay the killer and his relatives (12 *èjrirs* for slave (*þrel*), freeman's vergeld could reach several hundred *èjrirs*, as for *Høskuldr* in *Njala*). If the reconciliation of the warring groups of relatives to those conditions could not be achieved, the killer could be declared “forest man”, i.e. the exile in the forest, a man outside the law, property which had been confiscated and he himself could be killed by relatives of the slain (*Hravnkel Saga Freysgoða*, Chapter 13).

The value of well sagas for the understanding of the structure of the traditional society of the old Germanic people is huge. Other texts,

so full of archaic society depicting ancient Indo-European peoples, does not exist.

Reputable researchers are inclined to think that the feudal structure of society was actually imposed by the Scandinavian society in XI–XIV centuries, in the age of intensive contacts Scandinavia with Feudal continental Europe. Case Iceland. Iceland's Isolation from Feudal Europe, the persistence of the oral tradition of stories about ancestors, early scripture tradition, and traditions of the people's selfruling ("military democracy"), with the vitality of traditional society relatives are those factors which have given rise to the phenomenon of Old Norse literature—an inexhaustible source for the structure of society, psychology and religious representation of the ancient Germanic People.

Nucleas of *oðals* were dwelling long houses with skeleton-pillar design, with open fireplaces on the axle housing and serving as fest Hall. Sometimes they served as the temples, where *blótveizla* («feast of sacrificial blood») took place. There is the presence of an archaic vocabulary from poetic Edda in the name of religious objects (composites with ON *hlaut-*) attests to the historicity of the descriptions in the sagas *blótveizla* («feast of sacrificial blood»). It proves historical reality of this ritual. *Blótveizla* was the main religious event of the ancient Scandinavians.

The evolution of Norse ships from a Gokstad generic type to combat big Kings-Viking's *the long ships*, smaller long and narrow *shnekas* and to the freight trading *knorras* is well traceable in integrated mapping of archaeological findings and written sources.