ULAR AS ORNITOMORPHOUS SYMBOL: SEMANTICS AND FUNCTIONS (ON THE BASIS OF CULTURE OF YAKUT AND OTHER TURKIC PEOPLES)¹

УЛАР КАК ОРНИТОМОРФНЫЙ СИМВОЛ: СЕМАНТИКА И ФУНКЦИИ (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ КУЛЬТУРЫ ЯКУТОВ И ДРУГИХ ТЮРКСКИХ НАРОДОВ)

ORNİTOMORF SEMBOLÜ OLAN YABAN HOROZU: SEMANTİK VE FONKSİYON (YAKUT VE DİĞER TÜRK HALKLARININ KÜLTÜR MALZEMELERİNE GÖRE)

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ABSTRACT

This article concerns the image of улар (wood grouse) in the mythology and folklore of Yakuts with broad attraction of comparative-historical material on languages and traditional culture of the Turkic peoples and its symbolical meaning connected with gender characteristics. In mythological picture of the world, the bird’s image is correlated to the south sunny side, and heat; its attribute is red color. The author pays attention to ancient sources of the cult of snow-cock bird in culture of peoples from Altai linguistic community.

Keywords: folklore, myth, metaphor, symbol, meaning, trope

АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье рассматривается образ улара (глухаря) в мифологии и фольклоре якутов с широким привлечением сравнительно-исторического материала по языкам и традиционной культуре тюркских народов, выявляется его символическое значение, связанное с гендерными признаками. В мифопоэтической картине мира образ птицы соотнесен с южной солнечной стороной, теплом; его атрибутом служит красный цвет. Автор обращает внимание на древние истоки культа птицы улар в культуре народов алтайской языковой общности.

Ключевые слова: фольклор, миф, метафора, символ, значение, троп

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Folklor, efsane, istiare, sembol, önem, mecaz.

No data on the wood grouse\(^2\) mythological representations in Yakut’s culture in the literature has survived into modern days. There are etiological fairy tales, riddles, proverbs, phraseological units about the bird in Yakut folklore; its image underlies epic tropes.

The image of the wood-grouse is of high importance in creating plastic portrait of a Yakut epos character. The olonkho bogatyry "in his strong saddle quicker than the black wood-grouse flown up from a spring thawed patch, dexterously jumped, like a lekking wood grouse with its head leant back, took seat proudly. Ханча өволүү ыңышырғыар / харалдыктын көпүүт / хара улардаагар хапсагайдык, / хатана түспүү, / токуптар улар күрдүк / чоноочу олорон ӡыйсиптүз". Experts consider this comparison as a cliche which can also be met in other genres of Yakut folklore (Alekseev, 2008: 456). The text contains language game: the word харалдык ‘thawed patch’ in Verkhoyansk dialect of the Yakut language means ‘wood grouse’\(^3\); it may be a part of proper names of epic bogatyrfs: Харалдыкь-Бэргэн ~ Харальык Бэрэн ‘Thawed patch- Slashing fellow’.

It is not only comparison of a horse rider with a lekking wood-grouse, but also the word чоноочу, representing imperial bearing of the bogatyry that attract our attention. In the Yakut riddles about the bird "imperial bearing" will be one of the key signs: "Курын маска кувкес баар үңү. They say, somebody appeared proudly in dead standing forest". Or: Чорую хара Чорондага, чоногор-чоногор бинчылгалах үңү. They say, there is Horuodzha who is as black (as) a soot, and has imperial bearing".

In national ideas of man's beauty, the straight imperial bearing of the bridegroom is always emphasized: "Күпүүт кили кувкэритэн ыңр эбий. The son-in-law rides as a stately strong young man" (Pekarsky, 1958: col.1313). As we see, strong young man and wood-grouse are described here by means of using words containing the same root or closely related words: кувкэритэн – кувкес; чоноочу – чоногор, or etc.

\(^2\) Улар, тиш улар, хара улар, etc; in folklore texts the word combination куртуйак улар is used.

\(^3\) Ornithologists studying a way of life of a wood-grouse in Yakutia, note that its habitats lay mostly within the southern direction. "During the early-spring period stone wood-grouses live in bearberry larch forests on tops and southern slopes of ridges, where snow comes off earlier and thawed patches appear" (Andreev, 1987: 73). It is interesting that the specified feature of the bird's habitats was reflected in its name in the Verkhoyansk dialect of the Yakut language: харалдык ~ харалдыкь 'thawed patch' (Afanasiev, 1965: 119) – metonymic transfer on contiguous in space.
When a bogaty run in the belligerent heat, "his heels slap (with noise), similar to noise of wings of a wood grouse. Тэбисэн сүүрдээгэнэ – улуулагын тынга куртуйах улар кынатын тынгы курдуук тилгириэ" (Timofeev-Геоплукнов, 1985: 26, 303). In olonkho, there is a widely used set comparison: улуултагыбын улар курдуук 'as a sated wood grouse' – it describes a character who stands in fighting menacing position: sticking out his chest, with his head lean back. In epic tropes, the image of wood grouse 4 serves as the standard of man’s beauty and dexterity, demonstration of aggressive courageous character.

Feathers of wood grouses as a peculiar marker of males are used in the ceremony of Shors devoted to spring prayer to mountains and the rivers. "In each house, the bunches of a wood grouse's feathers were previously prepared, according to the number of men in a family, and bunches of rags according to the number of women. They were tied together in one general bunch чалаба which was then lifted onto the top of sacred patrimonial tree" (Sagalayev and Oktyabrskaya, 1990: 53). Yakuts who tied up craw and tail of a wood grouse to the ceiling of their jurt, "so that abaaay (≅malicious spirits) couldn't enter the dwelling", also sacrificed wings and feathers of the bird along with bunches of horsehair to the spirit of the land-owner (Popov, 1949: 264).

An arrow – a symbol of күү (soul) of a boy – is mentioned in Yakut etiological fairy tale "The luce (сордон) and the Black Grouse (хара улар, куртуйах)", in which the origin of "arrows" on legs of a wood grouse is attributed to bow shots of the luce (Kulakovsky, 1979: 73). The text begins with the story about the hostility between inhabitants of water and land, and the black grouse 4 acts as the representative of land. The plot of the fairy tale expresses clearly the spatial opposition of animals of the top/bottom (land/water)6: "Куртуйыга буулгагына үөзөнөн ытталган сордону кушгө түнэрү эбит. Биirsерэ аллараттан ыттан, ого баран куртууйагы атаха табар эбит. The black grouse shot from above and the arrow struck into the luce’s back. And the luce shot from below, and its struck the legs of the black grouse".

The confirmation of the улар image meaning can be found in the polysemantic lexeme сүүл which meant in the Yakut language not only a man’s productive force, 'sexual lust to a coition at males, beginning of mating call at males', but also 'a flock of black grouses'; the third meaning of this lexeme is "the highest degree (of thunderstorm, etc.) ... сүүл эннэт strong thunder, courageous thunder"7, "..." (Pekarsky, 1958: col. 2387).

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4 Traditional and widespread in folklore of peoples of the world is the comparison of kindness of a good fellow with an eagle, and in this regard we will point to an all-Turkic name күү күү which also has the meaning 'wood-grouse' along with 'eagle', 'golden eagle' (Kononov, 1975: 162; Tenishev, 1968: 228).

5 All chickens are afraid of water". But they "step out very quickly", "excellently run and fly" instead (Bram, 1992: 94, 96, 176-177).

6 Wood-grouse as a symbol of the Middle World acts in olonkho in the description of three hitching posts intended for guests. The first сэрээ is crowned with the image of the mythical heavenly bird ексику, the middle hitching post has an улар, at the last hitching post has a cuckoo (Goverov, 1938: 240). In this context the wood grouse represented on the average hitching post (орто сэрээ orto serge) serves as a symbol of the Average world (Орто доийду Orto doyd).

7 In the modern Yakut language only the first meaning of the word сүүл remained (YaRS, 1972: 352).
The verb суула has the following definitions respectively: "1) to lust, to be in lust (for a stud, stag) … about black grouses: to gather in flocks in spring when coupling, to lek; 2) about thunder: to thunder throughout the sky" (the same source).

Lekking of wood grouses in spring dawns is described by naturalists as a passionate chant in a condition of ecstasy⁸. In the hunting slang, the word суула means lekking ground itself, located on the southern slopes of ridges and river valleys. "and the very center of lekking ground in Yakut is called the perch of lekking ground" (Andreev, 1987: 69, 74). It is still not clear, whether the last name is based on the basis of metaphor 'heat of passion' ↔ 'fire', or not.

In the light of the discovered meanings of the улар image, an ancient Yakut custom of transfer of black grouse's and wood grouse's lekking grounds as a part of bridewealth at bailing out a bride, which were considered a property of the hunter on the basis of a common law is of high interest (Andreev, 1987: 70). "Hunting for wood grouses is a secret one… Good hunter never disclosed his places for a bag of (100) ubles, only to his son when dying" (Seroshevsky, 1993: 123). They say that good lekking ground might be exchanged for "a mare with "trekhtravy lonshak" (Andreev, 1987: 70) – significantly is that in this exchange, the "equivalent" unit of black grouse's lekking ground is эр киын суулы 'male cattle', i.e. horses.

Relicts of mythological image of a wood grouse are found in a popular Yakut fairy tale "The Birdie and Ala Mogus" which goes back probably to the etiological myth. The text is built up on contrasts and has the clear "question-to-answer" structure. The action is dated to high antiquity when one Birdie was the only feathered inhabitant of the world. The dialogue of terrible glutton and the Birdie who is afraid of water and afraid to cut hands with a sedge, tear her mittens, break a needle, etc. has cumulative character (Ergis, 1994: 323). The increasing tension of the dialogue ends with Mogus having become annoyed with the Birdie gets her on a spit and roasts. Surprisingly, the bird is full of vital energy, she continues conversation indifferently, and, upon being roasted, suggests him to eat her. When she finds herself in Mogus's stomach, and later of his dog's, she asks questions glibly. When the Birdie leaves the dog's stomach together with feces, a monster stretches his hands to grab her; but she "immediately turns into a wood grouse, flies up and sits onto the top of a larch. Чынчаага сөөгөхөө хара улар буула пүүэк да, тийл ўрдугүр тахсан олоро пүүэк". According to the text, all variety of feathered tribe in the world appeared from the Mogus's shot to a wood grouse, shattered pieces of which turned into birds (Ergis, 1994: 72 - 74).

Extremely enduring character of the Birdie who passes deadly tests: picking, piercing, getting on a spit, roasting on fire on both sides, first eating by the monster, then his dog, and bow shooting at last serves as the key motive of the fairy tale⁹. Whereas at the beginning of the fairy tale there is a question of damage to subjects or death (mittens will become wet and will tear, needle will break, the smith will fall ill, and shaman will be eaten

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⁸ There is a set expression in the Yakut language улар мыйны (literally, wood grouse's brain), i.e. stupid, dull person. As we know, wood-grouses in the culmination of their chants called as lekking, become silent for a while.

⁹ Semantic function is probably borne by implicit opposition: Mogus personifies brute physical force, "a low matter and physiology" (gluttony), and the bird in many cultures acts as archetypical symbol of a soul.
by an evil ghost), further development of the plot shows invulnerability and immortality of the small Birdie. The motif of fear before trivial dangers emphasizes her equanimity in the teeth of death. She not only remains safe, but "breeds" in such number of having flown up birds, that "the wide sky has suddenly darkened" (Ergis, 1994: 74).

Being an ornitomorphous symbol of the sunny south side (күн сире "life place")10, the image of a wood grouse serves as a quintessence of life itself, ineradicable vital force. In the light of this semantics, the connection of the Birdie with solar heat and red color is quite notable; the dialogue was triggered by special condition of the Birdie who reddened because of heat and sunbeat:

- Чыныча, того бу курдук кытардын? Why have you so reddened, Birdie?

- Күйисталан, күйисталан қытардын. Because of heat I have reddened (compare: күйице 'sun' in the most of modern Turkic languages, 'heat, solar heat' in classic Turkic languages; the primary word meaning is, allegedly, 'a blaze of the sun, a solar heat'. For languages and culture of Turkic peoples the concept of the sun as the life source (күн 'sun' and 'life') is a key one (Gabyshева, 2003: 154-159).

In Altai congratulation they say: "Multiply yourself more than "multi-child" wood grouse (a wood grouse with many children)", and in Yakut epos олонхо the happiness is compared to a wood grouse. "May friendly benefits as big as a motley female wood grouse be with me!" (Lvova, et al., 1989: 16; Orosin, 1947: 194-195). Definition of a female wood-grouse эбүр 'motley' serves in Yakut folklore as a constant epithet of the goddess a childbearing "әбирдәх иләкмәләх Иңхүсәт ийә Ieyekhsit mother with motley (freckled) cheeks"; it appears turning on a motley (plumose) cloud "эбүр быйым" (Obr. I, 1908: 131, 173). The name эбүр 'motley', 'speckled' which is also a nomination of "nipples on the mammary areola of a female breast эминийөн эбүр" (Pekaarskyy, 1958: col. 220) contains, probably, a hint at the function of birthing women nurturant. The same epithet may be used for a sprinkling spoon "сизл байым эбүр хамыйяк speckled (motley) spoon with a bunch of horse mane tied to" (Obr. 1, 1908: 144). The word эбүр, acting as an epithet to cloud, sprinkling spoon, associates with the image of drizzling rain which serves as a messenger of heavenly deities and a symbol of fertility (әбир самыр әбирдәх 'it drizzles; эбүр-дьэбүр 'drizzling' (Pekarsky, 1958: col. 220).

The solar nature of the wood-grouse image, and also the gender character of ornitomorphous symbol finds indirect confirmation in the Yakut proverb: "Үүн эр уота эрдәгәс уләр сага буллуутүүәр алаан бутән барар, күңәңә эр уота эрдәгәс уләр сага буллан баран умлулар. A good fellow is already sated and leaves when the flame he has kindled reaches the size of a wood-grouse female, and the fire of a bad fellow dies away having reached the size of a wood-grouse female" (Kulakovsky, 1979: 213). Red (color of copper or bloody collar) color serves as one of the key features of a wood grouse in the Yakut riddles: "Хаңыл тойон уола харага хааннаал. They say, the eyes of a haughty man’s son are blood edged". Or: "Наахара огоньор алтан харахтаяч (чарачыллаах). They say, the old man Nakhar has a copper eye (copper glasses)" (Oyunskaya, 1975: 127). There is a Yakut etiological myth explaining, why the superciliary arches of a wood-grouse are red (Ergis, 1994: 69-70).

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10 Күн lexeme meant 'sun' and 'life'.

The bird, in general, associates with 'solar', 'hot', 'male', 'red' features; the ornitomorphous symbol not only has gender character, but also embodies sacred vital energy, expressing the idea of a man's productive force.

Let's note that relicts of the wood-grouse image which belong, according to researchers, to the highest antiquity still remained in the culture of the people of the Altai linguistic community. S. I. Weinstein, analyzing the history of folk art of Tuva points an important role of ылар bird in the religious views of the Tuvinians. "The image of ылар in combination with shaman masks is known on Bizhiktakh-Huy's petroglyphs in the western Tuva which are most likely dated to the bronze era" (Weinstein, 1974: 215). The birds similar to hens, are met in well-known Suleksk writing; researchers also write about long-standing use of eggs in different rituals on the territory of Southern Siberia (Lvova, et al., 1989: 158). Analyzing images of birds in the Sakachi-Alyan's neolithic writing, writings from the early Iron Age on Arbi river, and medieval writings near Average Nyukzha former settlement, A. I. Mazin marks cultic worship of a wood goose by Tungus since the most ancient times 11(Mazin, 1984: 49).

"Very ancient representations were reflected in Buryat dances, - T. E. Gergesova says, - they are that "Тетеревин танец" ‘Dance of black grouse’, "Glukharinaya plyaska" ‘Dancing of wood grouse’ (Gergesova, 2002: 3); A. Ulano writes about the magic meaning of "Glukharin plaska" ‘Dancing of wood grouse’ and “Тетерин нанаан” wood grouse game of Buryat peoples too (Ulanov, 1974: 26). Ulara is the Buryat name of an autumn month, which is etymologized by V. Kotvich as the name of a game bird (Kotwicz, 1928: 54). "To each month a distinct, peculiar to this season zoomorphous code was assigned, a symbol of which was the name of a marketable animal" (Dashiyeva, 1998: 70).

The image close to a black grouse or a wood grouse, in a number of cultural traditions of people of the world is, undoubtedly, a rooster12, one of key symbols of sexual potentiality, man's productive force. "In the cultural traditions of Southern Slavs, Hungarians, and other peoples the bridegroom at the wedding ceremony often bears a live rooster or its image" (Tokarev, 1982: 310). In most traditions the rooster is a herald of light, a zoomorphous embodiment of the sun, a symbol of vital energy and heavenly fire. "As a representative of day dawn, fire and lightning a rooster in mythological legends is represented as brilliant red" (Afanasyev, 1983: 354). According to experts, there is a connection between the sacrifice of a rooster and fire getting. It is curious that the Tatar Mishars who considered the rooster as a messenger of light and happiness, before lighting the hearth of their new house used to cut a rooster on the perch of the stove and spilt its blood to the hearth (Mukhamedova, 1972: 188). The Tatar name койорры ‘a bird of happiness’ consists according to F. G. Mukhamedova of two words: ком (in the meaning of happiness) and кураи ‘rooster’ (The same source: 189).

"The rooster is as vigilant and all-seeing, as the sun … One of the vital strength of a rooster manifestations is its exclusive eagerness to fight … Arab and Turkic sources steadily provide the ideal military leader with bravery of a rooster" (Tokarev, 1982: 310).

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11 Images of birds of tetraonidae family are also used in ornamental art of Mansi. They stand independently and represent not an ornament, but independent figures (Fedorova, 1992: 111-112).

12 Tetraonidae (wood-grouse, black grouse, partridge, hazel grouse, etc.) is a family of gallinaceous birds.
is comparable with the image of a wood grouse to which a bogatyr in fighting is compared: "(he) as a black wood grouse, flies up dexterously onto a horse, shouting as a partridge. Хара уларын курдук атын үрдүүгө хабдывгыраан тахсан хап ына хатаны тыңыр" (Timofeev-Teploukhov, 1985: 17).

References:


