

UDC 398(4/9); 801.8(4/9); IRSTI 17.71.91
<https://doi.org/10.47526/2025-2/2664-0686.194>A.K. AKHMETBEKOVA¹, P.T. AUYESBAYEVA¹✉¹*Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor
Leading Researcher of the Research Institute of Turcology,
Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University
(Kazakhstan, Turkistan), e-mails: aaxbota@gmail.com; ksaryarka@inbox.ru*IMAGES OF GODS UMay AND ZHER-SU
IN THE FOLKLORE OF THE TURKIC PEOPLES

Abstract. Folklore is a repository of the ideological foundations of each nation. The history of the people, their views and worldview features are unique treasures recorded in folklore and passed down from generation to generation. From the objects of folklore, you can find out how the people developed, what they thought about, how they lived, what their values were. Folklore is the keeper of the memory and cultural code of the people. The forms of faith, social structure and power are changing, and folklore has the property of preserving information in its own context. This property is manifested in folklore in images. Myths form a system that reflects the special way of thinking of the people, their unique perception of the world. If myths are the spiritual core of culture, then mythical images are an integral part of this people. Although myths are falling out of use, mythical characters, transforming, remain forever in the minds of people. Such mythical characters include the gods Umai-An and Zher-Su (Earth and Water) of the Turkic peoples. Images of these gods can be found in fairy tales and legends of the Turkic peoples. In fairy tales derived from myths, they are depicted with their names, in other genres - in the images of “Albasta”, “Zheztyrnak”. Although their functions are in a polar relationship, we see that the actions of these characters are related to family, childbirth and the condition of a woman. The purpose of the article is to reveal the images of the gods Umai and Zher-Su in Turkic folklore and analyze the manifestations of their divine functions in transformed images. In the course of this analysis, the place of the gods Umai and Zher-Su in the worldview of the Turkic peoples will be established.

Keywords: Turkic folklore, mythical personas, transformation, worldview, divine function.

А.К. Ахметбекова¹, П.Т. Ауесбаева¹¹*филология ғылымдарының кандидаты, доцент
Туркология ғылыми-зерттеу институтының жетекші ғылыми қызметкері
(Қазақстан, Түркістан қ.), e-mail: aaxbota@gmail.com; ksaryarka@inbox.ru*

Ұмай мен Жер-Су құдайларының түркі халықтары фольклорындағы бейнелері

*** Бізге дұрыс сілтеме жасаңыз:**

Akhmetbekova A.K., Auyesbayeva P.T. Images of Gods Umay and Zher-Su in The Folklore of the Turkic Peoples // *Ясауи университетінің хабаршысы*. – 2025. – №2 (136). – Б. 69–79. <https://doi.org/10.47526/2025-2/2664-0686.194>

***Cite us correctly:**

Akhmetbekova A.K., Auyesbayeva P.T. Images of Gods Umay and Zher-Su in The Folklore of the Turkic Peoples // *Iasau universitetinin habarshysy*. – 2025. – №2 (136). – Б. 69–79. <https://doi.org/10.47526/2025-2/2664-0686.194>

Date of receipt of the article 09.01.2025 / Date of acceptance 30.06.2025

Аңдатпа. Фольклор – әр халықтың сөзбен нақышталған дүниетаным негіздерінің қоймасы. Халықтың тарихы да, көзқарастары мен әлемді тану ерекшеліктері де фольклорда қатталып, ұрпақтан ұрпаққа жеткізіліп, оның даму барысынан ақпарат беретін ерекше қазына болып табылады. Фольклорға тиесілі дүниелерден халықтың қалай дамығанын, не ойлап, қалай өмір сүргенін, құндылықтарын тануға болады. Тіпті тарихтың кей беттері ұмытылып не әдейі сырт қалдырылып жатса да, фольклорда орын алған дүниелер еш жойылмай, халықтың жадын, мәдени кодын сақтаушы болып, ерекше дереккөзі болып қала береді. Сенім-наным, қоғамдық құрылыс, билік формалары өзгеріске түсіп жатса да, фольклор ақпаратты өзіндік тұрғыда сақтай алатын қасиетке ие. Бұл қасиетті фольклордағы бейнелер арқылы тануға болады. Әр халықтың дүниетанымының қалыптасуын белгілейтін мифтер оның ерекше ойлау, әлемді ерекше қабылдауынан ақпарат беретін жүйені құрайды. Мифтер мәдениеттің рухани өзегі болса, мифтік бейнелер сол халықтың ажырамас бөлігі болып табылады. Мифтер қолданыстан шыққанымен, мифтік персонаждар трансформациялана отырып, халықтың санасында мәңгі жүреді. Осындай мифтік персонаждарға түркі халықтарының Ұмай ана мен Жер-Су құдайларын жатқызамыз. Бұл құдайлардың бейнелерін түркі халықтарының ертегілерінде, хикая, аңыздарда кездестіреміз. Мифтен бастау алатын ертегілерде өз аттарымен бейнеленсе, хикая, аңыз, әңгімелерде «Албасты», «Жезтырнақ» деген бейнелерде көрініс тапқан. Функциялары полярлық қатынаста болғанына қарамастан, бұл персонаждардың әрекет етуі отбасымен және нәрестенің дүниеге келуі мен әйел адамның жағдайымен байланысты екенін көреміз. Мақала мақсаты – Ұмай мен Жер-Су құдайларының түркі фольклорындағы бейнелерін ашып көрсету және трансформацияланған бейнелеріндегі құдайлық функцияларының көріністеріне талдау жасау. Бұл талдау барысында Ұмай мен Жер-Су құдайларының түркі халықтарының дүниетанымындағы орны белгіленеді.

Кілт сөздер: түркілік фольклор, мифтік персонаждар, трансформация, дүниетаным, құдайлық функция.

А.К. Ахметбекова¹, П.Т. Ауесбаева¹

¹кандидат филологических наук, доцент

Ведущий научный сотрудник НИИ Тюркологии,

Международный казахско-турецкий университет им. Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави
(Казахстан, г. Туркестан), e-mails: aaxbota@gmail.com; ksaryarka@inbox.ru

Образы богинь Умай и Жер-Су в фольклоре тюркских народов

Абстракт. Фольклор – это хранилище основ мировоззрения каждого народа. Фольклор является уникальной кладью истории народа, его взглядов и особенностей познания мира, которая передается из поколения в поколение, сохраняя информацию о ходе развития духовного мира народа. Из мира, созданного фольклором, можно узнать, как развивался народ, о чем мыслил, как жил, какими ценностями дорожил. Даже если некоторые страницы истории забыты или намеренно искажены, только фольклор остается уникальным источником, хранителем памяти, культурного кода народа. Несмотря на то, что вера, общественный строй, власть претерпевают изменения, фольклор обладает свойством сохранять информацию в своей особенной форме. Это свойство проявляется в фольклоре в образах. Мифы, обозначающие формирование мировоззрения у каждого народа, образуют систему, отражающую особый образ мышления народа, его неповторимое восприятие мира. Если мифы - это духовное ядро культуры, то мифические образы - неотъемлемая часть этого народа. Хотя мифы выходят из употребления, мифические персонажи, трансформируясь, навсегда остаются в сознании людей. К таким мифическим персонажам мы относим Умай-Ана и богиню Жер-Су тюркских народов. Образы этих богинь мы встречаем в сказках,

рассказах, легендах тюркских народов. В сказках, восходящих к мифу, они представлены своими именами, в поздних былинах, рассказах выступают как «Албасты» и «Жезтырнак». Несмотря на то, что функции богинь и Албасты и Жезтырнак находятся в полярных отношениях, мы видим, что действие этих персонажей связано с семьей, рождением ребенка и положением женщины. Цель статьи – раскрыть образы богинь Умай и Жер-Су в тюркском фольклоре и проанализировать проявления их божественных функций в трансформированных образах. В ходе этого анализа определяется важность богинь Умай-Ана и Жер-Су в мировоззрении тюркских народов.

Ключевые слова: тюркский фольклор, мифологические персонажи, трансформация, мировоззрение, божественная функция.

Introduction

Worldview is a determining factor in the cultural identity of a people. Naturally, the worldview and mentality of the Turkic-speaking peoples are formed on the basis of Turkic beliefs. Worldview, which is the most stable element of culture, or philosophical reasoning associated with the knowledge of the Universe, is the result of people's perception of the world and adaptation to it in their own way and lays the foundation. Changing this foundation means reshaping the identity of the ethnic group. The complete destruction of beliefs that form the basis of a worldview is equivalent to the destruction of the unique identity of an ethnic group. The ancient beliefs of any people arise in the process of adaptation to the natural environment and determine the way of life and being. The result of the adaptation process that has taken place over the centuries cannot be replaced by a worldview associated with foreign religions. Therefore, no matter how a new belief takes its place in a people's worldview, forcibly or voluntarily, it is synthesized at a certain level with ancient beliefs. In order for foreign beliefs to be adopted by the local environment and to produce a positive result, two conditions are necessary: first, the similarity of the content and essence of the local and foreign religion, and second, the transformation of the local belief through synthesis with the new belief. Often the process of synthesis of local beliefs is reflected in the filling of vacuums arising in the connection between the newly adopted religion and the ethnic worldview. Despite the fact that Islam meets the interests of the Turkic people in the social sense and is similar to their native faith, however, it is noticeable that the problems associated with the relationship of the Turks with nature and the environment are not considered from the standpoint of Islam. Therefore, when solving problems associated with the natural, biological existence of man (birth of a child, recovery from illness, etc.), there was an appeal to the ancient gods of faith.

To this day we see that the gods of ancient Turkic beliefs live among people within the framework of Islam, for example, the use of the words “god” and “Tengri” as synonyms for the word “Allah”. And among the Turks, all the attributes of shamans and healers are described by terms associated with the Islamic religion: “spell” of shamans, “summoning of spirits”, etc. Therefore, we see that the gods of the old faith have taken on an Islamic form.

Most of the problems related to the biological nature of man are related to female functions. In any belief, a woman, a baby, a girl are patronized by “mother” gods. Nature (the earth, the environment) also has a “maternal” character as a source of food and conditions for human existence. Due to the patriarchy of Islam, the status of a woman is often considered from a social point of view, and the biological side remains outside. Naturally, a Turkic woman living in harsh natural conditions needs special spiritual patron and protector. The rejection of female deities such as Zher-Su and Umay Ana (Mother Umay) in ancient beliefs denied their functions. In the culture of the Turkic peoples who adopted Islam, a vacuum was created regarding their functions. To fill this vacuum, the people even turned to Bibi Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, and as a result of assigning the functions of local female deities to her, her name became associated in the Kazakh

worldview with the blessing of the home and family patron. However, the autochthonous female deities had great influence, and the human nature of Bibi Fatima could not compare with their divine nature. Therefore, an attempt was made to deprive Umay Ana and Zher-Su of their divine status and exclude them of the Turkic worldview. But due to the strong influence of these gods, occupying an important and significant place in the life of the people, it was impossible to expel them from the people's consciousness and "kill" them. In this regard, in order to get rid of the female deities, a process was carried out to transform them into insidious, harmful metaphysical creatures by perverting their functions. As a result of this process, the sphere of influence of goddesses Umay Ana and Zher-Su narrowed, and their functions began to separate. The goddess Zher-Su abstracts and returns to her natural basis, even in the folklore of the Turkic peoples, Umay Ana becomes the ugly Albasty, and Zher-Su turns into Zheztynak. Such transformation processes marked the appearance of the goddesses Umay Ana, Zher-Su in various images of fairy tales, myths, legends and tales. The purpose of the article is to recognize the images of female deities preserved in the folklore of the Turkic peoples, to determine the manifestation of their original functions. To achieve this goal, the process of transformation of goddesses Umay Ana and Zher-Su into the images of Albasty and Zheztynak is considered, and images in the folklore of the Turkic-speaking peoples are analyzed. The characteristics of the manifestations of female deities in folklore genres, which are the genesis of the images of Albasty and Zheztynak, are given.

The genesis and functions of such a character as Albasty, based on the folklore of the Turkic peoples, attracted the attention of many researchers. In addition, some data are given by works on the origin of the image of Umay Ana and the recognition of its mythical nature.

Considering the meaning of the word "albasty", O.A. Sukhareva connects its origin with the goddess Anahita [1, p. 32]. Anahita is the goddess of water and abundance in ancient Iranian mythology. D.K. Zelenin, A.Z. Rosenfeld connect the origin of Albasty with water [2, pp. 33–34]. In general, the image of Albasty is widely known not only among Turkic communities, but also among Indo-Iranian-speaking peoples [3, pp. 58–61]. Therefore, it seems that there is a connection between the goddess Anahita, sung in the Avesta, and Albasty in the legends. However, the question arises as to why the Turkic supreme goddess Umay was transformed into the chthonic Albasty.

Based on folk literature and beliefs, in their works V.V. Bartold [4], V.V. Radlov [5], P.T. Melioransky [6], L.P. Potapov [7], N.P. Dyrenkova [8] presented some information about the goddess Umay in the religion of the Turkic-speaking peoples. The Tatar scholar R.N. Bezertinov connects goddess Umay with the divine worldview [9]. According to K.A. Zatov, the god Zher-Su is syncretized with the cult of ancestors in a patriarchal society [10, p. 191].

Research methods and materials

When writing the article, the methods of mutual comparison, comparative research, typological and interpretative analysis were used.

Umay and Zher-Su are common deities among the Turkic peoples. However, their transformations differ in relation to the historical development of different Turkic-speaking peoples. By comparing the folklore texts belonging to these peoples, one can recognize the genesis, functions, and characteristics of the gods. In this context, based on the comparative method, it is possible to determine how the Umay and Zher-Su gods were transformed in different historical situations. At the same time, through the integration of cultures, the characteristics of the mythical personalities of the Turkic peoples are revealed using the method of comparison with their manifestations in neighboring peoples. By classifying the plots based on the typological method, one can identify similarities and differences, universal structures, and plots, and recognize the ways, course, and patterns of transformation of the gods. Through the method of interpretive analysis, we

can determine the essence of the folklore texts of the Turkic peoples and the functions of the motifs involved in the formation of these images.

Results and discussion

According to the Turks, at first Umay, who stood after Tengri, was considered a goddess who gave man energy, that is, strength for life [7, p. 269]. As Tengri's spouse, Umay connected man with the metaphysical sky and performed the function of determining the amount of force of world (spiritual) origin. Later it was noted that her function was limited to the role of the guardian and protector of newborn child and young mother from evil forces and harmful demons.

In his study "Umay is the Deity of the Ancient Turks in Light of Ethnographic Data" L.P. Potapov supports the opinion of P.T. Melioransky that Umay lost the function of the god giving "Kut (good)", which means "spirit", "soul", "life" and remained only the patroness of the mother and child [7, p. 255]. Based on this function, Umay is considered a godmother who protects and nourishes the child from the moment he is in the womb until he reaches three years of age. Among the Altai-Sayan Turks, residents of Khakassia, Siberia, Kyrgyz-Kazakhs and other Turkic-speaking peoples, Umay Ana is known as the patroness of the woman who has given birth and the child [7, p. 260]. Therefore, Umay Ana and Anahita have similar functions of patronizing the mother and child, caring for the development of the baby.

In this article, L.P. Potapov relied on the findings of N.P. Dyrenkova and T. Bayalieva that some nomadic Turkic peoples considered the goddess Umay to be the Mother of Fire, the Mistress of Fire. K.A. Zatov connects the origin of Umay with the Sumerians: "It is quite possible that the original meaning of Umay among the Sumerians was Ud-Ai. In the Sumerian language, "ud" corresponds to the Turkic word for "fire". Its next meaning is the source of the sun, which in Turkic means noon (day), time (common Turkic). This is also hinted at by the fact that the late Turks called Umay the Mother of Fire" [10, p. 193]. In the myth "Ayu-batyr and Aisulu" from N. Mynzhanuly's collection "Kazakh Mythical Tales", Umay Ana is shown as the one who gave the hero a flint and taught him how to warm himself by lighting a fire. Fire worship is still reflected in Kazakh rituals associated with fire: "In Kazakh rituals, according to an ancient tradition, when a new daughter-in-law first enters the house, she pours oil into the fire of her large house. She worships the fire that burns as a result of the libation of oil, with the words: "May the mother of fire Umay bless us!" This is a form of fire worship of Umay, the mother of the tribe" [11, p. 35]. In the works of N. Mynzhanuly it is emphasized that Umay is a god who creates a family. It seems that after the goddess Umay lost the function of giving fire, the Mother of Fire or Mistress of Fire appeared. According to the antagonistic relationship between fire and water, the fact that both Umay and Mother of Fire are afraid of water and do not approach it means that they have the same origin [7, 280]. This conclusion distinguishes Umay from the Zoroastrian Anahita. Because Anahita is the goddess of water, rivers and rain, on which the abundance of the harvest depends. Therefore, Anahita and Umay have differences in functions from this point of view. However, the book by A. Nurgali contains the following information: "The power of Umay Ana is to give man fertile soil and sources of clear water. Both are the source of life. Therefore, Umay Ana is considered the Goddess of all food on earth" [12, p. 24]. This collection contains information that the twelve daughters of Umay Ana "block rivers, bring water to desert lands, open springs on mountain tops and work tirelessly so that water is abundant" [12, p. 24].

In the myths and tales of the Turkic peoples, in the oral literature associated with superstitions, there are contradictory statements about the goddess Umay. It can be said that these contradictions are mainly caused by the deprivation of Umay of the status of the supreme god. If Tengri is the god of the blue sky and is responsible for the creation of the universe, then Umay is the owner of the "good" that ensures the prosperity of this being on earth. R.N. Bezertinov describes Umay as follows: "Inhabiting the celestial zone, she emits rays onto the earth that

penetrate a person and, like hot sparks, live in him until death” [9, p. 60]. Umay is described as a gray-haired woman only in the collection of N. Mynzhanuly, in other ethnographic records and oral literature she is characterized by light hair (in our opinion – golden). Thus, it is clear that Umay is the prototype of the Sun. At the same time, it is said that Umay could provide precipitation necessary for the growth and development of animals and plants. If we say that Umay’s functions were limited during the patriarchy, then these functions should have been taken over by Tengri. However, on the contrary, as M. Eliade notes [13], Tengri became a “resting” deity, and Umay – an active deity. From here we can say that the limitation of Umay’s divine functions is associated with the new faith – Islam.

According to researchers, the new religious faith destroys the ancient gods in order to destroy and belittle the status of the old religion, and if not destroy, then seeks to distort their image and make it harmful to humanity [2]. Since the God of Heaven Tengri is not an obstacle to the new religion due to his passivity, even his name is used next to the Almighty Allah. And since the active goddess Umay was an obstacle to the firm establishment of Islam in the Turkic worldview, the process of her elimination was underway. How did this process take place?

The first stage is to deprive Umay Ana of her activity. In order for this process to take place, goddess Umay was deprived of her functions. This process of separation had two directions: the creation of a new being to perform Umay’s function, for example, the birth of Mother of Fire. It is necessary to understand the emergence of Mother of Fire conditionally. It is possible that in the first structure of the community, the Lord of Fire preceded Umay, but in order to strengthen the influence of goddess Umay, the function of the Lord of Fire was transferred to her. Now the reverse process occurs, that is, in order to decompose the essence of Umay, these functions are transferred to other gods and begin to collapse.

In the other direction, the function of a minor deity like Umay is transferred to a passive deity. Deprived of his primary functions, the god will eventually perish. If you notice, the function of the goddess Umay is limited to patronage of the child and mother, and her functions of giving blessings and abundance are not mentioned at all.

The second stage is the denigration of the functions of Umay Ana and her transformation into an evil force that threatens people. Before this, the death of a baby or young women was explained by the absence of Umay Ana nearby. Now, the act associated with the death of a child and mother is associated with the antagonism of Umay Ana.

L.P. Potapov, relying on materials from Khakassia, points out that among the local population, along with Umay-iche, there was also Kara Umay. Kara Umay is described as a demon that harms children: “... the Shors of the Kondoma River basin revered “Mother Umay” as the patroness of children, protecting their lives, and they associated illness and death of infants with Kara-Umay and classified her as an aiza, i.e., as a category of evil spirits in general” [7, p. 275].

In addition, L.P. Potapov writes that in the 1930s, two demonological characters named Albasty and Sary-ene lived side by side among the Uzbeks. The origin of Sary-ene is shown as an angel, and Albasty is included in the ranks of demons. The functions of both are defined as follows: if Sary-ene covers the woman in labor with her long light hair and helps her give birth, then Albasty, on the contrary, acts to the detriment of the child and the mother [7, p. 278]. The author of ethnographic notes connects the genesis of Sary-ene with the goddess Umay: “I think that in Sary-ene of the Khorezm Uzbeks one can assume a transformed image of Umay-ene, which existed among them in the pre-Islamic period” [7, pp. 278–279]. Based on the actions of the “black”, that is, the bad image of Umay Ana, she is completely deprived of the status of a goddess and is transformed into demonological character. At first, stories about how Umay Ana (or Sary-ene) confronted Kara-Umay and tried to stop him became popular, but later stories began to spread more widely, telling only about the villainous actions of Kara-Umay. Kara-Umay also continues to transform. Because where Kara-Umay acts, Umay-ana must also be. At the same time, the Turks

tried not to mention the names of creatures that were considered to bring bad news. Hence, the name Kara-Umay acquires a new name based on the features that define her character. Kara-Umay is known as “Albasty”, that is, “strangling with hands”, since there are often descriptions of young women in labor in a state of sleep paralysis and suffocation. The image of Albasty reflects some of the features of the goddess Umay: Albasty has light hair, if Umay’s light hair is a reference to sunlight, then Albasty’s light hair hints at the owner of a foreign, uncharacteristic color for Turks. Albasty has two nipples hanging from her shoulders, which is a crude representation of the motherly essence of the goddess Umay. Albasty’s heel is turned downwards, and Umay Ana is depicted in many myths as a bird and is also called Kumay. The description of the bird with the foot turned back shows the goal of clarifying the metaphysical essence. Despite the fact that the stories spread among the population contain a demand to make Albasty ugly, it can be said that the image of the goddess Umay has been preserved. In the folklore of the Turkic peoples, there are five common plots associated with Albasty: 1) stealing the lungs of a young woman in the form of a fox or a goat and throwing them into the water; 2) treating and healing a woman whom Albasty stepped on, using the qualities of holy man; 3) separating and saving those who are married to Albasty; 4) taking possession of Albasty’s hair or property and turning him into a servant; 5) attacking travelers in desert areas with the aim of causing them harm in the form of an Old Man or a pile of grass.

If in the previous 4 plots it is known that Albasty is a female character, then in the fifth plot we see that he begins to turn into a man. As the influence of the goddess Umay diminishes, the features associated with her functions continue to disappear in Albasty. Eventually, when the connection between Albasty and Umay is severed, the fact that she is a character born from Umay’s transformation is forgotten, and the result of Umay’s disappearance from the Turkish worldview is observed.

We can notice that the origin of Albasty is a god by his ability to take different forms and shapes and by his metaphysical nature, while the nature of Zheztynak is almost devoid of divine nature. In Kazakh fairy tales, Zheztynak is mentioned as the daughter or mother of Tobekoz or Zhalgyz kozdi dau (One-Eyed Giant) [14]. B. Abzhet connects the words “Dau”, “Diyu” with the Latin “Devs”, the name of the Greek god Zeus [15, p. 134]. According to this, Zheztynak has the divine status of the daughter or mother of the god. This image is very similar to the goddesses of animals and hunting, the Greek Artemis or the Roman Diana.

The beliefs of the Turkic peoples are dominated by the existence of gods associated with nature. In particular, the god “Zher-Su” has two meanings: one is god, the other is a place of residence between heaven and earth, even the name Zher-Su itself has the connotation of “birthplace” [9, p. 58]. S.G. Klyashtorny shows the “holy Zher-Su” as the main deity of the Middle World [16, p. 134]. From the top of the mountain to the forests, lakes and plains, everything was his domain. Among the Turks, the god Zher-Su, in modern language, is transformed into the meaning of the environment, nature, living space, associated with his function of providing life and abundance. Since this God was the source of life for those who lived on the land and in the water, they were all subordinate to him, dependent on him.

At the first stage, the god Zher-Su was presented in an amorphous form according to his name, but over time, based on the function of “abundance, growth (associated with harvest and offspring)”, he began to be depicted in the image of a “beautiful woman, beautiful bride”, capable of bearing offspring: “The Turks represented the deity Yer-Sub as a full, beautiful woman” [9, p. 58]. According to R.N. Bezertinov, the function of the god Zher-Su is mainly to ensure the abundance of livestock and agricultural products, to give health and well-being, happiness and peace. If Tengri with his passivity was assimilated by the Islamic religion, then Zher-Su, based on her generalized essence, is united with the concept of “natural environment”, “habitat”, turning into a physical being with the function of being a human habitat and, as it were, losing its divine status. However, her divine functions related to the general existence were not doomed. If Zher-Su is

responsible for the growth of all life on Earth, then, according to the new belief, its sphere of influence is limited, and it becomes the god of places beyond human habitation, such as forests and desert steppes. Since these places are wild and are home to animals and birds, Zher-Su acts as their protector and guardian. Based on this function, her character is reflected in the image of a half-human – a beautiful woman and half-beast – Zheztyrnak, possessing black power and copper claws.

Along with the responsibility of Zher-Su for all life, her duty to punish according to the command of Tengri is also designated: “In the Orkhon inscriptions, this deity is never mentioned separately, but together with Tengri and Umay (or only with Tengri), he patronizes the Turks and punishes those who have sinned” [16, p. 134]. Thus, the nature of the god Zher-Su can be characterized as follows: the first is the guardian of the natural environment and the animals inhabiting it, and the second is the punisher.

In Turkic folklore, the plot associated with the image of Zheztyrnak is monotonous: When a lone hunter in the evening in the forest or open field makes a fire and cooks meat, a beautiful woman quietly approaches him and sits down next to him. When the hunter offers her meat, she takes it without removing her hand from her long sleeve. But the sound of cautious claws is heard. Noticing this, the hunter puts a log in its place, hunts all night and finally kills Zheztyrnak [17, pp. 95–106].

In these stories, the hunter was not particularly surprised that the beautiful woman was alone in the field, rather, deep down he seemed to know who she was. Usually travelers who walk through a desert area ask each other about their business, but both the hunter and the woman were silent, and it was clear that they knew each other. The hunter was interested in sharing his food with the woman. And so, although the hunter wanted to establish a relationship, his actions were quite rude. The woman accepted the food, but silently left without saying anything. Then she came at night and tried to kill the hunter. Under certain circumstances, Zheztyrnak could kill a hunter while he was sitting by the campfire. However, at first she pretended to test the hunter. Zheztyrnak’s attempt to kill a hunter for violating certain rules regarding the hunter’s prey and the hunted animal gives an idea of the predicates of punishment. It is also noticeable that her character and behavior to act in the middle of the night are more similar to an animal than to a human. Her zoomorphic character allows us to assume that she was a goddess of birds and animals.

Now let’s compare the actions of the god Zher-Su and Zheztyrnak:

1) Zheztyrnak acts as a protector and master of the forest, steppe and a certain place. In oral literature, Zheztyrnak is found only among hunters and bird catchers. It follows that she is the patron of not only this habitat, but also the animals living in this region. The god Zher-Su also takes care of animals and provides them with the land and water in which they live, that is, their life.

2) As has been said above, the function of punishment is assigned to the god Zher-Su. He is not just a god of death, but punishes only those who violate known laws and norms. Zheztyrnak is also interested in punishing the hunter who violated the norms of this place. Therefore, we see that the function of punishing Zher-Su has passed to Zheztyrnak.

3) Both Zher-Su and Zheztyrnak are presented in the form of a young beautiful woman.

These similarities show that Zheztyrnak is connected to the god Zher-Su and suggest that it is a transformed form. If we look at the course of this transformation, then although Zher-Su seems to be a passive deity, without it there is no human existence. Based on its existence, people have access to fruits, animals, cattle and products of the earth. The god Zher-Su is the environment that provides all living things and human life.

Although the god Zher-Su has lost her life-giving function, having turned into Zheztyrnak, he remains the guardian of this natural environment. He does not interfere with those who earn their living by hunting game and birds, but strictly monitors that hunters do not go beyond the limits of what is permitted and do not destroy the natural environment, and punishes violators of the norm. Zheztyrnak, having lost her divine status and become a chthonic demon, can be killed, but the

actions of her sons Tobekoz and daughters-in-law, like herself, resemble natural disasters. The transformation of Zher-Su into Zheztyrnak was different from the transformation of Umai Ana. However, in order to deprive Zher-Su, which belonged to old beliefs, her its divine status, her functions were linked to the phenomena and results of the natural environment, and over time even the distinction between Zher-Su and nature disappeared. In the image of Zheztyrnak, Zher-Su is in human form, i.e. in the form of a permanent “beautiful woman”, so relations with her are reduced to the level of an ordinary person. The stories do not explain the reason for Zheztyrnak’s negative actions, but only describe her one-sided behavior, such as stealing and killing hunters in the middle of the night. The only thing that distinguishes her from humans is her strong claws made of brass or iron, and in some tales, her belly button is made of iron steel. In most tales, Zheztyrnak can only be killed with a gun or a weapon such as an axe. Zheztyrnak is helpless only against a hunter armed with a gun. Therefore, it is impossible to kill Zheztyrnak with a simple weapon. Although the fact that before the hunter with a gun, man has not yet appeared before Zheztyrnak indicates her divine status, we see that the mythical character has lost her power over man due to the development of technology. In the following stories, Zher-Su is presented as an evil demon, hunted by a hunter.

Conclusion

In the Turkic worldview, the gods Umai and Zher-Su hold great importance and high status, and their images are widely represented in folklore. This is especially evident in fairy tales that have retained a mythical tone, where Umai Ana, appearing as a bird or a white-haired mother, helps young people form and start families. Although ancient beliefs were diminished under the influence of Islam and the old gods were relegated to the realm of myth, the functions of Umai and Zher-Su were preserved in folklore, transformed into characters such as Albasty and Zheztyrnak. Their original, primordial functions were transformed into negative roles and were considered harmful, deadly and associated with the ranks of demons such as Albasty and Zheztyrnak. It is established that the stories associated with Albasty mainly consist of five main plots. While the role of the Umai Ana is to act as a guardian for the young mother and her child, in many regional tales, Albasty does the opposite: she steals the lungs of a young woman who has just given birth and throws her into the water in an attempt to take her life. In such stories, the central plot often involves a representative of the Islamic faith or a person with special powers who recognizes the Albasty in the form of a dog, goat, or fox, takes back from him the stolen lungs of a young woman who has just given birth or is in labor, and saves her. This plot not only reflects the intersection of local religious beliefs with newer religious traditions but also illustrates the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy. The second plot revolves around the rescue of the critically ill daughter or wife of a housewife by a guest with special power. Also in these stories, the villain Albasty tries to harm a woman, a man resists her actions and saves the ailing woman or girl. These two plots clearly demonstrate the connection between Albasty and Umai Ana. The actions of Albasty, who emerged as a result of the distortion of the divine function of Umai Ana, are characterized by the theme of causing harm solely to women while being ineffective against men. It can be argued that the emergence of these two plots is a result of the conflict between old and new religious beliefs. The plots involving the marriage to Albasty, using her possessions to turn her into a servant, and causing harm to people in the desert while disguised as an old man, are linked to the beginning of the loss of recognition of Albasty’s divine origin. This transformation marks Albasty as a demonic figure, and her connection to Umai Ana is completely severed.

Since the God of Zher-Su is considered the source of life for the Turkic peoples, oppositional or destructive actions cannot be attributed to him. Therefore, the God of Zher-Su in the image of Zheztyrnak is passive – concerned solely with the protection and preservation of the natural environment, and punishing those who violate the laws of nature. As a fictionalized character, Zheztyrnak personifies the dangers of darkness for a person traveling alone in the desert, potentially

becoming prey to predators. In the relationship between humans and nature, particularly between humans and the wild environment, we observe that the development of weapons enhanced human defensive capabilities and resistance to predators. This growing independence from nature is symbolically reflected in Zheztynrak's repeated killings with a hunting rifle.

If Albasty's divine nature is reflected in her ability to take on various forms such as a goat or a fox, then Zheztynrak's confinement to a specific location signifies her transformation into a demonological figure belonging to a narrative tradition rather than the fairy tale genre.

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