

Study of the pantheon of deities in Sakha folklore

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Abstract—This article touches on the issues of the study of the Sakha pantheon of Aiyy deities. The goal of this article is to examine the work and research dedicated to studying the upper Aiyy deities. This research utilizes comparative and descriptive methods to reveal the similarities and differences in representations of Aiyy deities in the Sakha epic *olonkho*. A lexico-semantic method was used in the analysis of the names of the upper deities.

An analytic survey of the work of researchers of Sakha folklore, including the work N. P. Prizupov, I. A. Khudyakov, V. M. Ionov, N. A. Alekseev, and others. These scholars often included representations of the deity *Iuriung Aar Toion*. The deity *Iuriung Aiyy Toion* is mentioned in the works of N. F. Ostolopov, R. K. Maak, E. K. Pekarskii, and others. Several researchers include representation of both deities, for example Ia. I. Lindenau. It was the opinion of A. E. Kulakovskii that *Iuriung Aar Toion* and *Iuriung Aiyy Toion* were representations of a single deity. A. I. Gogolev asserted that the image of the sun deity *Iuriung Aar Toion* merged with the functions of *Aar Aiyy Toion* in the 20th century. Researchers also mentioned two more representations of chief deities in the Upper World: *Aar Aiyy Toion* and *Aiyy Tangara*. The figure of *Aar Aiyy Toion* is often presented as the “Holy, Godly Lord” in the works of R. K. Maak, E. K. Pekarskii, and V. F. Troshchanskii.

The authors of this article analyzed *olonkho* texts from three different regional traditions: the central tradition, the *viliusk* tradition, and the northeastern tradition. The figure of the deity *Iuriung Aiyy Toion* is mentioned primarily in *olonkho* in the *viliusk* and northeastern epic traditions. In contrast, *olonkho* in the central epic tradition include representations of the deity *Iuriung Aar Toion*. The images of both *Iuriung Aar Toion* and *Iuriung Aiyy Toion* have been studied in the northeastern epic tradition.

As a result of this analysis of the works of researchers of Sakha folklore, ethnography, and history, we can conclude that the figure of the primary Sakha deity has been represented in four different ways: *Iuriun Aar Toion*, *Iuriung Aiyy Toion*, *Aar Aiyy Toion*, and *Aiyy Tangara*. The name of the chief deity in folkloric texts is represented in several ways, thus leading to different interpretations of his image.

Keywords—heroic epos, Turkic epos, *olonkho*, Sakha folklore, mythological figures, pantheon of deities, chief deities

I. INTRODUCTION

This article touches on the issues of the study of the Sakha pantheon of Aiyy deities. The goal of this article is to examine the work and research dedicated to studying the Aiyy deities. In Sakha mythology, it is possible to find an entire pantheon of upper deities. According to the Sakha, the universe is divided into three parts: the Upper World, the Middle World, and the Lower World. The Upper World is composed of several tiers where the Aiyy deities live. A. E. Kulakovskii asserted that “the heavens should not be considered to be three-tiered, eight-tiered, or nine-tiered, but rather simply many-tiered” [1]. In this article, we attempt to put order to the names of the chief deities, through the study of scholarly research on this topic.

II. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CHIEF DEITY IN SCHOLARLY RESEARCH

We studied the scientific work of researchers of Sakha history, ethnography, and folklore. In general, the researchers most often mention the deity *Iuriung Aiyy Toion*, for example, in the works of the researchers N. P. Prizupov, I. A. Khudyakov, V. M. Ionov, N. A. Alekseev and others. E. K. Pekarskii explained the name of the deity *Iuriung Aiyy Toion* as “the upper most being, standing higher than all other Aiyy, a good spirit, the creator of the world, governing the entire universe, creative – sending down his children and influencing the fertility of the earth, and reproduction of livestock, etc.” [2].

The figure of the deity *Iuriung Aar Toion* is mentioned in the works of N. F. Ostolopov, R. K. Maak, E. K. Pekarskii, and others. R. K. Maak wrote, “according to the understanding of the Sakha, the upper governor of the world, and all life upon the earth is *Ar toion* (*Ar-aiyy toion*); he waters the earth, and consequently he is responsible for the abundance of

food” [3]. E. K. Pekarskii gave the following interpretation of the name of the deity Iuriung Aar Toion, “*Aar Toion aga* or simply *Aar Toion* (pure lord, or Highest Lord), Iuriung Aar, Iuriung Aar Toion (White, heavenly lord), Aar Aiyy toion the chief deity, overlord of all spirits and creatures, upper governor of the world, creator of life on the earth, waterer of the earth, and consequently responsible for the abundance of food; in the understanding of other Sakha: the creator of the world, the upmost deity, being was identical to Iuriung Aiyy” [2]. This means that E. K. Pekarskii thought that the deity Iuriung Aar Toion according to his functionality and duties was identical to Iuriung Aiyy, in other words these two different names are representations of one and the same deity.

It should be noted that several researchers included representations of both deities in their work. For example, Ia. I. Lindenau in his historical-ethnographic materials described the deities Aar Toion and Iuriung Aiyy Toion. In materials describing the holiday Ysyakh, he mentions a shaman performing a blessing ritual and voicing the names of deities “*bulugas kharakhtaakh, khaptaghai tyllaakh taba atannaakh Aar Toion*” ‘sly-eyed, sensitive flat-tongued, ineffable jealous master of the universe’ (translation into Russian from Ia. I. Lindenau) “*Ius sakhany iuiodiuppiut Iuriung Aiyy Toion*” ‘Three people or Sakha created by the suprising white God’ (Translation into Russian from Ia. I. Lindenau) [4]. It must be noticed that first the deity Aar Toion is mentioned then the shaman names Iuriung Aiyy Toion and his wife Kiubei Khotun, and then all the other deities of the upper world. According to A. E. Kulakovskii, Iuriung Aar Toion and Iuriung Aiyy Toion – are both representations of the same deity. He remarked, “with the coming of Christianity, the understanding of a good chief god merged with an understanding of the Christian god (Iuriung Aiyy Toion – O. P.) whose function appeared to be identical to the function of the chief Sakha deity for the most part, significantly in reference to the creation of the world and the deity’s goodness and sense of justice” [1]. This means that Kulakovskii was suggesting that the influence of Christianity led to the disappearance of the chief deity Iuriung Aar Toion and that Iuriung Aiyy Toion took his place. This opinion was supported by A. I. Gogolev. He asserted that the image of the sun deity Iuriung Aiyy Toion in the 20th century merged with the functions of Iuriung Aar Toion. L. S. Efimova remarked that “researchers had varying ideas on the issue of the chief deity of the Sakha. Thus, both Iuriung Aar Toion and Iuriung Aiyy Toion both have the status of chief deity. Materials from several genres of folklore were used in order to clarify the identities of Iuriung Aar Toion and Iuriung Aiyy Toion: songs sung during circle dances, olonkho, and folksongs. The analysis of these mythological figures clarified that both deities have the exact same epithets.” The researcher, therefore, arrives at the conclusion that Iuriung Aar Toion and Iuriung Aiyy Toion are the same figure. And so, the study of these texts suggests that Iuriung Aar Toion and Iuriung Aiyy Toion are indeed the same figure.

Researchers also mentioned two more representations of chief deities of the upper world: Aar Aiyy Toion and Aiyy Tangara. The figure of *Aar Aiyy Toion* is often presented as the “Holy, Godly Lord” in the works of R. K. Maak, E. K. Pekarskii, and V. F. Troshchanskii. It is possible that the representations of the deities Aiyy Toion and Aar Toion were united into the deity *Aar Aiyy Toion*. The figure of the deity Aiyy Tangara ‘Heavenly Deity’ is often mentioned in the work of V.L. Seroshevskii, L. A. Afanasiev – Teris and A. I. Gogolev. The researchers hypothesized that the leader of the Upper World could be the deity Aiyy Tangara. The word *tangara* in the E. K. Pekarskii’s dictionary has the following definition, “*tangara* [related to таңры, таңры, тары, таңри, таңгри, таңра, Buryat теҗе, теҗе, теҗ, Mongol “тэһри, тһри” небо, бог; чув. турă] 1. The visible sky (khallaan); heaven, like deity; 2. A general name for good beings, good spirits, god, goddess, pagan deities; the chief deity, living in the seventh heaven...” [2]. This means that in these researchers scholarly works the head of the Upper World had several representations: Iuriung Aar Toion, Iuriung Aiyy Toion, Aar Aiyy Toion and Aiyy Tangara.

III. REPRESENTATIONS OF DEITIES IN SAKHA OLONKHO

An analysis of Olonkho texts is essential to the clarify the issue of Sakha chief deities. The authors of this article studied olonkho texts from three regional traditions (central, viliusk, and northeastern). Representations of the deity Iuriung Aiyy Toion were characteristic of olonkho belonging to the tradition of the viliusk group of Sakha. Representations of Iuriung Aiyy Toion were found in five of the eight olonkho texts analyzed. In contrast to the traditions of the Viliusk group, in the central epic tradition [5], representations of the deity Iuriung Aar Toion dominate (in five out of six olonkho texts). In six out of fourteen texts belonging to the northeastern epic tradition, can be found representations of Iuriung Aiyy Toion. Representations of Iuriung Aar Toion can be found in three olonkho texts of the northeastern epic tradition. These texts include “Khaan Dzhangystai” and “Aalya Bergen” in the Verkhoiansk tradition and “Iuc yollaakh Labangkhachaan ogonnor” in the Srednekolymsk tradition.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this way, the authors of this article analyzed the representations of chief deities in olonkho texts. In the texts from these three regional traditions (central, viliusk, and northeastern, there were only two representations of the chief deity – Iuriung Aar Toion and Iuriung Aiyy Toion. The deity Iuriung Aiyy Toion was more generally found in olonkho from the viliusk tradition (in five of eight text) and in the northeastern tradition (in six of fourteen texts). In the works of folklore researchers, ethnographers, and historians, four representations of chief deities were mentioned: Iuriung Aar Toion, Iuriung Aiyy Toion, Aar Aiyy Toion, and Aiyy Tangara. The name of the chief Aiyy deity can vary depending on the folkloric text and this

leads to there being several different interpretations of the image of the chief deity. Some researchers even believe that the varying images and representations refer to completely different deities. This study of Sakha folkloric texts suggest that the deities Iuriung Aar Toion and Iuriung Aiyy Toion are one and same figure.

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