

Cultural Codes: Representations about the Sky and Celestial Bodies in Yakut Riddles

Varvara Filippova and Sargylana Filippova*

Abstract: The idea of the anthropocentric nature of language predetermines and shapes the character of the paper. The article overviews riddles as a unique cumulative material that contains culturally important information about the worldview of Yakut ethnic group. The purpose of our research is to single out the lexical units representing cultural codes that metaphorically describe denotations (answers) of riddles. In the paper, we analyze the codes that cipher the denotations connected with the sky and celestial bodies. Such codes reflect some archaic representations of the Yakuts of the world and its structure. In order to achieve the purpose of the research we applied the methods of semiotic, semantic, descriptive and interpretational analyses that revealed the key cultural codes that encrypt references to celestial bodies and the sky. These codes are zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, spatial, color, somatological, attributive, numerical and object-related.

Keywords: paroemia, riddles, Yakut language, denotation, representation, cultural codes

INTRODUCTION

Riddles represent a perfect example of a distinct semiotic structure that consists of two interconnected components – a text and an answer. L.L. Gabysheva (2009) states that riddles, just like symbols, are capable of encompassing exceptionally wide-ranging and significant information; they have a specific compositional, rhythmic, and metaphorical structure and various types of parallelism. Riddles are metaphorical in nature, as objects concealed in the texts are encoded in their metaphorical equivalents. The metaphorical structure of a riddle predetermines the spectrum of research held within this genre. Yu.I.

* Varvara Filippova (✉)

Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Yakutsk, Russia
e-mail: varvf@yandex.ru

Sargylana Filippova (✉)

North-Eastern Federal University named after M.K. Ammosov, Yakutsk, Russia
e-mail: filippova_sargylana@mail.ru (corresponding author)

Levin (1978, 283) underlines that from the semantic point of view, a riddle is a text, the denotation of which is a particular object that is not directly named in the text. From the pragmatic point of view the function of such a text is to provoke the addressee of a riddle to name the denotation (Ibid.).

In various studies of Logics and Semiotics, the term 'denotation' is understood as a referent, an extension or a designate (Nöth 1995, 94). In our work, we follow the terminological tradition formulated in the research of S.P. Solov'eva-Oyunskaya (1992) and Yu.I. Levin (1978) and use the term 'denotation' to refer to the answer to a riddle. S.P. Solov'eva-Oyunskaya states that the denotation is a specific answer representing an objective meaning of a denoted concept (or sign). Denotation is a sign that may represent a thing, a quality or an attitude towards the concept; denotation may be considered a specific object or a quality of the object, which needs to be revealed (Solov'eva-Oyunskaya 1992, 5). In the presented paper, we shall refer to the definition suggested by Yu.I. Levin (1978, 283) who considered denotation an object which is encoded in the text of a riddle. By designating the answer (solution) as a denotation, we can presuppose that there is a class of objects concealed under the denotation, rather than just a single element out of a large scope of elements. This class of elements, normally encoded in the riddle metaphorically, is a particular notion, which is named if the riddle is being solved.

E. Köngäs-Maranda (1978) notes that there is a close interconnection between a riddle and its answer that is similar to the interconnections between alternative answers to the same riddle. The answer to a riddle plays an important role in creating stylistic features that define the descriptive components of a riddle, for example, such stylistic devices and features as alliteration and rhyme or the selection of consonants in words. Riddles always contain a term forming a pair with the term in the answer; the juxtaposition of these two elements serving as mechanisms of comparison and correlation forms a metaphor (Köngäs-Maranda 1971, 54). These elements of the riddle can refer to various class oppositions: animate-inanimate, natural-cultural, objects-faces, plants-people (Ibid.). The metaphorical nature of mythical thought is represented in riddles through images that reflect the natural environment and, adversely, it is part of the nature of metaphor to encode nature using social interactions, i.e. nature is represented through the image of a human society.

The main problem in finding an answer to a riddle is not in the attempt to find the denotation itself but to restore the initial and genuine description of an object concealed inside the text of a riddle. Solving a riddle is a two-stage process: riddle text – description – object (Köngäs-Maranda 1978, 274). These two stages of solving a riddle can only be subdivided artificially; when solving a riddle in a real-time setting, these two stages need to intervene with each other. By restoring the description, one can discover that the elements of description contradict each other, or there is a possibility that no real object coincides with the solution to the riddle; if this were the case, then it would be necessary to return to the first stage and try new methods of reversing the meanings of text elements (Ibid.). Difficulties occurring in the second stage of solving riddles (description – object) might lead to the necessity of making corrections to the first stage (text – description).

Just like in the context of philosophical hermeneutics, the so-called hermeneutic circle is used as the methodological tool for finding the answer to a riddle. The rationale behind the concept of a hermeneutic circle lies in the dialectical correlation between the whole and its parts. The mutual correspondence of the whole and parts always serves as the criteria for evaluating the correctness of perception (Gadamer 1991, 72). The basic rule of a riddle is to reveal its denotation by analyzing the meaning of the whole and its parts. If we regard denotation as a sign and the text of a riddle as metaphorically encoded explanation, we may adopt the following thesis: semiotics (the sign) should be recognized, while semantics (discourse) should be understood (Benveniste 1974, 133).

S.P. Oyunskaya (1975) supposes that in terms of their origin, riddles are linked to the notions of taboo and secret speech or archaic rituals together with the mythological and poetical worldview. Yu.M. Lotman (2000) suggests that one of the key objectives of researching riddles is to decode its implicit mythological and ritual structure. Riddles, just like myths, are tools used to conceptualize the world which both surrounds human beings and lies deep within them (Meletinsky 2000, 24-31). Riddle corpora is “the alphabet of the model of the Universe” (Tsvivan 1994, 178). Thus, a logical chain of assumptions which is built in the course of finding a solution solely depends on the specificity of a particular worldview. There is a wide range of definitions that have been selected for this term. But it is important to remember that the worldview is not a mirror reflection of the world or an open window into the world; it is a view, i.e. an interpretation or an act of understanding

the world; it depends on the prism through which the world is perceived (Serebrennikov et al. 1988, 55).

Every language reflects a certain model of perceiving and understanding the world (Apresyan 1995, 350). A linguistic worldview is a language-based depiction of the extra-linguistic reality and the way it is structured (Gak 2000, 36-44). The extra-linguistic or cultural space comprises particular cultural codes which are represented as a grid that culture lays over the surrounding world and further classifies, categorizes, structures and evaluates. All the cultural codes preset and predetermine the metrically-ideal sphere which performs a function in structuring and evaluating the material world (Krasnykh 2002, 232-57). Codes are regarded as specific types of concepts which we have previously observed, read or experienced; codes are a specific form of previous experiences (Barthes 1989, 455-56). Therefore, we may state that each object in paroemia may be considered a complex structure of cultural codes and signs. The riddle texts can be expanded into a wholesome storyline that reflects the archaic representations of the world creation as well as the origin and functioning of various objects in archaic culture. This means that each word unit implemented in riddles is a certain type of unique code that represents a mythological structure of the world as well as historical and ethnographic realia. Our research is focused on revealing the codes that cipher the denotations connected with the atmosphere and celestial bodies. Such codes are considered a reflection of the archaic representations of the Yakuts of the world and its structure.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A collection of Yakut riddles by S.P. Oyunskaia (1975) titled *Sakha taabyrynnara. Iakutskie zagadki / Yakut riddles* served as the research material for this article. The collection includes 2855 paroemias and presents a systematic collection of riddles with a parallel translation into Russian. The collection covers riddles from previous book editions including archives of the Yakutsk branch of the Siberian Division of the Academy of Sciences. The following written records of Yakut folklore, which are stored in the archives, were used in the process of compiling a collection of riddles by S.P. Oyunskaia; namely, folklore records collected by: A.I. Kondakov in 1907-1915; T.A. Vasiliev in 1919; S.A. Novgorodov in 1922-1923; P.V. Sleptsov in 1924; S.I. Koryakin in 1924; I.P. Soykkonen in 1927; N.D. Neustroev in 1929-1930; I.V. Popov in 1928-1930; A.A. Savvin in 1938, and others.

It is worth mentioning that the first written records of Yakut riddles date back to the middle of the 19th century and were mentioned in the following research works: *Über die Sprache der Jakuten / On the language of the Yakut people* by Otto von Böhtlingk (1851), *Viliuskii okrug Iakutskoï oblasti / Vilyusky District of Yakut area* by Richard Maack (1887). An early publication of the fundamental research work titled *Verkhoianskiï sbornik / Verkhoyansk Collection* by I.A. Khudyakov (1890) included 320 Yakut riddles with Russian translation.

To reveal the cultural codes that reflect the representations of the Yakuts of the atmosphere and celestial bodies we applied qualitative methods of analysis. The stages of the investigation were as follows: (1) We analyzed the texts of riddles and identified the key codes that represent denotations; (2) We defined metaphoric correlations between codes and denotations; (3) We interpreted the images of cosmic objects and the sky by analyzing the mythological representations of the Yakuts. Thus, when studying the images of the celestial sphere and bodies in Yakut culture, we applied the methods of semantic, descriptive, semiotic and interpretational analyses.

DISCUSSION

The word *taabyryn*, which is used to denote a riddle in Yakut folklore tradition, is formed from the Yakut verb *taaĩ* with meanings ‘to figure out’, ‘to suppose’, ‘to catch on’, ‘to predict’, ‘to guess’, ‘to interpret’, ‘to emerge’. The Yakut lexeme is related to the base of the Buryat verb *taa* – ‘to guess’, ‘to solve’, ‘to savvy’, and the Mongolian *tagha* - ‘to guess’, ‘to predict’ (Pekarsky 1959, col. 2524). However, S.P. Oyunskaya (1975) suggests that the term *taabyryn* originated from the general Turkic base of the verb *tap* – ‘to find’, ‘to guess’, like the Tatar word *tabyshmak* (Russian-Tatar Online Dictionary, n.d.), the Uzbek word *topishmoq* (Russian-Uzbek Online Dictionary, n.d.), and the Kyrgyz word *tabyshmak* (Russian-Kyrgyz online Dictionary, n.d.).

Semiotic analysis of Yakut riddles allowed the revelation of cultural codes reflecting archaic myths and zoomorphic representations of the sky. In the ancient Turkic worldview, as well as in Yakut riddles, the structure of the Universe is portrayed through a metaphorical representation of a horse. The Universe for the Yakuts is equated to an excellent horse, *aĩgyr-silik*; the deity in the image of the horse-sky is called *Tiört atakhtaakh türgen aĩyy / The fastest four-legged deity-creator* (Gogolev 1993, 19). A.I. Gogolev claims that Yakut

cosmogonic mythology adapted an Indo-European storyline according to which the horse is a zoomorphic image of the cosmos. For example, the ancient Arias equated the night sky to a black horse studded with pearls; the ancient Indians associated body parts of the original sacrificial horse with the cosmos elements (Akishev 1984, 31). As for the ancient Yakuts, they classified people, as well as surrounding objects, into *attaaghynan* and *satyytytnan/ equestrian and pedestrian* and then characterized them as either tall or small (Syulbe 1979, 117). Yakut riddles about the sky, stars and constellations show traces of reference to a horse, which serves as a zoomorphic code of the cosmic objects:

Sur sylgy subun tuhakhtalaakh / The grey horse has an extended spot
(Oyunskaya 1975, 34)

The answer to the riddle is *Arangas sulus / Ursa Major, Big Dipper*. In terms of its shape, the image does resemble an extended spot/ star on the horse's forehead. In a similar paroemia, which possibly originated from the Arctic zone of Yakutia, the image of a horse is replaced by the image of an elk or a reindeer. This zoomorphic code is connected with the mythological worldview represented in Yakut folklore, as there is a myth about a hunter who chased an elk (or perhaps a reindeer, or celestial maidens in some other versions of the plot) and lost his way (Sivtsev-Suorun Omolloon and Efremov 1990, 336). The story about this cosmic chase is considered the foundation for a riddle about the Milky Way:

Khallaan uolun xaïyharyn suola khaalbyt ühü / They say that the ski trail
of the sky boy still remains (Oyunskaya 1975, 35)

In the riddle we also observe an anthropomorphic code based on mythological stories about the creation of stars. In Yakut folklore there is a myth about *Khallaan Uola / The son of the sky* which was told by a Yakut native from the Olekminsk region (Nikiforov 1915, 293). According to the myth, a hunter was chasing a reindeer on his skis and left a trail in the sky and, by doing so he paved *Khallaan siige / the Milky Way*. There is also another myth where a hunter and a reindeer got frozen into *Taïakhtaakh Sulus / Elk or Reindeer Star* that includes the constellations of Orion, Ursa Minor and Ursa Major (Ibid.). So, in the riddles we observe the idea that the stars in the sky resemble living beings – horse, elk/ reindeer, humans. The Yakut people also believed that small ‘satellites’ sent cold weather to the Earth; this belief was

popular due to the fact that stars could clearly be seen during the winter nights.

The texts of Yakut riddles contain elements that represent the sacred realia of Yakut culture; the thesaurus reflects the traditional linguistic taxonomy of the objects and phenomena existing in the world surroundings. The Yakut paroemias contain instances of metaphorical description of constellations in the image of a *serge* / *tethering post*. *Serge* is a special object that organizes the living space of the Yakuts; it is a variety of a sacred vertical object and denotes a sacred central area:

Aan doïdu ortotugar kômüs serge turar ühü / *They say that in the middle of the Universe there is a golden serge* (Oyunskaya 1975, 34).

Answer: *Khotugu sulus* / *the North Star*.

Aan doïdu ortotugar sette serge turar ühü / *They say that in the middle of the Universe there are seven serges* (Ibid.).

Answer: *Arangas sulus* / *Ursa Major, Big Dipper*.

In the first riddle, we observe the archaic representations existed in German, Roman, Turkic and other cultures that the North Star was considered a sacred post in the center of the Universe, which held the sky (Eliade 1987, 146-150). In the riddles in addition to a sacred objective code (*serge*) there are spatial (*in the middle of the Universe*), color (*golden*) and numerical (*seven*) codes. The Yakut people had a variety of tethering posts that differed in their constructions, ritual functions and the number of ornaments. Typically, a tethering post with three, six or nine poles was placed in front of a house, on the east side. Tethering posts were placed during important events: special tethering posts were set up during shamanic rituals and sacrificial rituals for praising the deity of fertility; they were also set up during wartime and on several other important occasions (Semenova 2000, 42).

The national tradition of sewing holds a special place in the system of Yakut folklore images: the constellations are presented in riddles as static objects, as if they are ‘printed’ or ‘sewn’ into a beautiful ornament on a canvas of the night sky. So, *Ürgel* / *the Pleiades of stars* is metaphorically depicted as a constellation on a tethering post:

Uraghas töbötüger oïuu tikpittere ühü (oïuu-bichik baar ühü) / *They say that ornaments are sewn onto the cone of the pole* (Oyunskaya 1975, 34).

It is important to note that in the paroemias about the sky and stars, the key semiotic code is spatial, as it is necessary to follow the way these elements and objects are positioned:

Küökh son bütin aan doǰdunu bürüübüt ühü / They say that a blue double-sided fur coat has covered the entire world (Ibid, 23).

Answer: *Khallaan / the sky.*

Aana emeekhsin sonun abyraghyn kyaĭan abyrahtammat ühü / They say that the old woman Anna cannot cover the patches on her fur coat (Ibid, 33).

Answers: *Sulustar / stars.*

Sewing was considered the basic female crafting activity and ability and that is why we observe a female name in the last riddle. The images of the sky and stars are substituted by signs or codes that depict metaphorically represented objects denoting *serge* and canvas (or a fur coat). In the riddle about the sky we also observe a color code (*blue*). It is interesting to note that the last riddle also has an additional denotation – *mungkha, ilim kharagha / the holes of a fishing net*. And this correlation is not incidental, as we found another example demonstrating that the Yakuts used fauna species inhabiting the waters as a metaphor, where stars were depicted as fish. Thus, the image of the sky is implicitly connected with the infinite water source:

Balaghan ürde barchanan sabyllybyt (barylyy sytar) / The top of the balagan is covered with chopped dried fish (the fish move and shimmer) (Ibid., 32)

Barcha is a small kind of fish which is first cooked, then dried and cut into small pieces. In another sense, *barca* can be interpreted as small parts, pieces or slivers of a whole object. *Balaghan* is an ancient Yakut wooden yurt. So, in this riddle the sky is represented as a roof/ top of the house with shimmering fish.

Yakut riddles may also contain multi-component and complex solutions, in the following example all the answers may refer to the general topic “the cosmos and natural phenomena”:

*Kündü belie, / The precious sign/ token,
Köstör-süter, / The visible and invisible,
Kubulung-jibiling, / The moody and playful,
Kuku-bikii, / The disturbingly noisy,
Daraghana syargha, / Wide sleigh,
Oruluur Dokhsun, / The loud and rupturing,
Öйдóón kórbót / Uncatchable
Ürüng kymnyy, / White whip,
Aaghan sippet / Countless*

*Aghyrya tokhtor, / Falling beads,
 Baïym úskel, / The thriving and rich,
 Baryly keskil, / The generously fortunate,
 Dorghoon toïon / Master Echo
 Uluu jaaly, / The majestically noble,
 Óhiõnneex Órüine / Viscious Irina
 Baar úhü, tuguï? / Exist, they say, what are they? (Oyunskaya 1975, 17)*

The answers to the riddle are: *kün / the Sun, yï / the Moon, khallan / the sky, tyal / the wind, Úrgel / the Ursa Major constellation, eting / the thunder, chaghylghan / the lightning, ardakh / the rain, sir / the Earth or land, muora / the sea, taas khaïa / the rocky cliffs, kyhyn / the winter.* Codes representing denotations are expressed by epithets that serve as key features of described natural phenomena. The Sun is precious, the Moon appears and disappears, the sky plays and varies depending on mood, Ursa Major has a shape of a sleigh. Thus, in this riddle codes depicting the sky and cosmic objects are attributive; they characterize them visually and emotionally.

Stars may also be imbedded into a riddle with the help of the image ‘money/coins’:

Oghonñor jaahygyn kyaïan kõtõkhpõt, emekhsin harchytyn kyaïan aakhpat, kyys kurun kyaïan kurdammat, uol atyn taba tuppät úhü / The old man cannot lift his trunk, the old woman cannot count her money, the daughter cannot tie her waistband, and the son cannot catch his horse and tame it. (Ibid, 23)

Anthropomorphic, action- and object-related codes in this complex riddle depict *sir / the Earth or land, sulustar / the stars, kustuk / the rainbow, and chaghylghan / the lightning.* In this riddle we observe a metaphorical image of counting infinite quantities of objects that represent the stars and inability to capture or embrace objects that depict the atmosphere phenomena.

Large numbers also mean infinite quantities, their meaning is close to the semantics of the notions ‘many’, ‘numerous’:

Bair manyhyt tyhyynchanan ynaghy manyyr úhü / They say that one shepherd herds thousands of cows. (Ibid, 38)

The answers are *yï / the Moon* and *sulustar / the stars.* In the riddle there are action-related, numerical, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic codes that describe the supremacy of the Moon in the night time and infinite quantity of the stars.

The notion of sacred numbers is also a key sign of denotation and it serves as a special cultural code which is closely linked to the traditional culture of the Yakuts. M. Eliade (1987) and V.N. Toporov (1980) claim that in all the archaic mythological and poetic traditions numbers were used to reproduce the structure of the Universe. In the Yakut epic *Olonkho*, numbers contain information on the structure of the epic space: three worlds of the Universe, a nine-tier sky and eight-sided Earth. However, A.Ye. Kulakovsky (1979) stated that the tendency in Yakut epic poetry to use numbers and adjectives together with notions was attributable to alliteration. Thus, he claimed that numbers did not express the genuine and realistic number of the described object or its quality. The scholar supported his thesis by bringing the following examples from *Olonkho*: *aghys saghalaakh aan daïdy / an eight-rimmed world, toghus toghoïdookh suol / a path with nine curves, tiört sullügesteekh tümen baran tiün / a dark night with four latches* (Kulakovsky 1979, 10). For these reasons, when interpreting a number code, it is important to pay close attention to a possible alliteration used in the text.

Yakut riddles contain the following sacred numbers when objects and phenomena of the world surroundings are being depicted: *üs / three, tiört / four, sette / seven, aghys / eight, toghus / nine*. In Yakut culture, numbers such as *tiört / four* and *aghys / eight* are associated with the horizontal division of space continuum, while the numbers *üs / three* and *toghus / nine* are associated with the vertical structure of the world (Gabysheva 1988, 78-92; Filippova 2011, 76-83).

The sacred nature of the number ‘three’ originates from the shamanistic philosophy according to which the world is perceived as subdivided into or comprising three levels that represent different worlds, inhabited by gods and spirits (Alekseev, Emelyanov, and Petrov 1995, 25-34; Filippova and Poarch 2020, 72). Furthermore, human beings represent three vertical parts of the microcosmos. In Yakut culture there are traditional representations of a human soul consisting of three baselines: the top baseline – *iïe kut / mother-soul*, the middle baseline – *salgyn kut / air-soul*, and the bottom baseline – *buor kut / land-soul* (Kulakovsky 1979, 59-61). In spite of the importance and significance of the number ‘three’ in Yakut culture, it is interesting to note that we did not find riddles about the sky and celestial bodies with this numerical code. A sacral ‘three’ is usually used to explain the real quantity of parts of denotation, for example, *Aïyy kyyha üs atakhtaakh ühü / They say that the girl deity has three legs*. The riddle is about a

sandal / three-legged table that is encoded in the image of a girl. We think that the presence of this image is connected with the significance of gender roles in patriarchal societies – a girl is a hostess who takes care of the hearth and cooking. The number ‘three’ directly indicates the quantity of legs. On the other hand, we have to mention that, in our opinion, three-legged tables in Yakut culture may refer to the objects reflecting the Yakut mythological idea about the trinity of the world.

The number ‘seven’ is perceived as a magical one in many cultures. Previously we analyzed the riddle about seven *serges* in the middle of the Universe which described Ursa Major. There is also another Yakut riddle with the numerical code ‘seven’ about *Ürgel / the Pleiades of stars* associated with a seven-eyed reindeer:

Tangara tabata sette kharakhtaakh ühü / They say that the celestial reindeer has seven eyes. (Oyunskaya 1975, 35)

In this riddle in addition to numerical there are zoomorphic and somatological codes. Stars are encoded as seven eyes that form the shape of the constellation.

Now let us bring an example of a riddle with the number code ‘eight’ that encodes the Earth/land, and helps to identify other denotations indicating the sky and celestial bodies:

Sirii ihit siksikteekh, aghys kurduulaakh, ñaalbaan khappakhtaakh, altan aïakhtaakh, bar chuoghur ürütteekh ühü / They say the leather vessel is stitched at the sides, bound together with eight rings, covered with a tin lid, it has a copper neck, and it is covered with dots all over the top surface. (Ibid, 18)

The collective answer is *Aan doïdu / the Universe* encoded in the image of a vessel/jar. It consists of *sir/ the Earth*, *khallaan / the sky*, *yï / the Moon*, and *sulustar / the stars*. So, in this riddle the numerical code helps to identify the horizontal surface (the Earth), and then find other denotations. The sky is depicted as a cover / lid of the Earth; the neck of the Earth (like a neck of a bottle) metaphorically designates the window or hole through which the Moon is seen; dots on the top of the vessel / jar are stars.

In Yakut folklore, the number ‘four’ symbolizes the four corners of the Earth, or four sides of the horizon. This code may be used in combination with anthropomorphic and spatial codes; the Earth is compared to a human dwelling, which as a whole, serves as a metaphor of the mythological cosmos:

Tüört byraattyy jie-jieleriger kiirsibetter ühü / They say that four brothers do not visit each other's' homes (Oyunskaya 1975, 21).

In the next riddle the four sides of the horizon are encoded in number, while the Earth is denoted directly:

Sir-sibiet tüört aattaakh ühü / They say that the Earth has four names. (Ibid.)

Parts of the horizon are also described in the image of an eagle *Óksöki*; in the following riddle we observe a combination of numerical, somatological and zoomorphic codes:

Tüört aattaakh Óksöki toñon / Ekseky master with four names. (Ibid.)

Certainly, the image of a bird may indicate that an object concealed in the riddle is connected to a specific locus (the skies), while the previous codes – *four brothers* and *four names* – represented by the number ‘four’ refer to the space continuum in general (the four parts of the world). Ekseky-eagle sits on the ninth thick branch of the world tree that symbolizes the spatial model of the cosmos (Ibid, 104-106). In Olonkho, the bogatyrs turn into the monstrous eagle Ekseku, and the description of this bird coincides with the description of the gryphons existing in the folklore of the Scythian-Siberian era in the Altai region: the bird is striped; it seems to be squeezed in three places with a belt of a sacred piebald color (Gogolev 2002, 21).

On the whole, the analysis of the Yakut folklore texts allowed us to single out key cultural codes that symbolize and depict the sky and celestial bodies; we think that such research contributes to the understanding of universal and specific features in the worldview of various ethnic groups. We made an attempt to describe some national features of Yakut culture and mythology verbalized in the texts of riddles. We also hope that it paves the way for prospective comparative-contrastive research of Yakut riddles with the paremiological corpora of other peoples.

CONCLUSION

Thus, using the examples of riddles about the sky and celestial bodies, we have singled out the unique features of the Yakut worldview; these features are presented in the linguistic consciousness of the people and verbalized in such a folklore genre as riddles. Yakut riddles contain a metaphoric depiction that consists of myths, archaic representations and

the ideas of a unifying bond, which exists between the human space and the Universe. We also found that there is a generally established idea among the Yakut people that the stars resemble living beings.

Our observations revealed the key cultural codes which are used to encrypt references to the celestial sphere in Yakut riddles. The cultural codes are zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, spatial, somatological, attributive, numerical and object-related. Cultural codes embedded in Yakut riddles represent the world of sacred and significant objects; these cultural codes reflect the mythologemes of the sky, the stars, the world tree, the celestial horse, birds, and artifacts. Riddles contain key features and symbols presenting codes which are connected to traditional culture and archaic mythological representations. In general, Yakut riddles may be used as a unique material depicting the mythological and poetic worldview of the Yakut people.

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