Semantic Development of the Word “Тaŋara” in Sakha (Yakut) Language

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the evolution of the lexical meaning of the word ‘taŋara’ in Sakha (Yakut) language. The study focuses on Humboldt’s activity theory and observes a fusion of cultures as one of the ways of language development. The results of the study can be formulated as follows: etymology and functioning of the word in the epic reveal the following meanings: ‘heaven’, ‘deity’, ‘spirits of aiyy’ and ‘ičči’. The word use context has changed under the influence of the Orthodox dogma. Though the external form remained unchanged, the word underwent significant morphological and semantic changes: the affixation method increased the word-formative and phrase-forming potential of the word, the basic meaning of ‘god’ was fixed, the semantic volume was expanded, some values reflecting the pagan world view became obsolete. There was a separation between its synonym ‘ičči’ being a designation for otherworldly entities, and ‘aiyy’ as the name of good spirits, which still remains a component of the name of the Christian Orthodox god, ‘Aiyy Taŋara’.

Keywords: semantics, lexical meaning, the word taŋara, seme, semantic feature, semantic modification, shift of meaning.

Research area: philology.

Introduction

Humboldt’s activity theory presents language as a dynamic process of thinking and communication. So, language is an important tool for expressing human thought, which manifests itself in communication: “Die Sprache wird durch Sprechen gebildet” (Humboldt, 2000: 163). As a social phenomenon, language is sensitive to different historical changes. According to Humboldt’s conception, fusion of cultures is considered to be one of the ways of language development. The problem of linguistic contacts and their impact on the worldview of people was studied in our previous work (Afanas’eva, Ivanova, 2016).

Bloomfield lists the following basic ways of semantic change in a language: specialization and generalization of the word meaning (after H. Paul), obsolescence and loss of meaning, isolation, borrowing and metaphorization. Semantic change can be internally or externally motivated. Changes in the objective reality are determined by the real situation of communication. Alteration in the mental space influences the word context and its sphere of use (Bloomfield, 1968: 478–486). The phenomena of language change, linguistic models, grammaticalization, social context, contact-based explanations and typological perspective, namely: formal and functional motivation for language change (Newmeyer, 2004), metaphors, models and language change (Aitchison, 2004), grammaticalization (Lightfoot, 2004), in cognitive linguistics (Shitikov, 2012), in Russian literature studies (Azarenko, 2013) were discussed in the book “Motives for Language Change” (2004). In the present work, we observe the semantic change as a result of external changes of social and ideological nature.

Etymology and functioning of the word in olonkho epos

The Sakha noun ‘танара’ goes back to the ancient Turkic language: тәңри ‘1. sky, 2. god, deity, 3. divine, 4. master, lord’ (DTS, 1969: 544). In the ancient Turkic language there were other designations of sky, with other meaning than ‘god, deity’: ҕалик ‘1. sky, heavens; air-space, air, 2. heavenly; airy, 3. the upper chambers, the upper floor of the palace; chambers, hall, room’; ҕалик I ‘sky’ (DTS, 1969: 635); köк I ‘sky’ (DTS, 1969: 312), pair words köк qalïq ‘sky, heavens’ (DTS, 1969: 312, 412; Sravnitel’no-istoricheskaia grammatika…, 2001: 59).

In Sakha language күөс халлаан ‘blue sky’ is a combination of the adjective күөс and the noun халлаан. In this case, we see traces of contamination of the meaning of the noun көөк I and the adjective көөк VI ‘blue, bluish’, көөк тәңри ‘blue sky’ (DTS, 1969: 312). Ancient Turkic names of heavenly bodies күөн ‘sun’ and аж ‘moon’ bear the meaning of ‘god’: күөн тәңри lit. ‘god the sun’ (DTS, 1969: 326, 544); аж тәңри rel. ‘the deity of the moon’ (DTS, 1969: 24, 544).

In Sakha language there is no designation of ий танара, but in some set phrases there are signs of the deification of the sun and the moon. The combination of күөн танара ‘the sun-god’ was later transformed into күөн траахтаары ‘the sun king’ (king after the arrival of Russians, lit. траахтаары ‘staying in a remote place’). The same of the sun and moon deification has been preserved in the imperative set combination күөн-ию буол! ‘Save! Be the sun and the moon!’ These examples show the stability of the semantic structure of words representing the significance of god. Semantic signs of the ancient Turkic word meanings can still be found in some set phrases. The sky and heavenly bodies were endowed with a divine nimbus; a man sought salvation from them.

In the Sakha olonkho epos "Ǯулурүү Ңургүн Бутур" (“Nyurgun Bootur the Swift”) the lexeme танара is used in the meaning of ‘sky’:

Танара сүрдүүта, / Татыңк юлыыыта, / Күөн тахсыыта, / Күөн-ию буол! ‘At dawn [of the sky], when the tit sings at sunrise, when the lark flies off …’.

In Olonkho, the noun халлаан is found in the composition of the izafat combination халлаан танараата, ‘heavenly god, the celestial’ and the attributive combination танараллааах халлаан, ‘the sky is the abode of gods’. According to Olonkho, the sky is the habitat of not only the divine, but also the demonic forces of халлаан абаахита ‘heavenly demons, demons’ (Afanas’eva, 2013: 78).
Taŋaralaax xallaanyym / taxsan erer künün / tunallyyn kurduk ... (̈N̈B, 2003: 13). ‘... it looks like the radiance of the rising sun of the divine sky’.

Taŋara is a deity name. The supreme celestial deity appears in the form of the gray-haired old man:

Uruŋ Aiyy / Aar Toyon taŋara (‘the white holy God’), which is toyus hallaan toyono, ayys hallaan yraahtayta, sette hallaan kineehe (KKK, 1985: 1420) ‘the lord of the nine heavens, the king of the eight heavens, the prince of the seven heavens’.

The epithets aiyy and aar in the meaning of the ‘saint, kind, revered’ have correspondences in the ancient Turkic language, cf. other Turkic. aïriy II 1. ‘valuable, dear, 2. respected, honoured, respectable, honourable; the holy one’ (DTS, 1969: 19); aïriy III ‘1. clean, uncontaminated, 2. fig. morally impeccable, noble, decent, unblemished’, 3. Rel. ‘pure, true, uncomplicated, righteous, sacred, holy’ (DTS, 1969: 51–52). Aiyy is a characteristic of the names of saints and good spirits.

The epos reflects the worship of the sky, the worship of the heavenly deities. The hero of the Olonkho “Er Sogotox” (“Lonely Warrior”), presenting the cup with koumiss, appeals to the supreme heavenly deity with the request:

Warrior Er Sogotox on his knees / He went down, stared at the sky, / began to create the spell with choron: / “O Great Heavenly Host, / Yuryun Aar, the great ruler / of the nine white tiers of the sky ...” (Er Sogotox, 1991).

Etymological and contextual analysis reveals the following semantic features: ‘the sky’, ‘the sky is a deity’, ‘the sky is the abode of celestial gods’, ‘deities are spirits’. The words taŋara ‘heaven, deity’, aiyy ‘holy’, ići ‘spirit’ form a single synonymic row. The outer and inner forms of the lexeme taŋara indicate the presence of some animistic view and traits of the ancient religion of Tengrism. Human life is controlled by the inhabitants of heaven and spirits, so the man asks them for help and blessing, offers them sacrifices.

**Word meaning development after the spread of Christianity**

“Yakut Language Dictionary” by E.K. Pe-karskiy reflects the lexical composition of the language of the 19th century and, besides linguistic information, offers some cultural information of encyclopaedic nature. It provides five lexical meanings of the word taŋara; the semantic volume of the word is expanded by extrapolating the primary meaning to all concepts associated with god. In the dictionary article, the 3rd, 4th and 5th meanings are later formations that appeared after Christianization: taŋara ‘1) the visible sky; sky as a deity’ by-lyttaax taŋara ‘cloudy sky, cloudy day, cloudy weather’; aiyy taŋara (in the old days) ‘the deity sky; 2) the general name of good creatures (= aiyy), a good spirit, a god, a goddess, a pagan deity; the chief deity who lives in the seventh
heaven; spirit protector; idol, fetish; image of the protector spirit; 3) ‘God; deity, divine nature; icon, image’, təŋara suox ‘godless, atheist’; Aiyy Taŋara; cress taŋara ‘crucifixion’; üs mörstiönneeñ taŋara ‘The Holy Trinity’; ürdük taŋara ‘the Supreme Being’; taŋara aha ‘holy gifts’; 4) ‘holy, sacred’, taŋara uu ‘holy water’; 5) ‘holiday’; ulaxan taŋara ‘a great holiday’ (e.g. Christmas); taŋara kün (taŋara künë) ‘a festive day, a feast; Sunday’ (Pekarskiy, 1959: 2552). The image of the ancient deity of the Sakha Aiyy toyon taŋara acquires some icon features, and Orthodox icons are called taŋara küliğe lit. ‘shadow of God’.

In the Christianization period, the Orthodox dogma influence changed the context of the word use, shifting the emphasis towards the meaning of “God”. Along with this, the morphological processes of affixation began.

With the help of the affix -laax, which carries the meaning of possession, the lexeme təŋaralaax was formed. In the function of the attribute it conveys the information that a baptized person is considered to be enlightened and advanced: təŋaralaax ‘divine’ (about communion), üňjr təŋaralaax, üňjr suuttaax kihì ‘a person who has a deity to whom he prays, and a court in which he is judged’ (i.e. social and moral, not savage). Language retains traces of early beliefs; each Sakha clan, or ulus, had its totem deity: oγus təŋaralaax (shaman) ‘with the bull deity (protector); kuba təŋaralaax uluos ‘ulus with the swan deity’, mojotoj təŋaralaax nähilek ‘the settlement with the chipmunk deity’ (Pekarskiy, 1959: 2552). Idolatry is illustrated by the phrase: oloror oyo saya taas təŋaralaaxyym ‘a stone idol of a sitting child [size] I had’. In shamanism, spirits retain their national identity: nuuΪčća təŋaralaax shaman ‘to whom the Russian devil comes during the ritual’, oγus təŋaralaax ‘shaman to whom the Tungus spirit comes’ (Pekarskiy, 1959: 2552). The patronage of the gods extends to all living beings: təŋaralaax süöħü buolla ‘this is a domestic animal that is not destined at this time to die or be stolen and eaten (about a cow that escaped from thieves)’ (Pekarskiy, 1959: 2553).

Examples with the affix -lyy carrying the meaning of similarity, in the function of the adjective mainly designates church rituals: təŋaralyy kícäl ‘divine endeavour’; təŋaralyy sibätiydänär ‘divine sanctification’ (Pekarskiy, 1959: 2553). With the help of affixes -msax, -hyy, nouns are formed, denoting the conviction and status of a person as a believer: təŋaramsax ‘God-loving, worshiper’; təŋaralyy 1) ‘having God’s fear, God-fearing, pious, praying, carrying God within him; a hypocrite, a saint’, təŋarahyttar ‘church as a society’; 2) ‘devoutness’ (Pekarskiy, 1959: 2553).

Earlier, death was perceived as a withdrawal from the middle world: orto doydutan bar – ‘leave the middle world’ (Pekarskiy, 1959: 2552). After the adoption of Christianity, in the interpretation of death another motive appeared; after that, dying meant ‘going to God’. The idea of going to God was one of the significant moments in changing the image of God; dying, a person does not disappear into the dark world of demons, but reaches the saving God. The meaning is expressed with the help of the verbal affix – laa: təŋaralaax ‘to rest, to die; to give up the spirit’, təŋaralaabyt ‘the dead’ [Pekarskiy 1959: 2552].

Ököyö kärgänä ämiä tynatyynä ialajan byhaas təŋaralaabyt suraxtaaya. Sofron Danilov. ‘They say that Okoj’s wife died of lung disease this spring’ (BTS, 2013: 210).

The dictionary of E.K. Pekarsky reflects both pre-Christian and Christian concepts of God. The pagan god meant heaven, spirit, deity, idol, fetish and totem. Christianity, which began to spread in Yakutia in the 17th century, brought new meanings to the semantics of the word taŋara. The appearance of words describing church life testifies to the role of the church in the process of transforming the pagan concept of God. In the context of Orthodoxy, the word taŋara takes on some new meanings: ‘god’, ‘holy’, ‘icon’, ‘day of church holidays’. Affixation expands the word-formation capacity; the word performs the functions of an adjective, a verb, forms derivative nouns. The word ičći falls out of the synonymic row, retaining its reference to the otherworldly forces in general, while aiyy remains an epithet of the god name Aiyy Taŋara. The activ-
ities of the Orthodox Church contributed to the transformation of the value component of spiritual life. God таңара materializes in the form of an iconic image; all Orthodox saints are categorized as gods.

The modern “Great Explanatory Dictionary of Yakut Language” (2013) provides five meanings of таңара as a noun.

1. According to religious beliefs: ‘the supreme being who created the world and controls it, God’. Таңараттан көрдөс ‘ask from God’ (BTS, 2013: 203).

2. The icon.

Утый муннакка оxo көтөгөләяяг яхтар таңара олор. Амма Аччыгъя. ‘In the opposite corner, the goddess sits with a child in her arms’ (BTS, 2013: 204);

3. The day celebrated by the church as a religious holiday.

Макчалалыйап таңара түйөн келбит. Куннук Урустыррап. ‘Soon, St. Michael’s day came’;

4. Archaism. ‘protector spirit, totem’;

5. Archaism. ‘sky’.

The lexeme таңара is a component of the terminological combination, which generally refers to God in general: таңара итөгәлә ‘religion’, ‘a religion based on the belief in the existence of god (in the form of the God-man) who created the world and rules it’ (BTS, 2013: 207), lit. ‘God’s faith’.

The dictionary entry таңара and the examples from fiction texts show the shift of the main meaning as a result of the shift the actualization of the meaning of the god. The meanings of ‘heaven’, ‘protector spirit’, ‘totem’ have passed into the category of archaisms, and the meanings formed under the influence of Orthodoxy, have established: ‘icon’, ‘saints’ day’, ‘church feast’.

The meanings of phraseological units with ‘таңара’ component

Semantic analysis of the phraseological units with таңара component helps to identify some additional semantic features. Christianity was perceived by the Sakha through the pagan cult experience; by analogy with deification of the sun and the moon, the Sakha later compared Christ to the sun: таңара (кун) көрдөр ‘to deeply respect smb., to bow before someone; idolize’ (Nelunov, II, 2002: 179).

God is the supreme almighty being, and the man is powerless before him: таңарата мәстәммүкка дыл (мәстан) ‘brave in front of an enemy too strong’ (Kulakovsky) (about impotent threat), lit. ‘it’s like a stick to threaten the sky’:

Кәбис-кәбис, ёуугым, таңарата мәстәммүкка дыл. Ылбәүтүгә баысанды да сыяуызмыт? Оюңууңабуң нунку буоллай абаа. Н. Лугинов: ‘No, no, dear, it’s just like threatening the sky with a stick, you cannot change anything, complaining about fate? So, we have such a fate’ (Nelunov, II, 2002: 178).


A person tries to be honest with God: Таңарата бәрәмна, кыръык. А. Аччыгъя.


God disposes of the destinies of people and man obeys him: таңара xанна гынарынан согыйбыт ‘whereever God sends’.

Таңара xанна гынарынан согыйбыт. ‘Wherever God sends, we’ll go there’ (BTS, 2013: 207).

The church is the abode of God: таңара jiete ‘building for worship, the church, the temple of God’, таңара ўүрәй ‘theology’, таңара дөлбүрә (сөлөрүга) ‘a shelf for icons’. The communion rites serve as a motivator for phraseological units: таңарата тиқсөр көрдөр (кериет) ‘seldom, occasionally’ from таңарата тигис ‘religion, confession, communion’ (Nelunov, II, 2002: 180; BTS, 2013: 206); таңара акын

God’s grace is perceived as a carefree life, devoid of suffering: tanjara taalata inform. ‘a joyful, free life’, tanjara talbyt ‘to be on top of bliss’.

Tuox da kihalyata, ärräye suox, bäyäte talbytynan ja-hanar, köjulüen tattur olus üçügei olöynun tuhunan “köööön körö”, “tanjara taalata” dien noruokka bylyr etillen xaalbyt (Nelunov, II, 2002: 180). ‘Since immemorial times, people have referred to a carefree, independent and free life as the “merriment under the sun”, “God’s grace”.’


God is the saviour and man can always rely on God’s help: tanjara buol – ‘protect, save, protect from encroachments’ (lit. ‘be a god’), tanjara byyhaatyn ‘God save’, tanjara kömölöhüex ‘God will help’, tanjara ahan bi-erder ‘if God helps, lit. if God opens the way’ (BTS, 2013: 206).

Seritten xasta da ulaxannyk baahyran kelbite. Xayaan tyynnaax orputa buolla, čaxčy tanjara ahymmyt ki-bite. ‘He returned from the war with multiple heavy wounds. How could he survive? The truth is, God took pity on him’ (Nelunov, II, 2002: 177).

God is merciful, the man hopes for the pity of God: tanjara ahymmyt ‘God was merciful’.


Tanjara āyiexe uon oččonu bierie, onon, xata, malyy-manna yllat. S. Omolloon. ‘God will reward you with a hundredfold, therefore, come on, serve a prayer’.

God can punish a person: tanjara nakaaha ‘punishment of God’, tanjara atayastaabyt loan phrase: ‘god offended someone by smth’.

A disobedient person, who does not recognize God, is despised: tanjara umnubut bayyayi ‘a person who does not obey and violates God’s laws’. Some phraseological units have stylistic shades, expressing irony, reverence and humour. The ironic attitude towards those who create themselves an idol is transmitted by the phraseological unit tanjara gynan üŋk (üŋer tanjara onohun) ‘to worship someone’ (BTS, 2013: 206). Some comparative units express respect and reverence: tanjara kurduk körör ‘deeply respect smb., bow to smb., idolize (lit. as to look at God)’.

Most phraseological units are borrowed from Russian language, which motivates the following semes: the ‘higher being’, ‘disposes of the destinies of living beings’, ‘saviour and helper’, ‘brings grace’, ‘all-knowing’, ‘giving’, ‘gracious’, ‘punishing’.

Conclusion

The material and spiritual culture of the Sakha people takes its origin from the era of the ancient Turks, as evidenced by the historical connection of the words of Ancient
Turkic täŋri and Sakha таңаra. Analysis of the linguistic material indicates that the ideology of Orthodox Christianity, which spread among the people of Sakha more than three hundred years ago, caused some significant transformations in the language system. As a result, the following changes occurred in the development of the lexeme таңаra in Sakha language:

1) due to the metonymic shift, it lost its primary meaning of ‘heaven’;
2) the meaning of ‘God’ was updated;
3) the semantic volume expanded by extending the meaning to the designation of Christian saints, shrines and relics;
4) affixation discovered new functional and semantic possibilities; the word has acquired the functions of an adjective, a verb, and some new nouns have been derived;
5) adoptions from Russian language increased the phrase-forming potential of the word;
6) with the differentiation of meanings between the words таңаra “god” and içči “spirit”, the latter acquired a meaning close to the designation of otherworldly forces, e.g. içčileex sir ‘a place inhabited by dark forces’.

Most of the set units are borrowed from Russian language through adoption. This process was influenced by the following circumstances: 1) translation of religious books and texts by Orthodox missionaries, 2) religious service in Sakha language, and 3) development of bilingualism among the local population. Analysis shows that changes have affected all levels of the language. Linguistic facts prove that the transition from the pre-Christian pagan time to the Christian era led to some transformations in the concept of God.

References


Развитие семантики слова ‘тангара’ в якутском языке

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена изучению эволюции лексического значения слова ‘тангара’ в якутском языке. Рассматривается этимология, функционирование слова в эпическом тексте, проводится анализ данных толковых и фразеологических словарей, выпущенных в разное время. Слово ‘тангара’ восходит к древнетюрскому täŋri и до ХХ века сохраняет значение ‘небо, божество’. Внешняя и внутренняя формы лексемы свидетельствуют о наличии следов древних языческих верований (тэнгрианства, шаманизма). Поздние словари фиксируют значения, отображающие реалии православного христианства и замену первичного значения на ‘бог’, значение ‘небо’ отходит на второй план. Значения, обозначающие ранние верования, перешли в ранг устаревших. Бог больше не тождественный духу в языковом понимании, а персонифицированный иконический образ. Изменение контекстуального окружения слова привело к активизации аффиксов, что способствовало образованию глагола, имени прилагательного и других имен существительных. Заимствования из русского языка увеличили фразообразовательный потенциал слова; большинство фразеологических единиц с компонентом ‘тангара’ образованы способом калькирования. Анализ показал, что изменения семантики слова ‘тангара’ коснулись всех уровней языка. Семантические преобразования обусловлены внешними факторами, влиянием русской культуры через распространение среди якутов православного религиозного учения.

Ключевые слова: семантика, лексическое значение, слово ‘тангара’, сема, семантический признак, семантическая модификация, изменение значения.

Научная специальность: 10.00.00 – филологические науки.