

**SCTCMG 2021**  
**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of**  
**Modern Globalism»**

**MYTHOLOGICAL MOTIFS IN BASHKIR EPIC ABOUT AINA IN**  
**THE ARTISTIC UNIVERSALS**

Narkas Ahmetovna Khubbitdinova (a)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Institute of History, Language and Literature, UFRS RAS, 71, October str., Ufa, 450054, Russia,  
narkas08@mail.ru

**Abstract**

Today, according to the results of field research and the analysis of the collected folklore material. It is possible to fix only its fragments in the form of a plot or some extracts from the epic. According to the authors, some epic monuments could reach us in the form of cubaires (epic legends) and ozon kui (long folk songs, legends). Thus, such epics as *Akbuzat*, *Idel and Yaik*, *Tsar Shulgan and Minei-batyr*, *Kungyr-buga*, which generally make up the *Ural-batyr* epic. The ethnogenetic legend of Aina and Gaina, at its core, may also be part of the once famous ancient epic of the Bashkir people, because the legend has retained ancient sacred mythological motifs and images that may be traditional for the archaic epic. The purpose of the paper is to identify and consider the ancient ideas of the Bashkirs from the Gaina clan about the world and the surrounding nature, their beliefs, artistic and aesthetic traditions, rites and customs that are characteristic of archaic epic and are preserved in the versions of the ethnogenetic legend about the Bashkir clan of Gaina – *The Gainas*, *The Tulvints*, *Aina and Gaina*. To achieve these goals, a number of tasks were solved: establishment in this legend of artistic and aesthetic features characteristic of the traditions of epic creation; identification of mythological, worldview identity reflected in the legend of solar, sacred motifs, twin, totem images, the motive for the formation of the clan as a result of a marriage of a cultural hero.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

*Keywords:* Bashkirs, Aina and Gaina, archaic epic, traditions, desacralization, primal forefather



## 1. Introduction

It is known that the epic has been developed for centuries, was transmitted from generation to generation, polished and improved. But at some point some works ceased to exist as epic works. Perhaps the reason for this is the erasure of a holistic picture of the once former ancient epic, some sacred knowledge and experience from the people's memory.

## 2. Problem Statement

As a result of the study, the authors came to the conclusion that in the fragment or some part of the once famous ancient epic about the demiurge of ar – the mythical primate of the Gaina Bashkirs and the two brothers Aina and Gaina, that reached us only in the form of a mythological legend, the knowledge of the storytellers was already lost.

## 3. Research Questions

The following issues were addressed in the study:

1. In general, the concept of the universality of cultures is a worldview aspect of study in the field of philosophy, culture studies. According to Stepin,

*universality is a category, which accumulates historically acquired social experience and in the system of which a person of a certain culture estimates, comprehends and endures the world, includes all phenomena of reality getting to the sphere of his experience into universality.* (as cited in Zapesotskey, 2010, p. 83)

This concept is also applicable for art creativity as a universality of art cultures, arts. It is known that in any field of art (architecture, music, literature, folklore, painting, etc.), in the works of art thinking of different eras and the people the repeating formations and steady methods of self-expression are found. They are most often shown at the level of work poetics – motives, plots, images which trace the roots back deeply to mythology or folklore, i.e. to thickness of unconscious figurative creativity.

*Its first-born connection with judgment of the natural world serves as one of the important sources providing steady symbolics of the myth as rather autonomous form of culture ... The symbolics of the natural world is similar in different ethnic communities. For example, tkchi – always the symbol of the enemy, alien forces, and, on the contrary, everything connected with solar images (sun) represents positive forces.* (Krivutsn, 2000, p. 24)

2. Art universalities are also found in the Bashkir national epos. Perhaps, the kubair cycles (heptasyllabic poetic epic work. – N.Kh.), perhaps, was the basis for the Bashkir national epos *Ural-batyr*. Such eposes as *Yaik and Idel*, *Akbuzat*, *The Tsar Shulgen and Miney-batyr*, *Kungyr-buga*, form the basis of a cycle of the *Ural-batyr* epos. They continue the main subject, similar heroes that in *Ural-batyr* were not revealed completely are mentioned and remain fragmentary. The epos through some time may

back break up into separate songs, kubairs, legends, even myths. For example, *Karas and Aksha* included into the legend-rivayat about a fight of the Bashkir and Kazakh batyrs is found in the Bashkir folk art. The genre form and type of a verse of the Bashkir heroic epos. In terms of its epic scale, heroic pomposity and ideological and thematic art orientation this work is presented by a certain fragment of some separate historical. Such probability allowed the Bashkir scientist N.T. Zaripov including the given kubair in the *Historical Kubairs* of the multivolume academic collection *The Bashkir Folk Art* (1997).

3. The elements of the epic heritage can also be presented by mythical legends, which are based on sacred beliefs, contain an ancient plot of the struggle of a primal forefather – a cultural hero with demonic forces, where good and justice are established (there is a return of a celestial light or fire to earth, the discovery of new fertile lands for life, etc.). The universalities of epic poetics, as part of artistic culture, are ancient ideas that at the beginning of mythological time the sun, like other luminaries, is absent. “Archaic solar myths include myths about the disappearance and return of the sun” (Myths of the World, 1988). Thus, in the ancient Yakut folk epic – olonkho about Er-Sogotokh – the hero is the primal forefather and is looking for a companion to become the father of people, the founder of the clan. It should be noted that the myth of the cultural hero is most preserved in the traditions of the first ancestry of the Yakuts Elle-Er-Sogotokh (Meletinsky, 1976). In ancient tales about the hero of the Adyghe Nart epic, Sosruko is described as a cultural hero that gets fire (Meletinsky, 1976). According to another version of this epic, the hero extracts fire and millet seeds, etc. (Myths of the World, 1988). In the Karelian-Finnish legend, the hero commits a cosmogonic act, having obtained a celestial light, which may have formed the basis of the Finnish epic *Kalevala* (Meletinsky, 1976).

4. A similar originality of the universal poetics of the archaic epic, which is based on either sacred beliefs, mythological motifs and images experienced an artistic transformation into a smaller format in the form of the Bashkir ethnogenetic legend of the Gaina clan. In other words, the once famous ancient Bashkir epic about Aina and Gaina has reached the present day in the form of a legend. The Gaina clan is one of the largest clan formations of the Bashkir people. Villages founded by Gaina people are compactly located mainly on the territory of the Bardymy district of the Perm Territory of the Russian Federation. Separate Gaina villages are located in a number of other districts of the Perm Territory, the Sverdlovsk Region and the Republic of Bashkortostan (History of Bashkir Clans: the Gaina, 2015).

Gaina folklore is very rich in diverse genres, as evidenced by scientific expeditions organized by Bashkir scientists since 1963 to the Perm Territory of the Russian Federation. One of these genres is a legend, for example, an ethnogenetic legend of the Gaina clan, known in several versions: *The Tulvints*, *Aina and Gaina*, *Gaina*. These legends, in particular, contain an archaic story about the origin of the Bashkir clan Gaina: according to one of the options, as a result of a marriage with a demonic creature, the witch ar Tulaua, according to another, obtaining fertile land with the help of a deer to begin the life of a new genus. The legend of *Aina and Gaina* begins as follows: “Previously, the sun was behind the Tulva. It was stolen by one old woman ubyr (witch). She stole and imprisoned it in one cave, which is in a dense forest behind a mountain...” (The Bashkir folk art, 1997, p. 62). The ancient solar motif about the salvation of the sun was mainly preserved in two versions of the legend: in the text of *The Gainints* a young man named Gaina riding a deer came to a wild and cold land, where there was no sun, which was stolen by an azhdaha dragon: “Gaina came, killed azhdaha and brought the sun out of the ground. He tied

it to deer horns and swam across the Tulva River to this side. The sun rose high into the sky...” (The Bashkir folk art, 1997, p. 73).

5. The presence of two brothers in the legend implicitly refers to the so-called twin myths, in which one of the brothers usually performs good deeds, the second – only negative, which is also part of artistic universalities. This situation, the duality of brothers causes a steady allusion to the Bashkir folk archaic epic *Ural-batyr*, where there are also two brothers – the elder Schulgen and the younger Ural (Khubbitdinova and Yuldybaeva, 2020). During the course of events, the legend does not talk about the confrontation between Aina and Gaina, as well as about the fact which of them is older and who is younger, and especially about the fact that they could be twins. At the same time, given that in the Arabic alphabet Ain is the 18<sup>th</sup> letter, and Gain is the 19<sup>th</sup>, then the order may indicate the seniority of the first. However, this is only a hypothesis, and it requires careful further study. In all versions of the legend of *Aina and Gaina*, the dominant role is given to the first brother (The Bashkir folk art, 1997).

6. The reason for this probably lies in the erasure of a holistic picture of the once ancient epic of two brothers and witch ar from the memory of the people. In the surviving texts the the knowledge of storytellers in the form of a mythological legend is apparently lost, which led to the destruction of the epic plot, the desacralization of ancient beliefs and rituals, when “... as the twin representations transform, the antagonism of the divine twins is lost, later, one of the twins is taken out from the myth” (Myths of the World, 1987).

7. It should be noted that the image of a deer in the considered work – fragments of the epos about Aina and Gaina performs the important ideological and art function of choosing a safe place for life, reproduction that is considered a traditional motive for ethnogenetic legends of the Bashkir people. So, in the legends *From where the Bashkir came*, *Burele River*, *The Ailints*, *Murz*, *Tiraklints*, etc. wolves or horses find the land of plenty with juicy grass and deep rivers (The Bashkir folk art, 1997). The valleys of the Tulva River, where deer came, as the legend of Aina and Gaina says, were also rich with juicy grass that is of great importance, first of all, for the nomad. Perhaps, in the ancient time the deer was also a totemic animal of the Gaina clan.

8. The girl is also mentioned in the version of the Bashkir legend of Gaina *The Tulvints*. However, at first she appeared before brothers in an image of the above-mentioned witch ar named Tulaua – a prototype of Bashkir forest shurala or yarymtyk: ugly absolutely nude being with the body covered with wool with flabby breasts, one of which it threw behind a neck, and wrapped the second around a waist (Khubbitdinova and Yuldybaeva, 2020). If Aina was not able to master it, then Gaina was successful: “Having thrown the lasso on her, he pulled her together from a deer, then having twisted her long hair in a fist, beat her two times with a whip. At the very same time the witch turned into a beautiful girl and begged: “Don’t beat me, brother! – she said. – I will be your wife”. Then Gaina forced her to swear that she won’t create more evil. Having tied her for hair to deer horns, he put her on the deer and took home”. Then, of course, he married her, as a result of their marriage there was the Bashkir family Gaina (The Bashkir folk art, 1997).

9. It is known that before adoption of Islam all mythical beings – owners of mountains and forests, lakes and rivers: shurale, Yaschura – the Baba-yaga, meskey, yarymtyk and others were considered as the keepers of the near-home world, the nature in general, therefore in every possible way were honored and

sacrificed. However, after adoption of Moslem doctrine all these and other superstitions and beings took a form of negative and forbidden heroes (Khubbitdinova, 2011). Mythical ar is also mentioned in the considered legend (*The Tulvints*) as the hostess of these wild places. Here, unlike other version named *Aina and Gaina*, it is not said that she stole the sun, she only hurt the deer of heroes, and paid for it at the end. Perhaps, at heart Tulaua also had no nasty character and was only a keeper of these places. The arrival of strangers on her territory intruded upon her leisure. To protect the land, she exhausted deer who brought people here, and deprived one of the brothers of life: in the first night when deer were watched by the older brother Aina, she took him and threw highly up, and then sucked his blood from a heel (The Bashkir folk art, 1997).

10. It should be said that the narrative of the plot about the choice of a mythical creature as a first priority, or rather a primacy, in ethnogenetic legend was necessary to solve certain socio-political, cultural and ethnogenetic problems. So, people could consider themselves the descendants of the Genghisids or other nobles known from the history of the people (Muiten-biy, Genghis Khan), as well as mythical creatures – shurale (goblin, owner of the forest), shaitan, yarymtyk – pery or shurale (there are such legends as *Shaitanovo tribe*, *Ara bire*, *Devil ar*, etc.) If a clan or a tribe, supposedly dating back to famous historical personalities, is called to represent its strength and power, then the same is applied to mythical characters, animals. Here: ar – the family unit of the Bashkirs, bire / peri – a werewolf, represented as a progenitor of the clan, was a totem and sacred creature. So the mythical creature began to fulfill the function of the primal forefather, the progenitor, which is a traditional phenomenon in folklore. In the legend *Aina and Gaina*, as a result of the union of a man and a mythical ar, the Bashkir clan of Gaina occurred. It existed in about the same meaning in the ancient Turkic language. Apparently, here there is a desire of the Gains to mythologize the origin of the clan, to give it a shade of mysticism, which prompted them to “apprehend” the once negative witch ar, transferring it to the pantheon of positive characters (heroes).

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to identify and consider the ancient ideas of the Gaina Bashkirs about the world and the surrounding nature, their beliefs, artistic and aesthetic traditions, rites and customs that are characteristic of the archaic epic and are preserved in the versions of the ethnogenetic legend about the Gaina Bashkir clan – *The Gainas*, *The Tulvints*, *Aina and Gaina*. To achieve these goals, a number of tasks were solved: establishment in this legend of artistic and aesthetic features characteristic of the traditions of epic creation; identification of mythological, worldview identity reflected in the legend of solar, sacred motifs, twin, totem images, the motive for the formation of the clan as a result of a marriage of a cultural hero – demiurge and the mythical ar from the family of witches, etc.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The material of the study included an ethnogenetic legend and epic samples necessary to identify the features of the epic traditions – motifs, plots, and image systems. For this, the paper used comparative, textual, analytical methods of study.

## 6. Findings

The study established that in the legend of *Aina and Gaina* there is an image of an ancient solar motif, which is subsequently intertwined with the motive of the hero's marriage to a mythical creature from the ar clan, which turned into a beautiful girl (therefore, unusual, ritualized), which marked the beginning of the Gaina clan. The presence of ancient sacred ideas about the sun and images of a cultural hero-primal forefather – the instigator of a clan or a tribe, a totem animal (deer) – speaks of the epic nature of this work, the scale of folklore thinking of this people. Just as today it is impossible to find the presentation of a holistic epic in the people, and only fragments of it, and during the period of the ethnogenetic legend of *Aina and Gaina* and its variants, the integrity of the plot could be lost. It is good that the archaic epics *Ural-batyr* and *Akbuzat* were recorded in earlier periods (1910 and 1917, respectively). The epic legend of *Aina and Gaina* at the time of its recording in 1963 could already survive desacralization when there was a “weakening of strict faith in the truth of mythical “events” (Meletinsky, 1976). Subsequently, it could narrow down to a fairy tale, a legend – hikayat, etc. In this case, it could be preserved in the form of versions of the legend of *Aina and Gaina* as a precious fragment of the ancient, possibly eponymous epic of the Gainas.

## 7. Conclusion

The versions of the ethnogenetic legend of *Aina and Gaina* reached us since they were recorded in 1963 by a famous Bashkir scientist Kirey Mergen. Knowledge about the history of the epic and the laws of epic creation, the artistic universalities of culture, the mythology of the peoples of the world, the time of its disappearance allows seeing something more than just a legend in the legendary plot. If the myth, having survived desacralization and deritualization due to the depreciation of the initial ancient beliefs and ideas about the world, can fall into fairy tales, then the archaic epic, in turn, for the same reason can be decomposed into mythological legends. Therefore, we see a fragment, part or brief arrangement of the once famous archaic epic about the return of the sun by a cultural hero-primal forefather riding a white deer, which also discovered fertile lands for the life of a new kind, which arose as a result of marriage with a mythical female demiurge. In general, we can say that other similar ethnogenetic legends based on ancient, including totem, beliefs, solar myths shared a similar fate, at the heart of which they can be the result of a once existing archaic epic.

## Acknowledgments

The study was carried out with the financial support of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bashkortostan as part of the scientific project “Archaic Epic of the Bashkir People: Artistic and Stylistic Aspect (epics *Ural Batyr*, *Akbuzat*, *Zayatulyak* and *Khyukhyly*)” No. 19-412-020008 r \_ a.

## References

- History of Bashkir Clans: the Gaina* (2015). Shezhere.  
Khubbitdinova, N. A. (2011). *Folklore in 19th-Century Literature: Russian-Bashkir Folklore-Literary Ties Revisited*. Gilem.

Khubbitdinova, N. A., & Yuldybaeva, G. V. (2020). Artistic and epic transformation of the ancient epic about Ainu and Gaina into the ethnogenetic legend of the Gainin Bashkirs. *Oriental Studies (Previous Name: Bulletin of the Kalmyk Institute for Humanities of the Russian Academy of Sciences)*, 13(2), 455–464.

Krivutsn, O. A. (2000). *Estetika*. Aspect Press. <https://textarchive.ru>

Meletinsky, E. M. (1976). *Poetics of Myth*. Nauka.

Myths of the World. (1987). *Myths of the World. Vol. 1: A-K*. Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya.

Myths of the World. (1988). *Myths of the World. Vol. 2: K-Я*. Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya.

The Bashkir folk art (1997). *Legends and farts. Vol. 2*. Bashkir book pub.

Zapesotskey, A. S. (2010). *The theory of culture of academian V.S. Stepin. Lectures given to students of SPbGUP in May – September 2010*. SPbGUP.