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## Ornithomorphic image of an eagle in the shamanic tradition of the peoples of Siberia (Sakha, Khakas, Tuva)

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**Abstract.** The article comprehensively examines ornithomorphic images in the shamanic traditions of the peoples of Siberia. Ornithomorphic symbols occupy a special place in the shamanic worldview because they have an important function in establishing contact with the spirit world, in depicting cosmogonic concepts. The article analyzes the symbolic meaning of the images of birds in the shamanic rituals of these peoples, including the Eagle.

The relevance of the study is due to a deeper understanding of the cultural heritage of the peoples of Siberia (Sakha, Khakas, Tuva), including the ritual, symbolic, and worldview significance of the ornithomorphic image of the Eagle in shamanic traditions. The study of ornithomorphic images allows us to consider the spiritual world and mythological concepts of the Sakha, Khakas, and Tuva peoples from a new angle. The article analyzes the symbolic meaning of the images of the Eagle in shamanic rituals and the attributes of these peoples. Mythological, ethnographic, and culturological methods were used in the study. In mythological analysis, the meaning of the image of the Eagle in the shamanic worldview is revealed, and their role is determined. Ethnographic methods made it possible to study the role of the Eagle in shamanic practices. Archaeological materials served as the basis for the study of shamanic attributes, the ritual function of birds from ancient times to the present day. Cultural analysis revealed not only the ritual, but also the socio-cultural significance of birds.

The results of the study revealed the multifaceted role of birds in the shamanic traditions of the peoples of Siberia (Sakha, Khakas, Tuva). Eagle feathers are often found in shamanic clothing, and their images are often found in avenga (tambourine) and headdresses. Sound imitations, such as the voice of an eagle, are an important part of ritual songs and rituals. Shamanic traditions of the peoples of Siberia, based on images of birds, do not lose their relevance as a source of spiritual and cultural wealth for modern society.

**Keywords:** shamanism, ornithomorphic image, Siberian peoples, spiritual traditions, Eagle, shamanic clothing, attributes, Sakha, Khakas, Tuva.

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## **Introduction**

Shamanic traditions of the peoples of Siberia are an important area that determines the deep spiritual heritage of Turkic culture. These traditions reflect the inextricable connection between nature and the spiritual world, and the image of birds occupies a special place as the main manifestation of this connection. In shamanic traditions, birds are perceived not just as natural creatures but as intermediaries connecting the world of Man and spirits. They are considered protectors, guides, and symbols of strength and wisdom in shamanic rituals. The special meaning of birds such as Eagles, Swans, and Crows determines their important place in the mythology of the Turkic peoples.

Currently, some elements of traditional cultures, including the shamanic traditions of the peoples of Siberia, are disappearing due to globalization and cultural changes. In this context, the study of the spiritual heritage of the Turkic peoples, especially the ethnic groups of the Siberian region, is of particular importance. By studying the symbolic role of birds in the traditions of the shamans of Sakha, Khakas, and Tuva, analyzing what functions they perform in shamanic rituals, we get the opportunity to reassess not only historical and cultural values, but also the philosophy of living in harmony with nature.

The role and spiritual meaning of birds in shamanic traditions are important not only for the value of the past, but also for preserving the current cultural diversity and passing it on to future generations. From this point of view, the study of shamanic traditions is relevant not only for scientific interest but also for fulfilling international obligations to protect and preserve cultural heritage. The article examines in detail the role of the Eagle in the shamanic traditions of the peoples of Siberia and its symbolic meaning.

## **Materials and research methods**

The mythological, ethnographic, and cultural methods used in the study make it possible to comprehensively study the image of the Eagle in the shamanic traditions of the peoples of Siberia, complementing each other. Mythological analysis, through the image of the Eagle in Legends, analyzes their significance and opens the way to understanding the spiritual and cosmic aspects of shamanism. The ethnographic method records the use of the image of the Eagle in shamanic rituals and reflects their living image in modern society. The culturological approach reveals the social and ritual meaning of the images of the Eagle and helps to understand their place in the philosophy of life in harmony with nature. The interconnection of these methods ensures the authenticity of the research results and contributes to the formation of a full-fledged picture of the significance of the Eagle in shamanic practice.

## **Results and discussions**

In the shamanic traditions of the peoples of Siberia (Sakha, Khakas, Tuva), the image of the Eagle has a huge cultural and spiritual significance. This study is aimed at identifying the symbolic significance of Eagles in the shamanic worldview and a comprehensive analysis of their mythological image.

The Eagle is considered in the belief system of many Turkic and Mongolian peoples as a connecting symbol with the higher world. This bird gives spiritual strength to the shaman and serves him as a protector and guiding spirit. The cult of the Eagle is found in many peoples of the Eurasian space [1, p. 119]. In Sakha folk mythology, the Eagle is described as the protective spirit of people themselves. In addition, the Sakhas considered shamans to be descendants of the eagle [2, P. 55]. In the mythology of Sakha, the Eagle, snakebite, and Woodpecker are associated with objects that have magical properties. According to their beliefs, the Eagle had a special quality that could bestow the stone of happiness on a person who saved himself from trouble [3, p. 7].

In the Sakha language, the word Eagle is called "hotoi". In addition, the Eagle has a special role in the mythology of Sakha. For example, "Kut Toyono" (Toyon of Heaven) – is depicted as the ruler of the upper world, and the Eagle is considered its sacred bird. This bird plays an important role in shamans' travels to the spiritual world, where they communicate with the spirit of the Eagle and establish a relationship with the upper world.

In the Legends of Sakha, the Eagle is described as an observer and spiritual protector of the fate of a person. To explain the role of the Eagle in the shamanic traditions of the peoples of Siberia (Sakha, Khakas, Tuva), it is important to consider specific mythological patterns. The Legend of the birth of a shaman from an eagle is found in the mythology of the Sakha. According to this legend, the souls of shamans initially fall into the mouth of the Eagle. The Eagle takes the same soul and migrates to a meadow area with plenty of sunlight. This is where the red birch or maple tree grows. The Eagle settles on top of one of those trees and lays eggs. After a while, the egg bursts and the baby comes out of it.

According to Saha beliefs, good shamans come from an egg lying on a red birch tree, and bad shamans come from an egg on a maple tree. Hatched shamans spend their entire lives under the protection of the Eagle-mother, and she becomes their main spiritual assistant. According to another version of the legend, the mother of the future shaman sees in a dream a red birch in a Meadow Valley. She takes a small nest in a tree and thereby becomes pregnant with the future shaman [4, p. 595].

According to one version of the third legend, after the creation of Man by the Western celestial gods, evil forces of the eastern direction began to harm people. Noticing this, the Western gods send the Eagle as a shaman to help people. However, although the Eagle helps people, they perceive it as just a bird and distrust it because they do not understand its language. The western gods take this into account and order the eagle to pass on its knowledge to the first person they meet. This man turns out to be a woman. The Eagle comes into contact with him, and the child born from their union subsequently becomes the first Shaman among people [5, p. 20]. In the shamanic tradition of the Sakha people, the Eagle is considered a sacred creature and is described as a giver of spiritual strength and direction to the shaman, as well as a mediator between people and the spiritual world.

In the shamanic culture of the Sakhas and other peoples of Siberia, the shaman's clothing was one of the most important elements that symbolized his connection with the spiritual worlds. Full shamanic clothing usually consisted of a cape, a headdress, and a tambourine (tambourine). In some people, there are also cases when a mask and gloves are added to it [6, p. 30]. The

shaman's robe is made to resemble the image of a bird, which symbolizes the process of its penetration into the other world. It was believed that bird wings and feathers sewn to the robe helped the shaman during a spiritual journey. According to legends, The Shaman painted an image of an eagle on his glory and used it as a "guide" during a trip to the upper world.

During the rituals, the shaman attached eagle feathers to his headdress, which meant that he was ready to communicate with the spiritual world. Sakha shamans used the voice of the Eagle to join the spiritual world. A double-headed eagle was also attached to the front of the shaman's robe, serving as a symbol of his journey to the ancestral realm and the domain of the nine shamanic deities inhabiting the upper world. Upon reaching this sacred space, the shaman would proclaim, "I flew as an eagle with three heads." It is worth noting that in ritual poetry, symbolic exaggeration is common – for example, using the number three in place of two, or eight instead of seven [7, p. 89].

The headdress is one of the most important attributes of Sakha shamans. It was believed that it enhances the shaman's vision and hearing, allowing him to understand the language of spirits. In addition, the headdress helps the shaman to see the world invisible to ordinary people. According to another belief, the headdress had a special power that gave the shaman the ability to fly and transform.

Shaman's glory is considered one of the main tools of shamanic practice. Its main function is to introduce the shaman into a state of trance and act as a guide in his trips to the spiritual worlds. The fur is usually Oval, and one side is covered with the skin of a cow or calf. It is believed that five or more images of birds and beasts were placed along its edge, the number of which depended on the level of spiritual energy of the shaman. On the inside of the avenue, an Iron Cross was attached to hold it [8, p. 114]. The rod for hitting the aviary is most often made of wood or deer antlers. It has a slightly curved, flat shape and, short stem. On the outer surface of some sticks, contour images of animals and birds are carved [9, p. 417]. In general, the shaman's clothing and its components determine the mythological essence of the shaman and contribute to his realization of the function of mediating between the spiritual worlds. The special veneration of the image of the Eagle by the shamans of Sakha suggests that in their mythology and religious views, this bird is associated with the upper world. Thus, the image of the Eagle becomes an integral part of the shamanic tradition and is perceived as a guiding force and protector in the spiritual journeys of the shaman.

The Khakas, being under the influence of the worldview system characteristic of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples, described the Eagle as a "bird of heaven". This concept is based on the boundary value of the bird between heaven and Earth [10, p. 107]. In the Khakas language, the eagle is called "Hara Hus" (blackbird) and is considered a spiritual guide on the shamans' journeys to the upper world. Sternberg wrote about the Eagle cult in the Khakas: "We meet the Eagle both as the ultimate ancestor of shamans and as a totem animal and guardian of a certain tribe" [1, p. 121]. The researcher accurately emphasized the role of this bird in shamanic practices. Its connection with the sky is also clearly reflected in shamanic traditions. At the same time, it should be noted that for most Khakas shamans, the shaman's ritual was directly associated with the image of an eagle [11, p. 26].

The symbolism of the eagle was widely used in shamanic paraphernalia. The shaman's robe is covered with eagle feathers, and the headdress is decorated with an eagle's wing, head, or

claw. These elements determine the role of the Eagle cult in the Khakas culture [12, p. 339]. The lower part of the shamanic cover of the Khakas is decorated with bird claws [9, p. 66]. The pointed upper part of the shamanic headdress is decorated with the back feathers of an owl or eagle. In rare cases, an eagle's head is placed in the upper part of the headdress. Eagle feathers were an important component of Khakas shamans' headdresses, symbolizing both their ritual roles and their elevated status within the community. The presence of feathers marked a clear distinction between shamans and ordinary individuals, as this element was considered a unique and defining feature of their sacred attire.

Some Khakas shamans wore a special "Bird Hat". It is prepared without touching the head and wings, where the internal organs of the Eagle are removed and dried. It is considered as one of the most important attributes that ensure the shaman's connection with the celestial world. The image of an eagle was often depicted in shamanic outfits, as well as in ritual attributes. The images of the Eagle were located in the upper part of the shamanic avenues, symbolizing its connection with the transcendental world. For example, the image of an eagle was painted on the avenues of Khakas shamans, and during the ritual, they perceived it as a spiritual guide [13, p. 96].

In general, shamanic clothing and attributes are part of an important semiotic system that implies the transformation of a shaman into a bird during his transition to another world. According to the data, Khakas Shamans were divided into several categories, and their connection with the Eagle had functional features. The great shamans – pugdurs owned nine avenues, and their clothes were decorated with metal arrows, Eagle Wings. In addition, it was believed that they had the support of powerful spirits. In ritual practice, the pugdurs carried out rituals for the treatment of infertility and the Prevention of epidemics [14, p. 41].

In the mythological system of the Khakas, a special place was occupied by the connection of the eagle with celestial bodies. There are widespread notions that this bird can strive for the sun and communicate with it in unison. In this regard, Sternberg writes: *"the unique power of Flight lifts it to unattainable Heights, to the sky, and the terrible fire in its eyes makes people aware of their connection with the sun"* [1, p. 112]. In summary, in the traditional worldview of the Khakas, the Eagle is considered as one of the main symbols of communication with the higher world. Its manifestation in shamanic attributes implies the connection of the shaman with transcendental journeys. The mythological and ritual aspects of the Eagle cult are a special component of the Khakas culture.

In the Tuva language, the word "Eagle" is called "ezir". In the people of Tuva, the Eagle is of great cultural and mythological importance. It is considered a sacred bird associated with the upper world and occupies a special place in shamanic traditions. It is believed that shamans communicate with the spirit of the Eagle and travel to the upper world. According to the beliefs of the people of Tuva, Shamans can arise from shamans who were their ancestors, spirits of Earth and water, spirits of heaven, evil spirits called "Albys", and demons called "Aza" [15, p. 11].

According to folk traditions, the most powerful shamans receive their supernatural abilities "from heaven". They get a "shamanic disease", a phenomenon associated with the touch of one of the ends of the rainbow falling from the sky to them [7]. The main activities of shamans included, first of all, the treatment of sick people, the search for lost objects and pets, the prediction of the future, as well as the consecration and treatment of pets [16, p. 186]. The power of the shaman

was in his alliance with auxiliary spirits. These spirits include animals such as crows, Bulls, Eagles, Bears and Badgers. The Eagle is of particular importance in the shamanic system of the Tuva people.

This bird is considered as a mediator that ensures the shaman's connection with the upper world. Tuva shamans used to summon the spirit of the Eagle and resort to its help when entering a trance or traveling to the spiritual worlds. The eagle was distinguished by the qualities of foresight, agility and wisdom and was perceived as a defender of a shaman from dangerous spirits. The Eagle's flight speed and cunning actions made it a reliable spiritual companion for shamans. Tuva shamans believed that the spirit of the Eagle plays an important role in their ritual actions [14, p. 78].

In addition, the image of the eagle was also reflected in the clothes and attributes of the Tuva shamans. Shamanic clothing consisted mainly of a cape, a hat and shoes [9, p.70]. The clothing of Tuva shamans is one of the most important elements reflecting their connection with the mythological and spiritual worlds. The traditional clothing of the shamans of Tuva, Altai, and Khakas often symbolized the image of a bird. This feature is especially evident in comparison with the costumes of Western Tuva and southern Altaians [17, p. 357]. Shamanic headdresses and capes were decorated with eagle feathers to strengthen their connection with the heavenly spirits. Bird feathers were often used in the headdresses of the Tuva shamans. Specifically, black and red Owls, owls, eagles, Crows, and bird feathers are found in shamanic headdresses.

These animals and birds were considered as spiritual defenders and helpers of the shaman. According to the beliefs of the Tuvas, during the ritual, the shaman was able to take the form of animals and birds depicted on his headdress. This means that the status of a shaman, that is, power and glory, was measured only by eagle feathers attached to his headdress [18, p. 165]. The shaman's headdress played a special role in the formation of his mythological image. The heads, feathers or skins of birds and animals attached to it strengthened the shaman's connection with the spiritual world and contributed to his entry into a trance. During the ritual, the shaman absorbed the properties of these animals and fulfilled his mission with their power by turning into birds:

*"Let's turn into a crow,*

*Let's just soar.*

*Where, where*

*Are we red-blooded souls?*

*Turning into a Falcon,*

*We are watching from above.*

*Turning into an eagle,*

*We give a review from four sides."* [16, p. 189].

This tradition shows the importance of the cult of animals and birds in the shamanic belief system [19, p. 471]. Thus, the clothing of the Tuva shamans clearly demonstrates not only their role as intermediaries between the worlds, but also the importance of the image of a bird in the belief system. Images of birds such as Eagles, Crows, and Owls were considered not only as elements of clothing, but also as magical attributes that help the shaman enter a trance and come into contact with the spiritual world.

For the people of Siberia, birds play a central role in shamanic traditions. However, the significance of individual species of birds, their symbolism and use in rituals have similarities. In shamanic traditions, the Eagle to a certain extent represents the image of the Supreme God, but its close connection with the cult of the sun is also noticeable. All these elements allow us to clearly determine the religious significance of the shaman's clothing: when wearing it, the shaman enters a mystical state formed and consolidated through long-term spiritual practices and initiation rituals [20, p. 90]. Birds are considered in the beliefs of all three peoples as intermediaries between the lower, middle and upper worlds. They help the shaman "ascend" to the heavenly world or "descend" to the lower world inhabited by ancestral spirits.

## Conclusion

The study of ornithomorphic images in the shamanic traditions of the peoples of Siberia (Sakha, Khakas, Tuva) revealed their important role in the worldview system and ritual practices of these ethnic groups. Birds in shamanic culture are not only natural beings, but are also reflected as intermediaries between worlds, symbolizing a person's deep connection with nature and the spiritual world. The results of the study showed that the Eagle has power in each ethnic group and a special connection with the upper world. In summary, in the shamanic traditions of the peoples of Siberia (Sakha, Khakas, Tuva), the image of an eagle occupies a special place. He is not only a mediator who establishes the connection of the shaman with the upper world, but also his spiritual protector and leader. The image of the Eagle in shamanic clothing and rituals emphasizes its spiritual significance. The cult of the eagle was reflected in mythology, religious rites and shamanic practices, becoming an integral part of the shaman's mediating activity between the worlds. This study allows a deeper understanding of the cultural and mythological role of the image of the Eagle, revealing its multifaceted meaning in shamanic traditions.

## Author Contributions.

**Toktorbayeva A.B.** – Corresponding author, defining the goals and objectives of the scientific article, working with research materials and methods, collecting and analyzing theoretical materials.

**Sharip A.Zh.** – collecting and analyzing theoretical materials.

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**Сібір халықтарының (саха, хакас, тыва) шамандық дәстүріндегі бүркіттің  
орнитоморфтық бейнесі**

**Аңдатпа.** Мақалада Сібір халықтарының шамандық дәстүрлеріндегі орнитоморфтық бейнелер кешенді түрде зерттеледі. Орнитоморфтық символдар шамандық дүниетанымда ерекше орын алады, себебі олар рухтар әлемімен байланыс орнатуда, космогониялық түсініктерді бейнелеуде маңызды қызмет атқарады. Мақалада осы халықтардың шамандық рәсімдердегі құс бейнелерінің соның ішінде бүркіттің символикалық мағынасы талданады.

Зерттеудің өзектілігі Сібір халықтарының (саха, хакас, тыва) мәдени мұрасын, оның ішінде шамандық дәстүрлердегі бүркіттің орнитоморфтық бейнесінің ритуалдық, символдық және дүниетанымдық маңызын тереңірек түсінумен байланысты. Орнитоморфтық бейнелерді зерттеу саха, хакас және тыва халықтарының рухани әлемін және мифологиялық түсініктерін жаңаша



қырынан қарастыруға мүмкіндік береді. Мақалада осы халықтардың шамандық рәсімдеріндегі және атрибуттарындағы бүркіт бейнелерінің символикалық мағынасы талданады. Зерттеуде мифологиялық, этнографиялық және мәдениеттанулық әдістер қолданылды. Мифологиялық талдауда шамандық дүниетанымдағы бүркіт бейнесінің мәні ашылып, олардың рөлі анықталды. Этнографиялық әдістер шамандық тәжірибелердегі бүркіттің рөлін зерттеуге мүмкіндік берді. Мәдениеттанулық талдау құстардың тек ритуалдық ғана емес, әлеуметтік-мәдени маңызын да ашып көрсетті.

Зерттеу нәтижелері Сібір халықтарының (саха, хакас, тыва) шамандық дәстүрлерінде құстардың көпқырлы рөлі бар екендігін айқындады. Бүркіттің қауырсындары шамандық киімдерде, ал олардың бейнелері даңғыра (бубен) мен бас киімдерде жиі кездеседі. Дыбыстық имитациялар, мысалы, бүркіттің дауысы ритуалдық әндер мен ғұрыптардың маңызды бөлігі болып табылады.

Сібір халықтарының құстар бейнелеріне негізделген шамандық дәстүрлері заманауи қоғам үшін рухани және мәдени байлықтың қайнар көзі ретінде өзектілігін жоғалтпайды.

**Түйін сөздер:** шаманизм, орнитоморфтық бейне, Сібір халықтары, рухани дәстүрлер, бүркіт, шамандық киімдер, атрибуттар, саха, хакас, тыва.

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### **Орнитоморфный образ орла в шаманской традиции народов Сибири (саха, хакас, тыва)**

**Аннотация.** В статье комплексно исследуются орнитоморфные образы шаманских традициях народов Сибири. Орнитоморфные символы занимают особое место в шаманском мировоззрении, так как они играют важную роль в установлении связи с миром духов и отражении космогонических представлений. В работе анализируется символическое значение птичьих образов, в частности орла, в шаманских обрядах этих народов.

Актуальность исследования связана с более глубоким пониманием культурного наследия народов Сибири (саха, хакас, тыва), включая ритуальное, символическое и мировоззренческое значение орнитоморфного образа орла в шаманских традициях. Изучение орнитоморфных образов позволяет по-новому рассмотреть духовный мир и мифологические представления народов саха, хакасов и тувинцев. В статье анализируется символическое значение орла в шаманских обрядах и атрибутах этих народов. В исследовании использованы мифологические, этнографические и культурологические методы. Мифологический анализ позволил раскрыть значение образа орла в шаманском мировоззрении и определить его роль. Этнографические методы помогли изучить место орла в шаманской практике. Культурологический анализ выявил не только ритуальное, но и социокультурное значение птиц.

Результаты исследования показали, что птицы играют многогранную роль в шаманских традициях народов Сибири (саха, хакас, тыва). Перья орла широко используются в шаманских костюмах, а его изображения встречаются на бубнах и головных уборах. Имитация крика орла является важным элементом ритуальных песнопений и обрядов. Шаманские традиции народов

Сибири, основанные на образах птиц, не теряют своей актуальности в современном обществе, оставаясь источником духовного и культурного наследия.

**Ключевые слова:** шаманизм, орнитоморфный образ, народы Сибири, духовные традиции, орёл, шаманские костюмы, атрибуты, саха, хакас, тыва.

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