



Article

# On Mythological Essence-Acquiring Beliefs and Terms

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**Abstract:** Myths and beliefs are essential components of folklore, and when we talk about folklore, it is, in fact, human culture itself that we are discussing that shapes folkways, worldviews, and values. These features also are closely tied to rituals, symbols, and magic, embodying people's connection with nature and society. The cultural traditions of Uzbek people in the era of ancient culture are expressed through belief systems such as fetishism, totemism, and the worship of animals and objects. Superstitions about using amulets, talismans, sage, the wolf and snake, and symbols of power for protection and guidance. Traditionally, folklore studies have concentrated on rituals and symbols; however, little has been devoted to the incorporation of totemistic and fetishistic beliefs into the lifeways of Uzbek people in modern contexts. The purpose of this article is to study customs, myths and beliefs in the folklore of the Uzbeks, of which the magical power of an object, an animal, and a cult of ancestors are widely spread in their heritage. It shows that animal and object-related mythological faith has played a key role in social life and culture owing to the evident use of amulets or through rituals conducted on marriage and funeral events. The present study represents an unprecedented examination of the roots of totemism and fetishism found in mythological notions that have remained vital in modern Uzbek folklore. This study emphasizes the need to take account of the historical and cultural background of these myths, providing insights into the continuity and change of ancient beliefs in contemporary Uzbek culture, or rather the recent modification of the ancient spiritual heritage.

**Keywords:** Folklore, Myth, Symbol, Fetishism, Totemism, Amulet, Mythology, Ritual, Magic, Ancestors

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## 1. Introduction

Folklore, one of the important layers of folk oral creativity, has always reflected the lifestyle, worldview, customs and values of people. Iryms, which are one of its components, are a subtle phenomenon that regulates the relationship of man with nature and society, giving it a certain meaning and content.

The experience of interpreting iryms as a work of folklore also exists in world folklore studies. In 1984, the Russian scientist E.G. Pavlova published her observations on the identification of folk iryms, while S.A. Tokarev specifically discussed the historical foundations and magical essence of iryms [1]. In 2013, one of the Russian researchers Viktor Panko published his scientific research on the study of iryms as a genre of folk oral creativity. In 2015, the Chinese researcher Wang Weiyuan defended his master's thesis on the peculiarities of iryms as a genre of folklore [2].

Among Uzbek superstitions, there are also many superstitions based on fetishism and belief in the magical power of objects. Among our people, there are many cases of using amulets and talismans to protect themselves and their loved ones from evil and to attract good luck. People who wear amulets believe that they will be safe from harm. A

magical spell - a prayer - is written inside the amulet [3]. Similarly, wearing amulets is also a common occurrence. An amulet is an enchanted piece of jewelry. Usually, sorcerers recite magic words and breathe on an object and present it to another person, assuring them that it will protect them from evil forces [4].

Among our people, we often witness the custom of some shepherds to nail a horseshoe to the top of the gate of a rural house. Keeping a horseshoe in the yard as a magical object also goes back to the animatic mythology of our ancient ancestors. In ancient Greek mythology, the horseshoe is associated with Zeus, the god of heaven and thunder. The symbolic images of the horseshoe in mythology include: good luck, prosperity [5].

The cult of ancestors and belief in the spirits of the dead gave rise to superstitions related to remembering the deceased and observing the rules of behavior in the cemetery. In Karmana and Khatirchilik, it is forbidden to point at the grave with the index finger bent. If someone does this, they should immediately bite their index finger and say "Astaghfurillah". Otherwise, the danger of getting a sore hand or encountering some evil is predicted [6].

Sometimes among our people we also come across superstitions that it is not possible to plant a flower in the yard, it is not good to plant a poplar in front of the house, and it is bad if a white forest grows in the yard. These omens associated with natural phenomena and plants arose in the mythological imagination associated with the cult of plants. Our ancient ancestors divided plants into two categories: good and bad. They believed that bad plants attract evil forces. White pine was also considered a plant that attracted evil spirits. This plant usually grew in abandoned cemeteries and deserted reserves. It was believed that the dead lived under such plants. Therefore, white pine was not allowed to grow in the yard [7].

Many omens have been living in the rituals of our people's everyday life. For example, there are traditional practices in wedding and mourning ceremonies that are also omens. For example, during a funeral, a woman who was suffering from childlessness is made to cross the path of the coffin. As a result, this woman will soon have children, - it is said. Or it is forbidden to give the bones of an animal slaughtered for a funeral to a dog. If it is given to a dog, the corpse will suffer in the grave. A lamp is lit in the house where the deceased was found for forty days. There are views that this rite also appeared in connection with the ancient belief in fire worship. In our opinion, the tradition of lighting a lamp to please the soul of the deceased is a product of animistic mythology and is interconnected with Zoroastrianism. In the scientific observations of folklorist O. Kayumov, the lighting of a censer is interpreted as one of the important attributes of the shamanic ritual, namely a censer as a means of invoking the mythological patron spirits of the shaman [6]. Because ancient beliefs always logically complement each other. We can see this phenomenon in the connection between animism and Islam, animism and Zoroastrianism. We can observe this in the content of the myths that appeared in the context of beliefs such as friendship, totemism and animism [8].

Totemism is one of the forms of primitive religion, based on the mystical connection of a group or tribe with a certain animal, plant or object. This connection is manifested by worshiping an object called a totem, considering it sacred and paying respect to it. Some myths are often associated with animals, and these animals are accepted as ancestors, patrons or symbols of the group. Among Turkic peoples, there is a myth of sewing a wolf and its claws and teeth into the cradle or headrest of children, supposedly to protect the child from evil spirits. Among Turkic peoples, the wolf is considered the head of an ancestor. A famous legend about the ancient Turks tells that the wolf is the ancestor of the Turks: "The free life of a certain Turkic family disturbed a neighboring prince. Choosing the right time, he sent his army against them. The Turkic tribe was defeated. The enemy soldiers killed people and stole livestock. However, during the battle, a ten-year-old boy survived. The soldiers did not kill the boy. However, fearing the wrath of the bloodthirsty

khan, who ordered the Turkic tribe to be destroyed without leaving a single person, the soldiers cut off the arms and legs of the boy and threw him into a meadow lake. Here he was to die in terrible torment. The dust had already settled behind the enemy army that had passed. The boy had lost consciousness. A she-wolf came, circled the boy, sniffed him, and disappeared into the thick bushes along the shore. After some time, the wolf brought back mysterious medicines in his fangs. The wolf went through a lot of trouble to heal the boy's wounds [9].

## 2. Materials and Methods

It is not known how much time passed, but the khan heard rumors that the boy was alive. More soldiers were sent to the lake to destroy the boy. It is not known what happened to the last representative of the clan, but the female wolf managed to escape. After some time, the wolf appeared in the Altai Mountains. There was a cave in the mountains, and in the cave was a plain covered with thick grass. There were mountains on all four sides of the cave. Here the wolf took refuge and gave birth to ten sons, each of whom took his own offspring from the young man. One of the wolf's sons was Ashina, the name of the previous generation. This man had great abilities, and therefore he was chosen as the head of the family. Ashina, in memory of her miraculous birth, made her banner with the image of a wolf's head decorated with. His family gradually increased to several hundred families. After some time, a man named Asyan-she came out of the cave with the whole territory and declared himself a vassal of the Zhuzhan Khan.

Time passed. The son and the wolf became more numerous, and people wanted to become a people. The brothers gathered and began to decide who would unite their relatives and become the first khagan. They argued for a long time and could not agree. Finally, they asked Kam for advice. Kam thought a lot. He began his sacred ritual, his soul left his body and flew to heaven. He passed through the five heavens and stopped at the handle of the staff of Tengri - the Golden Stake star. Here the soul of Kam heard the sacred words and returned. He set off on a difficult path, conveying the will of Tengri to his brothers. If Kam ascended Baiterek and was higher than all the brothers, then he was the closest to Tengri, the khagan will be. Baiterek is not just a tree, but a path to the sky, to the throne of the Great Tengri. The brothers came to the Great Tree and began to climb up. They descended from the branches, their arms and legs torn, exhausted. The only person who climbed higher than all was Ashina. He even touched the wings of the sacred eagle before descending. They said that at the top of the tree, angering the people, Ashina simply hid in the thick branches and waited for him to fall from the tree. Only then did he descend and declare himself the winner. The people did not know whom to believe. Then the Kamlars came to the foot of the tree and decided to wait for the sign of Tengri. With the morning sun rising, the brothers stood on the crown of Baiterek. After some time, the mighty eagle descended from the tree and, having made seven sacred circles, landed on Ashina's head fell.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Now no one doubted that Tengri would choose him. Thus, the first khagan of the Turks appeared, and Ashina's descendants ruled the people for many more years.

Ashina - the name means "noble wolf". A banner with a golden wolf's head was always hung above Ashina. The Turks call themselves the "fed wolf's milk". As a sign of respect for the crow, which did not allow the descendants of the Turks to perish in the swamp, Ashina's golden seed was called the golden bird or the golden red crow seed.

Ashina's descendants Asyan-shod led five hundred families out of the cave, came to Altai, mixed with neighboring peoples, and took the name Turk. When the Turks multiplied, a sinegrivorous wolf came to them and led them to conquer new lands at sunset. When it was time to go, the wolf cried out "Kosh, Kosh - "On the road!" he shouted,

and people followed him. They conquered many lands and built a great empire." The Uzbek people also considered the wolf as their ancestor from ancient times, so its skin, claws, and The belief that the tooth also protects its descendants from evil arose.

S. A. Tokarev notes that "Totemistic myths are also known in America and Africa, but in general not in their usual form, since totemism disappears with the early social system" [10]. Cultural heroes associated with totems - the Tsagna corn cob among the Bushmen, crows and others among the peoples of North Asia and America, as well as the myth of the origin of the Por and Moose phratries among the water thieves - are also visible. In mythology, ideas about the marriage of a person with a zoomorphic primitive, zooanthropomorphic nature creature or a creature capable of evolution are widespread. This marriage gives birth to a people. The legends about the Duse tiger among the Oroks, the Oleinkh Muzdyu among the Kyrgyz, and the Myak Eash among the Sami tell about this. Zoomorphic symbols (animals associated with the cult of Mars and animals indicating the places of settlement), the conquests of twin souls (naguals), and others are also associated with totemistic ideas [11].

In the mythology of many peoples of the world, the wolf is depicted as a symbol of strength, courage, independence, and freedom. The wolf can also be associated with fear, savagery, and evil. For example, among the Turkic peoples, the wolf is considered a sacred animal, and its image is depicted on flags and other symbolic signs. On the contrary, in Christianity, the wolf is perceived as a symbol of Satan and sin. Among the Uzbeks, there are also cases of considering the wolf an evil force. For example, the Khatir peoples refer to the wolf as a night enemy. They believe that if they see a wolf, it will come at night and oppress their lives, property, and souls.

In the mythology of many peoples, the snake is depicted as a symbol of wisdom, secret knowledge, fertility, healing, and rebirth. At the same time, the snake is also considered a symbol of danger, deceit, and evil. For example, in ancient Greece, the snake was considered a symbol of the god of medicine Asclepius. In the teachings of the Christian faith, the snake is perceived as a symbol of the devil and temptation [13].

Totemism and animal-related myths are an important part of human culture. By studying them, we can understand the worldview of ancient societies, their moral and religious values, as well as the relationship between man and nature. Sometimes animal-related myths are interpreted as harbingers of events: "If a dog barks, there will be trouble," "Seeing a spider is a sign of money coming." In myths, animals also appear as symbols characterizing qualities and strength. For example, the fox symbolizes cunning, cunningness, the wolf symbolizes strength, and the snake symbolizes wisdom and cunning [14].

The Uzbek people have totemistic myths that are based on the veneration of animals. Like the wolf, which we mentioned above, the Uzbeks of the Zarafshan oasis also venerate the snake. The Khatirchi and Nurota people call the snake Uzunopa at night.

Among the Uzbek myths, myths related to magical thinking and rituals also form a separate category. Myths based on belief in the power of words and actions: "What you wish for, will come true", "How you greet the New Year, will be the same". We can see rituals to attract good luck and ward off misfortune: spitting over the left shoulder, knocking on wood, burning negative emotions, etc. In Uzbek iryms, we can see the use of symbolic actions to change reality: tying knots for good luck, burying problems in the ground, etc. Often, our people practice the irym of tying a rag with an intention to trees growing in a secluded place in the mountains, plants in shrines. This irym arose primarily as a result of the belief that plants have a soul, a soul, and secondly, people intend to untie the crocodile knot when their dreams come true. The rag is a symbol of this desire, a symbol of the knot, a problem, in the essence of the irym. In short, the meaning of iryms is important as a folklore genre related to the lifestyle and life of the people. In iryms, first of all, archaic ideas and cultural values of our people find their expression. The essence of

Uzbek iryms is often found in the ancient religious ideas of our ancestors: fetishistic and totemistic views. Ancient mythological ideas were formed in the minds of our primitive ancestors and were transferred to their lifestyle and social relations through myths. Myths were formed as a result of the transition from thought to action of taboos or motivational motives, imbued with beliefs that acquired a mythological essence. As a result of the socialization of myths, they became popular as values and have reached us [15].

#### 4. Conclusion

The study concludes that belief systems rooted in fetishism and totemism are integral to understanding the myths and customs of the Uzbek people. These beliefs not only reflect the deep connection between humans and nature but also offer insight into the ways in which ancient myths continue to inform contemporary practices. The article emphasizes the enduring relevance of folklore in preserving cultural identity and spiritual beliefs across generations.

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