

## LEGENDS OF THE KAZAKH PEOPLE ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF GEOGRAPHICAL PLACES AND CELESTIAL BODIES

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### **Тайаныш сөзлөр**

фольклортаныў, әдебият, теория, изертлеўлер, метод, әпсана, жер, суу, аспан, жулдыз .

### **Ключевые слова**

фольклор, литература, теория, исследования, методика, мифы, земля, вода, небо, звезды .

### **Keywords**

folklore, literature, theory, research, method, birds, legend, earth, water, sky, stars .

### **Introduction:**

The ancient ancestors of the Kazakh people observed the geographical places where they once lived and the nature surrounding them through the worldview characteristic of their era, striving to understand its mysteries. In making these observations and drawing conclusions from them, mythological concepts and religious beliefs preserved up to the present day played a significant role. Among these, animistic – especially totemistic – beliefs later influenced folklore, contributing to the emergence of numerous etiological legends and their cycles about celestial bodies, various animals, birds, and their specific features.

### **Review of Literature and Methodology:**

In conducting this research, the following methods were employed: comparative analysis, analysis-synthesis, comparison of theoretical approaches, as well as historical and logical methods. During the research process, in order to clarify and enrich the content of the study, the following literature was utilized: Qaskabasov, S. Kazakh Folk Prose. Almaty: Gylym, 1984. Meletinsky, E.M. Paleo-Asiatic Mythological Epic: The Raven Cycle. Moscow: Nauka, 1979.  
and others.

### **Discussion and Results:**

In Kazakh folklore, etiological legends about the origin of geographical locations can be classified into two main groups:

1. Folk legends about the origin of mountains and rocks.
2. Folk legends about the origin of rivers, lakes, and springs.

In Kazakh folklore, mountains and rocks are often believed to have emerged from the transformation of a human being. The explanation for this view has been examined within folklore studies. [1:73].

We also analyzed several local geographical formations that, according to underexplored folklore materials, are believed to have originated as a result of the actions of a giant heroic figure. Giant figures such as Alangasap, Aryslan, Tolagay, Ersary, Sartaqpay and others build cities, control rivers and channels, raise high mountains, and at times even bring rainfall to the earth, saving people from drought. Ultimately, as a result of their heroic deeds, they undergo a transformation and become part of nature itself. In other words, geographical objects are created through their actions and the tools they use, fulfilling the fundamental heroic function characteristic of world mythology. However, the role of Kazakh giants remains relatively limited in scope. In Kazakh folklore, the origin of seas, lakes, and springs is often explained through the belief that they were “formed from tears.” For example, rivers and valleys such as Atasu, Burabay, and Zhaiyq are said to have emerged from the tears of people who fell into sorrow and wept. A similar notion exists among the Turks as well: in the creation of rivers, the motif of “originating from tears” also carries another meaning—*rebirth*. This is because, according to ancient beliefs, the human soul is eternal, and thus in legends we often encounter stories in which ancestors are reborn by transforming into rivers or valleys. [2:195]. Compared to the narratives of other peoples, the legends about the origin of geographical places in Kazakh folklore possess distinctive and unique features. For example, among Turkic peoples, after the death of sacred or holy individuals (such as Masat Ata, Közata, Azanur Äwliye, and others), a healing spring, a sacred spring, or a holy stone is believed to appear at the place touched by parts of their body—such as their blood, saliva, or footprints. The origin of this legend may be connected to the tradition of sacrifice found in the folklore of many peoples of the world. However, there is also an opinion that such events among us arose during battles with enemies, yet eventually these events led to the emergence of sacred sites. Sometimes mountains and stones are said to have formed from the transformation of heroes or wronged individuals who encountered enemies (such as Zheke Batyr, Okzhetpes, Üshdingek (the Two Sisters), Qyrqshilter, Qyrq Qyz, and others). Research conducted on Kazakh etiological legends belonging to this category shows that their origins correspond to various stages of mythical periods as well as subsequent historical eras. S. Qasqabasov, a scholar who studied etiological myths in Kazakh folklore, also states that the emergence of such myths is

“a process that took place during the second stage of mythological consciousness.” [3:22]. Uzbek folklorist M. Juraev writes: “Mythological views, beliefs, and the artistic expressions associated with the constellation of the Seven Robbers (the Big Dipper) are found among the majority of Turkic-speaking and Mongolian peoples. In Uzbek folklore it is known as *Etagan* – *Yetti Qaroqchi*; among Siberian peoples, particularly the Tuvans, it is called *Jetikhan* or *Dolon Burkhan* [4:25], while among the Buryats it is known as the *Seven Smiths* or *Seven Khans*.” [5:59] In the legends of these peoples, the Seven Robbers are depicted as the celestial protectors of humans. Kazakh folklorist Toyshanuly Akedil states that among these peoples, in ancient times, the constellation of the Seven Robbers was regarded as sacred and that rituals of worship were performed in their honor. [6:13] According to Akedil Toyshanuly, the reason the seven stars are known as the “Seven Robbers” in Kazakh, Karakalpak, and Uzbek legends is as follows: “The basis for the recognition of the seven stars as thieves or robbers lies in an ancient plot widespread among Turkic-Mongolian peoples about the ‘cunning thief.’ In later periods, this plot was enriched with new content due to real historical events characteristic of the nomadic lifestyle – *barımta-syrimta*, raiding, and the plundering of others’ livestock and property. In short, the ancient narrative about ‘the thief-robber’ acquired a new form due to new realities, and it replaced the older archaic legend in which the Seven Stars were portrayed as protectors of human clans.” [6:13] In general, in the mythologies of many peoples around the world, the motif in which a cultural hero creates or brings something into existence by stealing a particular object is widely encountered. In Uzbek folklore, a version of the legend concerning the *Etagan* constellation that resembles the Kazakh variants was recorded by M. Juraev from Abdiev Eshan. The scholar, differing from Toyshanuly Akedil, agrees with the view of S. A. Qasqabasov, linking this narrative not directly to *barımta* (raiding), but rather to the lifestyle of nomadic Turkic peoples and their cosmogonic interpretations of the movements of celestial bodies. He explains his opinion as follows: “According to popular belief, when stars pass beyond the horizon, it means that they have fallen asleep. The stars of the Great Bear, however, do not rest at all during the night—they continue to move without pause and vanish from sight only toward dawn.”

This, in turn, reminded people of the life of robbers who spend the whole night stealing livestock and property, then hide themselves at daybreak. Based on this comparison, the tradition of describing the *Etagan* stars as the Seven Robbers emerged,” he writes. [7:28].

We agree with the views expressed by M. Juraev and S. A. Qasqabasov regarding the origins of the version of the legend connected with the “Seven

Robbers.” It is difficult to determine precisely whether this version of the legend first took shape among the Uzbeks or the Kazakhs. Nevertheless, it is clear that the foundation of the legend arose as a result of the historical and genetic connections between these peoples. In the ancient mythological worldview of the Turkic and Mongolian peoples, *Temir Qazyq* (the Pole Star) was perceived as the celestial stake around which the sky continuously revolved. Among the Mongols, it is regarded as the stake to which Kögedai Mergen ties his two **kulager** horses; among the Buryats, it is the stake used by the supreme deity Hormust to tether his **kulager** horse or dun mare, forged by nine blacksmiths. In some traditions, it is also the stone that seals the opening at the center of the sky. Among both the ancient Turks and the Mongols, it was known as *Temirqazyk* or *Altinqazyk*.

The legend about the Pleiades (Ürker) that is widespread among the Karakalpaks differs in content from the legends found among the Kazakhs and other Turkic-Mongolian peoples regarding the origin of this star cluster. In the legends of the Turkic-speaking and Mongolian peoples of the Altai region, the central narrative revolves around a creature that controls the weather, sends cold to humans and livestock, and brings harm to them. Seeing the harm it caused to animals, when someone tried to crush the creature under a cow’s hoof, it slipped through the hoof, rose into the sky, and became a star. [8:1007] In a version of the legend recorded by G. N. Potanin among the mountain peoples of the Altai, the Pleiades (Ürker) is portrayed as an evil mythological being that once lived on earth. It would consume people’s livestock and bring them great misfortune. At that time, a figure named Jedikhan (the Seven Robbers) descended to the earth and attempted to kill it by trapping it under a horse’s hoof. Then a cow appeared and stomped on the creature with its hooves. As a result, the evil being was divided into seven parts under the cow’s hoof, rose into the sky, and became the seven stars. [9:574]

The legends of the Pleiades among the Turkic-speaking and Mongolian peoples of the Altai are considered archaic versions, and in terms of their origin, they are relatively close to mythical times. The legends about the origin of the Pleiades among the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia vary widely in content. The Uzbek version of the legend, for example, is connected to weather patterns on earth and the survival of animals. This version contains no dualistic elements. In it, the constellation Khulkar is depicted, and one of the previously wrathful heroes of the Turkic-Mongolian version, represented as a cow, is replaced by a goat. In the Tatar version of the legend, the number of girls who become stars is twelve, while in Kazakh versions they are depicted as forty. In the Tatar version, the time and place of the event are associated with the Bulgar period, and the girls’ father is represented by a character named Tyryshmal Khoja. The girls, along with



their father, fall into the hands of enemies, who intend to use them and their father to construct a mountain. The girls escape from the enemy and ascend into the sky as stars, while their father is thrown from the mountain and transformed into a river. [11:368]

**CONCLUSION:** In short, in the etiological sense, the analysis of the causes of the formation of legends usually occurs in relation to the actions, external appearance, and behavior of the beings that are the objects of the legend. This is because, during that period, people's minds had not yet formed a rational understanding of natural phenomena and the living nature surrounding humans; therefore, their thinking was guided primarily by instinctive emotions, associations, and the practical experience available at that time. Moreover, Kazakh etiological legends are considered the result of the people's views on their environment at various social levels, their religious beliefs, social and communal relations, customs and traditions, and, of course, the requirements of folklore imagination.

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