

VALUE AND KNOWLEDGE COMPONENTS OF THE SAKHA PEOPLE CULTURE

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Abstract: The paper considers the religious and philosophical belief system of the Sakha people. Traditional values are fundamentally transformed in the life content and find their true expressions. The Yakut cultural archetype *aiyy kikhite* is under analysis. It is demonstrated that collective representations as the carriers of the value content of spiritual life are preserved in the belief system of people.

Keywords: Worldview; Ethnos; Spiritual Resources; Cultural Memory; Collective Representations.

Introduction

The worldview of the Sakha people is determined by the *Olonkho* heroic epos and the mythology revealing the mindset of herders and hunters. It is characterized by synthesized representations and images connected with beliefs and religious cults. *Olonkho*, the *Aiyy Teaching*, shamanism form a complete philosophical system. Religious and mythological belief system of the Sakha people can be characterized as follows.

1. Religious and mythological representations of the Universe as a three-part structure joined by the World Tree (*Aal Luuk mas*) along its axis.
2. Combination of polytheism, headed by the presiding deity *Yuryung Aiyy Toion*, and animism – overall ensoulment of the environment, with every object and phenomenon having its soul, *ichchi*, whereas human and animal soul is *kut*.
3. Dualistic understanding of the world based on the principle that “normal functioning of the Universe can be achieved through the struggle of the good and the evil”.ⁱ
4. The possibility to influence the supernatural powers with sacrifices, charms, following certain rules and traditions and with the help from the shamans – mediators between man and nature.

The richer and more energetic the creative activity of spirit is, the further this activity is likely to depart from the original sources of human Existence. The purpose of philosophy is to understand and to comprehend them in their fundamental shaping principle. Initially, the meaning of life finds its true form only in this awareness. Life goes beyond the borders of the Existence given by nature and is changed and finished in the form of “spirit”.ⁱⁱ Here we may identify the general and typical characteristics of the shaping process itself to find the spirit and its essential unity in many expressions.

Spiritual Resources of the Past

The society always seeks spiritual resources for its self-affirmation through the revival of the belief of the past – the past which is further away than the epoch when the belief that discredited these resources was born.ⁱⁱⁱ This is the belief in the unreal “better communist future” or the popular world religions which are no longer the focus of spirituality and are transformed into well-organized political appendices of state structures; besides, some of them are the monopolies seeking to own men’s souls as human commodity. A man absorbs both positive and negative ideas. And when in a deadlock, when everything seems to represent evil charms, a man needs spiritual and moral support and hope for salvation. This spiritual strength helps him not to lose his dignity. The socialization process is inevitable, but can it really be considered as just nurturing the good? After all, a man’s ability to resist socialization, to fight the vices of his environment, to turn away from the corrupt, immoral and criminal deeds plays a significant role as well.^{iv} A man lives and acts in accordance with a particular historic context, in a particular community and in particular life situations revealing and modifying his nature and essence. Understanding of existence applied to the theory of man allows one to move away from the important, but still abstract notions of nature and human essence to more context oriented considerations. One can not be limited with only the general characteristics of mankind. They are surely necessary as the starting methodological points to study man and as the objective basis of the specific. They can help to set the links between the answers and the questions of what man is, how he lives and what he believes in in different historical epochs and in different social conditions, what the “quality” of man and of his different social communities in modern life is, what the trends and perspectives of his changes are, etc.

Yakut Cultural Archetype aiyy kihite

Yakut virtue lies in a creative person, a kind person, a carrier of the good and spiritual and physical harmony. What is more, the good is active, creating; it is not for nothing that aiyy means both “goodness” and “creativity”. There is a false assumption that a Sakha person is slow, indecisive, not very talkative, does not speak his mind, feelings and emotions. However, this is not true. In their everyday life the Sakha people can be very quick to understand each other; if they want to characterize a person, they choose the right figurative words and expressions, so you can easily imagine this person. This can be illustrated by comparing the notions of Naara Syokh, which means smart, funny, sometimes running wild, always ready with his tongue, and Kuekh Keppe which is very slow, lazy, hardly breathing, green due to being motionless all the time. We believe that the principle of “Middle Way” (orto kikhi sierinen) preached in old eastern ethical teachings is the conceptual basis for the philosophy of an Aiyy man. In accordance with the Confucian canons, the ideas of the middle and harmony are similar to Aristotle’s “golden mean”, and very often the expression “to be a perfect fit” is supposed to convey this meaning. Fur coats are a perfect fit for the winter. But you will not wear them in summer. The same applies to feelings and wishes. Social relationships and personal behavior must be determined by the set borders within which satisfying our wishes and expressing our feelings is considered a norm. Harmony is the reconciliation of differences in unity. To achieve harmony, differences should come in the right proportion. Socrates

saw no difference between wisdom and morality. He believed that sophrosyne is wisdom, knowledge of life which is as proportionate and harmonic as kalokagatiya.^v

The ideal of aiyy kikhite means to be moderate in everything, including butun kikki buolbut “to become a complete person”, that is to reach the marriage age, kikhilii kikki buolbut “to become a humane person”^{vi}, uerekhteekh kikki “to become a literate person”. With this soul disposition, a person becomes aware of his connection with the divine unity of things, feels connected with everything included into this unity. In other words, all ethnical processes are permeated with the so called passionarity induction of harmonic people, according to the theory of Lev Gumilyov. With their passion and enthusiasm, they inspire less passionate people.^{vii} People cognize the surrounding world, the properties of objects and substances to provide all the necessary things for their life and activity and to create appropriate social conditions. That is why cognition is mainly a tool to use those properties of the natural phenomena, which are useful for man and necessary for him. It is also a tool to get rid of everything, which is harmful or useless. The things people appreciate, find useful, necessary or pleasant are called values.^{viii} In their studies of people’s culture, ethnography, symbolic elements of clothes, and signs of ritual behavior, researchers have made important observations and come to important conclusions. They have demonstrated that there is a correlation between, on the one hand, the world perception, lifestyle and way of thinking of people at a particular stage of their historic development, and, on the other hand, their choice of priorities and values. This is what F. Kh. Kessedi wrote about in his work “On one feature of ancient Greeks mentality”.^{ix} We may say that the national character of the Greeks shown in the context of their background and accumulated social experience played a significant role in the focus of their creative powers on arts and abstract theoretical issues – philosophical, mathematical, ethical, legal, social and political.

Collective Values and Value Structures

From the ethnosociological and ethnopsychological points of view, in the culture of the Sakha people, the priority collective values are considered to be determined by ethnical self-awareness. They are broadly understood as the importance of the phenomena and objects of the actual reality, mainly in the function of the social regulators of people’s behavior, as collective representations with personal meaning. In philosophy, personal value structures – focal values and directive values – comprise people’s mentality. The focal, or dominant, values in the spiritual culture of the Sakha people are the ideas about a man’s place in the world system, about the temporal meaning of mankind history, the opinions about the meaning of life, good intentions, public well being (cult of family, home as a charm, strive for education). Directive values are a catalog of dos and don’ts.^x In the Yakut spiritual culture anny is sin, set is punishment for violation of norms. Public values (language, home grounds, hospitality, historical monuments, peoples’ friendship, etc.) are also connected with the ethnical traditions. The attitude to language can be compared with the attitude to mother. There is a saying “your native tongue is your mother’s tongue”. Today’s sociocultural situation is known to have a certain shift in public values. The economic crisis, social and political disturbances add to this. The existence is materialized due to the alienation of the social, moral and ethical values; the spirituality of the past generations is seen as unimportant.

Cultural Memory of Generations

Our contemporary L. N. Stolovich^{xi} argues that G. G. Shpet^{xii} was a precursor to the theories of “collective memory” and “social memory” that appeared in the 1960s in the Russian philosophy and semiotics to describe the storage of social and cultural values. Today it is important to remember the past that comprises the cultural memory of generations. In our recent past, in the society of social class differentiation, the criteria of Beauty, Goodness and Truth contradicted the real conditions, requirements and limited opportunities of social organization. Sometimes moral ideals were substituted by social and political requirements, everyday practices. For example, the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism appeared in the life of the socialist society. Although in totalitarianism, it was extremely difficult to follow the moral ideas of a person being “a friend, comrade and brother to another person”¹. These ideas became the ivory-tower way of thinking about the great unreachable future – communism, rather than the working regulations of everyday activities. In other words, the ideals of moral society were apart from the actual everyday practices due to the fact that their realization did not meet the actual opportunities and specific situational needs of the social reality. So, this conflict between the required and the actual gave rise to the idea of “the absolute good”, “overall justice”, “moral ideal” as something very far from the everyday routine,^{xiii} something similar to the ideal of *aiyy kikhite*. This is reflected in the worldview and collective memory.

Conclusion

Life is the basis of world perception and collective representations. Life experience in traditions and customs is determined by a relationship system. Any worldview, archetype, being a theoretical understanding of people’s life, is based on two pylons – knowledge and values. Thus, value and knowledge components of a worldview correlate as the aim and the tool to achieve it.^{xiv} Collective representations as the carriers of the value content of the spiritual life are preserved in the mentality and belief system of people.

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¹ One of the Principles of the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism proclaimed at the XXII Communist Party Congress in 1961 in the USSR.

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Notes

1. Gogolev, *Mythological World of Yakuts*, 6.
2. Kassirer, "Philosophy of Symbolic Forms," 209.
3. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 616.
4. Tugarinov, *Nature. Civilization. Man*, 100.
5. Losev, *History of Antique Aesthetics*, 420.
6. Bravina, "Theory of Life and Death in Ethnic Culture," 23.
7. Gumilyov, *Ethnosphere*, 508.
8. Tugarinov, "Spiritual Values of Man," 24.
9. Kessidi, "One Feature," 143.
10. Kuznetsov, "Symbol Analysis," 27.
11. Stolovich, *Beauty. Goodness. Truth*, 426.
12. Shpet, *Works*.
13. Drobniskii, "Philosophy and Moral Perception," 91.
14. Kant, *Works*, 229.