

DIVISION OF THE HEAVEN CULT INTO PERIODS IN NORTHERN EURASIA

ПЕРИОДИЗАЦИЯ КУЛЬТА НЕБА СЕВЕРНОЙ ЕВРАЗИИ

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ABSTRACT

In the article the author analyses on material culture and vocabulary Saha ancient lunar and solar calendars, rock carvings, as well as folklore texts. The study is a comprehensive study of the worship of the sky at the junction of the folklore, Ethnology, and archaeology. Thus, the author of periodization where the worship of the Sun and the moon are seen as the dual concept of the worship of the Heave. In addition, the methodology is of interest-specific lexical units to mythological layers. This gives the exploration depth and significance.

Keywords: periodization, calendar, astroarcheology, Eurasia, the cult of Heaven

АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье автор анализирует на материале традиционной культуры и лексики саха древние лунные и солнечные календари, наскальные рисунки, а также фольклорные тексты. Исследование представляет собой комплексное изучение культа Неба на стыке фольклористики, этнологии, археологии. Таким образом, автор составляет периодизацию, где культы Солнца и Луны рассматриваются в качестве дуальной концепции культа Неба. Кроме того, представляет интерес методика работы – от конкретных лексических единиц к мифологическим пластам. Это придает исследованию глубину и значительность.

Ключевые слова: периодизация, календарь, астроархеология, Евразия, культ Неба.

ÖZET

Bu makalede yazar, Saha eski ay ve güneş takvimleri, kaya yazıtları ve folklor metinlerinin kelime ve kültürleri ile ilgili malzemeleri incelemektedir. Çalışma folklor,

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etnoloji ve arkeoloji bağlamında göğe tapınmanın kapsamlı bir incelemesidir. Bu yüzden yazar, güneşe ve aya tapınmanın cennete tapınma olarak görüldüğü dönemlere yoğunlaşmıştır. Üstelik, takip edilen yöntem mitolojik farklı seviye birimlerinin özel dilbilgisel incelemesine dayanmaktadır. Bu çalışmaya derinlik ve önem kazandıran ana özelliklerdir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Dönemler, takvim, astroarkeoloji, Avrasya, cennet kültü.

Relevance of the topic is that currently Siberian astro-archaeological materials tend to be analytic which does not allow to consider them in the context of identified forms and content of the Heaven cult among peoples inhabiting the northern regions of Eurasia. Of course, the astral religion (*V.E. Larichev*) did not arise independently of the Heaven cult. Moreover, these terms refer to a spiritual phenomenon, which was the source of all the monotheistic religions of the world, as well as astrology and astronomy. Observation of celestial bodies, obviously, was typical initially for the nomadic type of household (hunters, and then cattle-breeders) as an orienting point in space and time. This has contributed to the syncretism of archaeological cultural complexes of the Paleolithic and Neolithic Ages, found both in Europe as well as in Asia and America.

Division of the Heaven cult into periods should be started from the Paleolithic, with the advent of lunar calendars, made of stone and bone. These calendars are, of course, have been associated with the worship of the Moon as part of the deified Heaven. It is night sky with the moon and stars which served as a guide in space and time for ancient nomadic hunters. The alignment of stars clarified the direction in space, and the moon's phases – the time and seasons.

In this light, the analysis of the Indo-European mythology, that of Turkic, Mongolian ethnic groups and peoples of Mesoamerica and Polynesia showed that pre-mythology with syncretical images, motifs and themes is at their origins. Reference materials for this hypothesis were stable motifs in cosmogony and etiological myths. For example, creation of man from clay (soil) by Deity, the World Tree, a clear duality, a ternary World, etc. Obviously, these resemblances indicate that the Heaven cult in pre-mythology was of a rather great importance. The above texts shows more or less blurred scenes, which can be explained as a the result of superposition of subsequent mythological formations. This is a primarily Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, influence. On the other hand, the oral cultures had only forms that could be interpreted in various ways. On this basis, the most objective can be written texts of the Veda, Avesta, Popol Vuh, the Egyptian and Tibetan "Book of the Dead", as well as cuneiform tablets of ancient Sumerians, reflecting the the Gilgames epic. But these primary sources refer to the period of societies of military democracy, and to the occurrence of the first farming towns-civilizations, when the worship of the Sun, associated with the cult of fertility, became more important because of the agricultural type of household. The cult of the Moon, which played a significant role in the nomadic style of household loses its positions due to several reasons - it's a transition from matriarchal to patriarchal relations, the development of consciousness, improvement of household, etc.

All mythologies, in one way or another contain materials revealing the worship of fire and water, which reflects the duality. In their turn, these Elements are earthly incarnations of idolized Sun and Moon as binary components of the Heaven cult. In the culture of the

Paleo-Asian (Indigenous Peoples of the North) Element of air is reflected in the development of the Wind cult with a differentiated worship of good and evil gods of wind. It was important for the hunting for large marine animals, where the wind direction played an important role. The element of water was worshiped as the supreme deity associated with the cult of ancestors. The cult of fire as such does not exist, but remains in the form of the initial stage of ritual sacrifices to various spirits and deities. This was predetermined by the conditions of marine fishers household. Thus, the whole Paleo-Asian mythology is focused on the elements of air and water, giving life.

Modern science has the concept of Nordic mythology, which European scholars consider as the legacy of the ancient traditions of the Indo-Aryans. When comparing Paleosian mythology and the so-called Nordic mythology, a number of profound and fundamental differences can be specified. This refers to the image of the World Tree, the deity of the land, which are not present at the Paleosian. In this case the common aspect is the developed worship of good and evil gods of the wind. And apart from that, the Nordic Mythology has substantial resemblance with that of the peoples of Asia.

The Sky God of nomadic tribes takes the form of a structured worship, enclosing the cults of fire and water which is related to the development of mythology. These elements are incarnated in cosmic component – the sun and the moon. Thus, the elements of fire and water giving life to humans become sacred in the cult of the sun, as the celestial source of light and heat, as well as the moon, as a celestial body that affects the ocean tide. At the same time they become equivalent, reflecting the duality in the worship of the Sky god. The Asian mythology encloses, obviously, the god of wind contained in the notion '*Cama maac (sata taas)* – stone of 'cara', 'яда' etc. This is a stone found in the entrails or in the head of sacred animals (horse, elk, and wolf) or in the nest of an eagle. According to the legends of the Sakha, for example, *cama maac (sata taas)* summoned the wind which gathered rain clouds. This stone was used in droughts. And the element of the earth is worshiped as a spirit of the earth.

In this regard, according to the mythological content we can say that Nordic mythology is closer to the Paleosian one than the tradition of Asian nomads. In its turn, the mythology of the ancient Indo-Aryans, which became the basis for such religious doctrines as Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism is closer to the views of the peoples of Asia.

The worship of Elements in turn, did not arise as a local tradition. This is indicated by similarity of the paleolithic cultures all over the world. The materials of these cultures were syncretic on the one hand - it can be designated as the "Paleolithic ideological syncretism." On the other hand, they were closely associated with the worship of heaven as a divine substance. Basing on the above fact we move to direct interpretation of the materials of archaeology and the refinement of periodization of the Heaven cult. Of great interest for us can be the anthropomorphic figurines (Irkutsk region, Malta, *see Figure 1*), as well as the sculpture and bas-relief image of "mammoth turtle" denominated by V.E. Larichev (Khakassia, Malaya (Small) Syyyia, *see Figure 3*) and the image with disproportionately elongated limbs on the mammoth tusk (Yakutia, Berelekh, *see Figure 4*) (Alekseev et al. 1990: 56-57), being the reminiscent of the image of the Goddess Nut of the Egyptians.

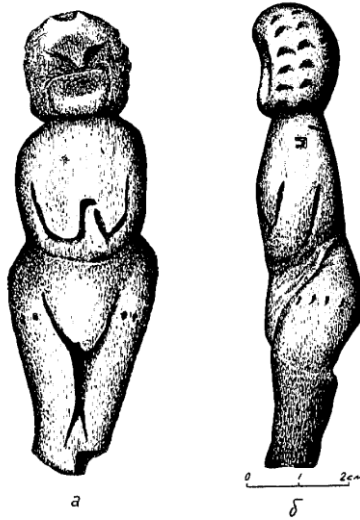


Figure 1. An unknown person

In the dual concept of the Heaven cult based on the traditions of the Sakha, the leaders of the group of Celestials Uluu Toyon (the Sun) and Yuryung Aiyy (the Moon) are perceived as the opposing forces. But among them there is a god, the leader of the leader of the local group named Odun-Chyngys Haan, which is not fully perceived as equal to the supreme Deities. The semantics of Odun-Chyngys Haan correlates with the identified value of the sign “U I” on the left shoulder of Maltha anthropomorphic figurine conditionally denominated as "An unknown person" by V.E. Larichev (see Figure 2). According to him, the sign is related to the sacred letters of the Chaldeans, and the ancient Indian sages - P I, that means "man-woman", "Father-Mother", "One whole", "Combination", "Conception", "Fertilization", "He is", "Being", "Perfect number"(Larichev1 1999: 159), containing the semantics of 'androgyny'. It should be noted that in the traditional culture and vocabulary of the Sakha there is a sufficient number of examples pointing to the fact that “creation of the “initial” base of the culture of the ancestors occurred under strong influence of the ancient Indo-Iranian groups” (Gogolev 1993: 6-12).



Figure 2.

The semantics of these signs is quite clear and can be easily explained within the frames of the following theory. The shape of first signs is similar to a vessel, and in case of figurine from Maltha it is open - U, and in the sacral sign it is inverted Π , i.e. closed. It resembles an inverted vessel on which danced the goddess Amaterasu. Closed vessel contains the semantics of the end, interruption of the process and therefore the sign of the Chaldeans is possibly associated with the cult of the ancestors, related to the world of the dead (physical sphere of existence). Open vessel may symbolize the cycle within which the souls of ancestors incarnate in their descendants (spiritual sphere of existence). In addition, the vessel it is a cavity associated with a fertile womb, and correlated with the feminine. The second signs are masculine and phallic symbols. It's pretty obvious. Thus, these signs are associated with the ancestors, but if in the sacred sign the ancestors are seen outside the category of "here and now", as an abstraction, the sign of maltine figurine represents the ancestors, who are perceived as members of the community within the category of "here and now". The comparison between the mythological story about "a hairy pillar of the sky" from the culture of the ancestors of the Sakha and sculptural bas-relief "mammoth-turtle" from Minor Syvia provides more convincing evidence. According to Larichev V.E. "rounded dome-shaped outline of the head and the back of a mammoth was perceived by the people of the Stone Age, as the vault of Heaven, and the lower part – as the Earth, the hair on the body - as trees and grass, the bone protruding through the skin – as the mountains, blood vessels - as rivers" (Larichev2 1999: 195).

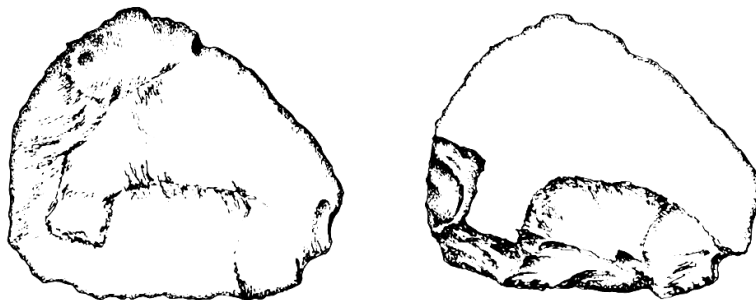


Figure 3. Mammoth turtle.

In this case it is advisable to use the above mythological material of ancestors of the Sakha for the interpretation. This topic is discussed in the book by A.I. Gogolev "Origins of mythology and traditional calendar of Yakuts," where he presents the facts of existence of cosmogonic myth among the ancestors of the Sakha with the image of a frog- turtle as the terra firma. Thus, according to the olonkho texts:

The three main pillars,
 Of bright three-storeyed sky
 Jumped up and turned a somersault
 With the hairy limbs (Urastyrov 1983: 62).

In addition, in the cosmogonic myths of Sakha the "edge of Heaven, hanging down as a fringe, is rubbing against the edge of the earth." It should be noted that according to the mythopoetic tradition "the edge of the Upper World is falling down on the Middle World as

a fringe." If we add the image of Berelekh mammoth with elongated limbs it becomes clear that "the hairy pillar of Heaven" is nothing but a limb of a mammoth, a huge silhouette of which forms a dome-like vault of heaven.

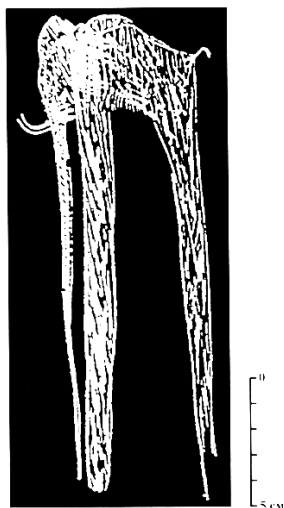


Figure 4. Heavenly mammoth

According to some scientists, in Yakutia in the Upper Paleolithic, as judged by archaeological findings, there was some mythology, and thus religious consciousness. In my view, the image of Berelekh mammoth quite clearly indicated that ancient inhabitants of the territory of modern Yakutia had the cult of Heaven with a developed mythology, as well as religious consciousness. It is well known that the evidence of emergence of such consciousness is the perception of a real object as separate from its image. The image of Berelekh mammoth indicates the existence of religious consciousness which made it possible to synthesize the exterior of a real animal into a mythological image. Disproportionately elongated limbs of the mammoth, are of course, an arch of the sky, and his limbs are "hairy pillars of Heaven." Thus, the revealed facts prove that the ancient inhabitants of the territory where presently Yakutia is situated in the Upper Paleolithic had a cult of Heaven, associated with the worship of the mammoth as an Uranian Deity.

In the language of the Sakha the word 'mammoth' is expressed by *Yy O yha* (*Uu Oguha*), a "Water Bull". According to experts, "This concept of strongly mixed up with the concept of *Ebe*, i.e. *иччи* (*ichchi*), the spirit of water (lake, river, etc.)" (*Kulakovskiy* 1979: 43). Here we find the reflection of the fact that the remains of mammoths were usually found in inundations of water pools. Basing on this we can conclude that the ancestors of the Sakha perceived mammoth tusks as horns, and the remains of the mammoth as remains of a huge bull. Perhaps, this gave rise to the motif of *dying and reviving god*. This mythological image is connected with the image of the Bull of Winter *Дьыл О yha* (*Djyl Oguha*). In its turn the motif of dying and reviving god is largely related to the phases of the moon - new moon, full moon, wane Moon and new Moon.

The cult of fire expressed in sun worship, began to emerge along with the domestication of the wolf, because the tribes with the wolf totem as a rule manifest a clear-cut cult of Heaven. In addition, according to the lexical materials in my thesis the designation of the domesticated wolf – ‘a dog’ (Turkic *um, ым* (it, yt)) is included in the semantic field “fire; heat; abdomen; life” (Egorova 2010: 34).

Thus, division into periods of the cult of Heaven should be as follows:

1. Paleolith

(≈50 – 10 thous. BC) – Origins of the Heaven cult, which is expressed in the cult of the Moon set in a society of primitive hunters who roamed for migrating prey; the domestication of the wolf;

2. Mesolithic

(10 – 5 thous. BC) – Emergence of agriculture and small cattle-breeding rudiments. Foundation of permanent settlements the inhabitants of which worshiped the sun as the giver of harvest;

3. Neolithic

(8 – 3 thous. BC) – Final division of household types: sedentary and nomadic communities. Parity of the Moon and the Sun worship. Formation of classical type of the Heaven Cult.

Of course, the night sky with stars and moon helped Paleolithic hunters who migrated after the prey to orient in space and time the ancient. And that’s way the cult of the moon preceded the cult of the sun. This is indicated by the lunar stone and bone calendars, preceding solar ones. In Mesolithic the people still weren’t able to work iron, and therefore the appropriating type of management remained (hunting and gathering), but there were rudiments of small cattle-breeding and agriculture with use of stone tools. At the same time in the Paleolithic era, the domesticated wolf used a heat source, was an aid in household life serving as a hunting dog and guarding livestock. It is important the gene of polar wolf is the initial gene for all dog family - *Canis Familiaris*.

The reference period begins with actualizing of solar cult inherent to the agricultural civilization as the giver of bounteous harvests. In Neolithic societies of military democracy, the importance of the cults of the moon and the sun reach parity and become equivalent, forming the classical type of the Heaven cult as the embodiment of the two opposing forces and elements. Besides, the deities originally associated with the feminine begin to assume masculine traits.

A striking example of the cult of Heaven in the period of military democracy is the tradition of the Huns – *Чэлли* (Chenli), as well as the Turks and Mongols of the Middle Ages in the form of *Монгу Тэнгри* (Mongu Tengri). That’s why the term “tengrism” is associated with the tradition of medieval Turko-Mongols.

The rudiments of the Heaven cult of the given period are inherent to all traditional societies and that’s why they are characterized by syncretism. In this case the definition of this spiritual phenomenon as religion is obviously erroneous because religion is characterized by four basic principles - a single prophet, the Holy Scriptures, the institution of the priesthood, collegiality. On this basis, the modern manifestation of actualization of the Heaven cult can be described as a spiritual practice.

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