

Zh. Zανάdíl 

Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Turkish-Kazakh University, Kazakhstan, Almaty
e-mail: zhuldiz_zanadil@hotmail.com

THE MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGE OF KORKYT ATA: SPIRITUAL MENTOR AND HERO IN KAZAKH AND TURKIC CULTURE

In the analysis of the mythological role of Korkyt Ata in Kazakh culture and other ethnic contexts, complex symbolism and universal aspects emerge. Korkyt Ata, a legendary figure, possesses numerous mythological nuances related to heroism, fate, and spiritual wisdom. Comparative studies reveal that the image of Korkyt Ata has varying shades in Kazakh, Turkish, and Azerbaijani mythology. He appears as both a warrior hero and a spiritual mentor. His legends often incorporate symbols of water, connected with birth and death, as well as motifs of celestial and Tengri-related associations. These elements combine cosmic and earthly aspects, reflecting deep cultural and philosophical notions of life, death, and immortality. The image of Korkyt Ata, being archetypal, transcends cultural and epochal boundaries, inspiring contemplation of profound life questions and universal mythological themes.

Key words: Korkyt Ata, Mythological Symbolism, Cross-Cultural Interpretation, Heroic Archetype, Spiritual Mentor, Cultural Context.

Ж. Занадил

Қожа Ахмет Ясауи атындағы Халықаралық қазақ-түрік университеті
Еуразия ғылыми-зерттеу институты, Қазақстан, Алматы қ.
e-mail: zhuldiz_zanadil@hotmail.com

Қорқыт атаның мифологиялық бейнесі: қазақ және түркі мәдениетіндегі рухани тәлімгер және батыр

Қорқыт атаның қазақ мәдениетіндегі және басқа этникалық контексттегі мифологиялық рөлін талдау күрделі символдық және әмбебап аспектілерді ашады. Аты аңызға айналған тұлға Қорқыт атаның ерлікпен, тағдырмен, рухани даналыққа байланысты көптеген мифологиялық бейнелері бар. Салыстырмалы зерттеулер Қорқыт ата бейнесінің қазақ, түрік, әзірбайжан мифологиясында әртүрлі реңктерге ие екендігін көрсетеді. Ол батыр-жауынгер және рухани тәлімгер ретінде көрінеді. Оның аңыздарында көбінесе өмірге келу мен өлімге байланысты су таңбалары, сондай-ақ аспандық және тәңірлік бірлестіктердің мотивтері бар. Бұл элементтер өмір, өлім мен өлместік туралы терең мәдени және философиялық идеяларды көрсететін ғарыштық және жердегі аспектілерді біріктіреді. Қорқыт ата бейнесі архетиптік бола отырып, мәдени-дәуірлік шекараларды еңсеріп, өмірдің терең мәселелері мен әмбебап мифологиялық тақырыптарға шабыттандырады.

Түйін сөздер: Қорқыт ата, мифологиялық символизм, мәдениетаралық интерпретация, батырлық архетип, рухани тәлімгер, мәдени контекст.

Ж. Занадил

Международный казахско-турецкий университет
имени Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави, Казакстан, г. Алматы
e-mail: zhuldiz_zanadil@hotmail.com

Мифологический образ Коркыт Ата: духовный наставник и герой в казахской и тюркской культуре

В анализе мифологической роли Коркыт Ата в казахской культуре и других этнических контекстах проявляются сложные символические и универсальные аспекты. Коркыт Ата, легендарная фигура, обладает многочисленными мифологическими образами, связанными с героизмом, судьбой и духовной мудростью. Сравнительные исследования показывают, что образ Коркыт Ата имеет разные оттенки в казахской, турецкой и азербайджанской мифологии. Он предстает как воин-герой и духовный наставник. Его легенды часто включают символы воды, связанные с рождением и смертью, а также мотивы небесных и тенгрийских ассоциаций.

Эти элементы объединяют космические и земные аспекты, отражая глубокие культурные и философские представления о жизни, смерти и бессмертии. Образ Кorkyt Ата, будучи архетипическим, преодолевает культурные и эпохальные границы, вдохновляя к размышлениям о глубоких вопросах жизни и универсальных мифологических темах.

Ключевые слова: Кorkyt Ата, мифологическая символика, межкультурная интерпретация, героический архетип, духовный наставник, культурный контекст.

Introduction

The study of the rich culture of the Kazakhs and the analysis of its evolution in various sociocultural contexts in which the ethnic group realized itself is important not only to identify differences between traditional and modern aspects but also to understand the deep connection between ethnic identity and worldview.

Elements of Kazakh culture found their formation over many centuries, long before the formation of national identity. This process included the participation of many tribal associations, each of which introduced its special elements into the perception and understanding of the surrounding world. However, despite the diversity, there was a common denominator - a horse-nomadic civilization, which became the basis for uniting and forming a common picture of the world.

The Kazakh picture of the world left a deep mark on the culture and worldview of the ethnic group. This is a view focused on a cosmocentric perspective, where a person is closely intertwined with the surrounding nature. It expresses their unique attitude to the world, where everything has its place and meaning - from the stars and the sky to the earth and man. It is a single whole in which each element plays its role in the harmonious symphony of the world.

Therefore, the study of Kazakh culture allows us to deepen our understanding of the relationship between ethnic identity and worldview. Its richness and centuries-old evolution speak of a deep respectful connection between man and the world, enriching our understanding of the diversity of cultural approaches to understanding the surrounding reality.

For hundreds of years, cosmocentrism permeated the Kazakh picture of the world, perhaps as an unconscious reality. The idea of the Universe saturated with the cosmic atmosphere, and the view of man and his place in this great harmony were preserved, perhaps without deep reflection. However, this worldview is rethought through cultural expressions (Kokumbaeva, 2022).

In many cultures, images, and symbols embody profound philosophical beliefs. The image of Korkyt

Ata, a legendary figure in Kazakh mythology, is closely tied to cosmocentrism - the doctrine of the central role of nature in human worldview. Korkyt Ata, embodying the archetype of a hero and sage, transcends the boundaries of time and cultures, permeating legends of heroism and spiritual development. Elements of his legends, including symbols of water and celestial associations, reveal both spiritual and everyday aspects, reflecting deep philosophical concepts about life, death, and immortality. Thus, the image of Korkyt Ata becomes a bridge between the human soul and the vast universe, opening new horizons for understanding universal mythological themes.

The profound consciousness and understanding of the universe as an integrated cosmic entity, along with the inherent limitations of humanity and its existence, find a profound embodiment in the demiurgic endeavors of the forebears of Kazakh culture, notably Korkyt-Ata. His appellation assumes a rich tapestry of connotations, encompassing the realms of cosmogony, music, ethnogenesis, ethics, and humanism. Mythological awareness does not lay claim to being an unmediated reflection of life's primordial origins; rather, it artfully reconstructs this primordality through mythologemes that eloquently narrate the universe's inception. This cosmogonic mythos, interwoven with the birthing of the Universe, Time, and Space and inextricably tied to the persona of Korkyt-ata, operates as an almost prophetic voice that unveils and disentangles the true essence and processes governing the Universe's formation. It stands as a pivotal juncture that demands attention, as its foundational tenets intersect harmoniously with contemporary scientific paradigms encompassing the Universe, Time, and Space, in addition to the intricate nexus that binds humanity with the cosmos. This enigmatic mythological legacy beckons us to explore the boundaries between ancient wisdom and modern knowledge, revealing a tapestry of connections that intertwine Man and the World.

Materials and Methods

The research material encompasses an analysis of legends, myths, and symbols related to the Korkyt

Ata image in both Kazakh and Azerbaijani mythologies. Texts from various sources in Kazakh, Azerbaijani, and English languages were utilized for the analysis. The research methodology involves comparative analysis, semiotic examination of symbols and plots, and the exploration of the Korkyt Ata image's cultural and philosophical contexts. The analysis results identify common mythological themes and universal symbols associated with the hero, revealing profound cultural and spiritual aspects.

An analysis of the priorities of cultural creativity within the framework of the Kazakh worldview, types of creative practice, and value orientations that strengthen this worldview approach in the historical development of traditional Kazakh culture, reveals strong links with the influence of Korkyt-Ata. This fusion of the ideals enshrined in culture and the contribution of Korkyt-Ata forms a special image of Man and the World, uniting them into a harmonious unity.

The aim of this article is to analyze the differences in the interpretation of the image of Korkyt Ata as a hero of epic in various cultures, including Azerbaijani, and to compare this interpretation with his portrayal as a spiritual mentor in Kazakh folklore. Through a comparative analysis of different mythological contexts, we aim to uncover how these two distinct roles, heroic and spiritual, are shaped and perceived in different cultures. This article also aims to explore the influence of Korkyt Ata on cultural practices and value orientations in each of these cultures, shedding light on significant aspects related to mythology, heritage, and identity.

Discussion

Significant divergence exists in how the character of Korkyt-ata is perceived within Kazakh folklore compared to the folk narratives of other Turkic communities. Among the Kazakhs, Korkyt embodies a more mythical archetype, serving as the sacred spirit of the steppe (aruakh), a shaman, visionary, and architect of Kazakh musical heritage. On the other hand, in the folklore of other Turkic ethnicities, Korkyt often assumes the role of a storyteller, narrating heroic epics, particularly those intertwined with historical figures from the 12th to 15th centuries, mainly within the realm of Azerbaijan. These sagas find their embodiment in the manuscript "Kitabi Dede Korkud." (Oynas, 1978)

Thus, revealing the Kazakh culture and its evolution, we deepen the understanding of the close relationship between ethnic identity and views of the world. The richness of its forms and seman-

tic aspects allows us to look into the depths of the worldview that taught and teaches us the harmonious neighborhood of Man and the Universe.

The epic "Kitabi Dede Korkud" or "The Book of My Grandfather Korkud" stands as an exquisite product forged through the intricate evolution of oral folk poetry. Each thread of this age-old tradition becomes discernible in the creative tapestry encapsulated within a text compiled solely in the 15th century. However, its roots delve much deeper, tracing back to the era when the Oguz Turks emerged in Iran during the 11th-12th centuries. Scrutiny by the American anthropologist Michael Meeker substantiates that the legends and ballads within this epic could not have materialized before the 13th century (Meeker, 1992). Only in the 15th century did written monuments begin to crystallize, preserving the essence of this narrative tradition.

The epos "Kitabi Dede Korkud" serves as a testament to the profound symbiosis between the collective memory of the Turkic peoples and their intricate narrative prowess. This literary endeavor encapsulates not only the tales of valiant heroes but also the enduring connection between the past, present, and future of these cultures. As we explore the enigmatic realm of Korkyt-ata across diverse folklore traditions, we uncover the intricate mosaic of human creativity, preserving echoes of bygone epochs while reflecting the intricate dance between cultural continuity and evolution.

Researcher Viktor Zhirmunsky notes that the content of the epic Oghuz tales is much older than the literary processing that they received in the "Book of Korkud" of the 15th century. According to his analysis, the Oghuz legends arose in the form of heroic songs in the 9th-10th centuries in the Oguz settlement area on the Syr Darya and then remained in the oral tradition, were processed in the Near East, replenished with new heroes and plots (Zhirmunsky, 1962). Thus, the epic "Kitabi Dede Korkud" is the result of the selection, fixation, and processing of these songs during the military expansion of the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century.

This epic legend, which lives on the pages of "Kitabi Dede Korkud", reflects a surprisingly consonant story, covering many events that took place on Azerbaijani soil. It is no coincidence that many battles and moments of songs unfold in the areas of Demirkapy Derbent, Barda, Ganja, Deresham, Alinja, and Karadag, as well as along Lake Gogcha and at the foot of Karachuk. The canvas of these works is intertwined with the threads of events that personify the national heritage and color of this land.

Unlike the myths and legends that have reached us from the Kipchak Turks, “Kitabi Dede Korkud”, consisting of 12 independent songs, finds its uniqueness in its organic connection with a common plot, images, and heroes. This work is a monument skillfully synthesized by the creator of the great epic. There are also older heroes, such as Kazan Khan, Dirse Khan, Kazyly Goja, Bekil, Baybejan, Aruz, Garagyune, and representatives of the younger generation: Beyrek, Uruz, Basat, Yeynek, Sekrek, Karabudag, Amran (Hajiyev, 2015).

The central theme of this epic is the spirit of heroism, where courage and fearlessness are considered the highest virtues. Heroes, rebelliously standing up in the battle for their homeland, become the main characters of this story. It is this idea that gives “Kitabi Dede Korkud” a unique energy and makes it unique in comparison with “Korkyt Ata”.

Azerbaijani historian Sh. Jamshidov expressed his thoughts about the place of this epic in a certain geographical environment, noting that “Kitabi Dede Korkud” is nothing more than a historical dastan (Dzhamshidov, 1983). This work, in the language of folk art, conveys the ancient culture, the conditions of social life, and the emerging period of the statehood of the Oghuz, revealing their political-administrative and military-geographical environment.

V. Bartold also wrote about the fact that the Syr Darya is the birthplace of Korkyt: “Legends about the folk storyteller, sage and predictor Korkyt Ata, which arose in the Syrdarya valley, moved west to the Turkmens, met further in Anatolia, in the Ottoman era they existed until the 17th century among Azerbaijan, in the 10th century among the Pechenegs” (Bartold, 1962).

The final version of this epic was recorded in the 15th century on the territory of modern Azerbaijan under the title “The Book about my grandfather Korkud in the Language of the Oghuz Tribe”. This heroic epic has become an outstanding result of the long development of oral folk poetry, surpassing the limits of the literary creations of the Turkic world. Since the beginning of the 19th century, it has attracted the attention of foreign scientists, who put it on par with folk tales that have won worldwide fame.

Thus, “Kitabi Dede Korkud” is not only an epic work that embodies the heroism and spirit of the nation but also a historical artifact, permeated with culture and traditions. In his songs, the endless valor of the heroes, devotion to the native land, and a living connection with a rich heritage flourishes.

The image of Korkyt tata in Kazakh mythology absorbs the whole spirit of the great steppe, starting

from the vast expanses of Siberia, Turkestan, and a particularly important place along the banks of the Syr Darya River, leaving a mysterious trace, transmitted through numerous legends and myths of the great sage. The essence of these legends, many centuries separating us from their origins, has become a thin fragment of the culture and history of the people.

Thus, the sublime “Korkyt-Ata”, originally associated with the Kazakh shamanic culture and living in the lands of Turkestan and along the banks of the Syr Darya, acquired a significant significance in the historical, geographical and ethnic context by its resettlement in Azerbaijani territories. Merging into the society of ethnic consciousness and combining from various sources, including Oguzname and Tezkire, it is gaining new significance in the Azerbaijani historical environment. Hence, Korkyt Ata becomes the owner of a real spatiotemporal entity.

In a plethora of both Kazakh and Russian-language sources, one can discern a recurrent exploration of the mythological nuances and structural-semantic interpretations surrounding the persona of Korkyt Ata. Nonetheless, a pivotal inquiry lingers unanswered: the elucidation of the Turkestan-Syrdarya’s and Azerbaijani-Turkish-Turkmen’s perspectives on the epic remains enigmatic and inconclusively settled.

The name of Korkyt resonates with myriad mythological facets that unfurl the profound intricacies of this emblematic figure. Diverse scholars, including O. Suleimenov, Z. Naurzabayeva, and S. Sh. Ayazbekov, approach this multifaceted icon from divergent vantage points, unveiling its myriad dimensions.

Although the historical context of Korkyt Ata as a figure of yore has garnered considerable scrutiny, the exploration of its ancient mythological underpinnings has received scant attention. Within the limited corpus that delves beyond historical boundaries into the mythos, three noteworthy studies emerge.

The inaugural contribution hails from Olzhas Suleimenov and is aptly titled “Turkiler kuninin batuy men shyguy” (Sunset and Sunrise of the Turks). In this treatise, the author delves into the allegorical essence of Korkyt Ata’s image, entwining it with solar mythology. This exploration unravels the mythic facets underpinning the image and its influence on the archaic beliefs of Turkic communities (Suleymenov, 1999).

The second exploration emanates from the realm of cultural studies, authored by Zira Naurzabayeva,

within this scholarly pursuit, Naurzbayeva scrutinizes the genesis of Tengrianism, forging links between the persona of Korkyt and this primal universal tradition (Naurzbaeva, 2013). She unveils the mythic strata enshrouding Korkyt's image as an embodiment of Tengri, further delineating seven distinct aspects within this portrayal.

The third scholarly exploration, authored by S. Sh. Ayazbekova and titled "A Glimpse into the Ethnos' World: Korkyt-ata and the Philosophical Resonance of Kazakh Music," delves into the examination of Korkyt's image through the lens of the musical philosophy inherent in Kazakh culture (Ayazbekova, 2011). In this work, the author uncovers the interplay between Korkyt's mythic portrayal and his role as a creator of music, unveiling his profound impact on the spiritual perception of the Kazakh populace.

While the research endeavors of O. Suleimenov, Z. Naurzbayeva, and S. Sh. Ayazbekova may at times exhibit disparities, they should not be perceived as contradictory or erroneous. Instead, they signify diverse facets of the intricate mosaic that constitutes the multifaceted image of Korkyt. As future investigations shed light on new dimensions of this portrayal, it is conceivable that their findings might harmonize into a unified paradigm, revealing the full depth and enigma of this mythological symbol.

In this light, the depiction of Korkyt is remarkably intricate, warranting a comprehensive analysis from assorted perspectives. The legends surrounding Korkyt's origin are infused with classical mythic symbols that transcend both Western and Eastern cultural boundaries. Symbolism is also deeply entrenched within the appellation "Korkyt," with its primary interpretation aligning with the notion of "fear." In the Kazakh language, the term "Korkyt" resonates with meanings like "frighten" and "fright." The origin of this name finds its roots in ancient lore, recounting a tale where the mother of the future Korkyt purportedly consumed the flesh of a kulan before his birth. Her pregnancy extended for an astonishing three years and nine days, marked by recurrent contractions. Eventually, the day of his birth arrived, heralded by a tempest that threatened with thunder, lightning, and tumultuous winds, enshrouding the surroundings in a veil of darkness.

From the moment the baby was born, an extraordinary phenomenon unfolded: he spoke, a sight that evoked fear among those present. Initially, the locals speculated that the child might be a demon in infant form. However, once they realized that this child was no different from any other, their apprehensions subsided. The consensus among the

guests who had gathered to celebrate the birth was that "His magnificent birth scared us so much that he should be given the name Korkyt."

Derived from this legend, the name "Korkyt" symbolizes an exceptional event while concurrently representing a journey encompassing fear and great expectations. This name is tied to a remarkable narrative that epitomizes the potency of birth and embodies a resounding call to courage and determination.

The legend surrounding Korkyt's birth resonates with classical myths about the emergence of "heroes," "demigods," and "prophets" across diverse cultures, yet consistently sharing common elements. For instance, the birth of Krishna in Hinduism, accompanied by miraculous occurrences, the advent of Hercules and Perseus in ancient Greek mythology, and even the arrival of John the Baptist and Jesus in Christianity. In each instance, the birth of such figures characterizes a challenging epoch within the history of the people to whom the hero belongs, heralding impending transformations.

While historical consensus regarding the precise dates of Korkyt's existence remains elusive, most historians concur that Korkyt lived during the transition from the 9th to the 10th century. This epoch was marked by profound challenges for the forebears of the Kazakhs residing in the expanse of the Great Steppe, as they grappled with cultural and spiritual shifts amid the propagation of Islam. Thus, the name Korkyt symbolizes the people's apprehensions about current dilemmas and impending changes.

As aforementioned, the birth of mythical figures is often accompanied by extraordinary natural phenomena. In this context, the legend narrates that before Korkyt's birth, a fierce thunderstorm swept through the steppe, symbolizing a connection to the sky and Tengri - the paramount deity of the nomads before the advent of Islam. This thunderstorm also accentuates the symbolism of water, which remains a pivotal motif throughout Korkyt's life, reinforcing ties to classical mythic imagery across various cultures. The linkage with Tengri is depicted in legends through bestowed providence and direct dialogues between our hero and the Supreme Tengri. Iran-Gayyp, in his poem influenced by folk myths, describes Korkyt's entreating of Tengri right after birth. Korkyt, in his inconsolable cries, yearns to ascend to the heavens to commune with the Highest - Tengri - an image that encapsulates the collective sorrow of humankind:

«I am insensible, and listen, I can't bear it much, perhaps it's because You are aggrieved. All

the universal sorrows, How futile. Am I! In my mother's womb, I endured for three years! While You were already, from the outset, showering me with happiness, to be within the womb alone: Nine months and nine days» (Iran-Gayip, 2012).

Korkyt's fervent contemplation commences with the retelling of the legend that revolves around his stay in his mother's womb for an astounding three years. Korkyt's contemplations about his divine election through a miraculous birth strongly echo the biblical motifs enshrouding the birth of the Messiah. As aforementioned, water stands as a paramount symbol within the narratives encompassing Korkyt's legacy, notably with the Syr Darya River being designated as the abode of the illustrious forebear of the Kazakhs.

In Kazakh culture, Korkyt also embodies the archetype of a sage, to whom the authorship of numerous proverbs and aphorisms is attributed. These sayings predominantly revolve around themes of martial prowess, valor, human integrity, the quest for life's meaning, and the education of the younger generation.

The illustrious scholar V.V. Bartold perceptively remarked that the insights of Korkyt foreshadow an era he (i.e. Korkyt) might prefer not to witness. This impending epoch is predicted to be characterized by a lack of parental compassion for their offspring and a fading reverence of children toward their parents. This prophetic foresight harbors a profound anticipation of societal transformations, wherein virtues and familial values will confront unprecedented challenges. This dimension unquestionably pervades Korkyt's mythos, unveiling age-old ideological milestones that transcend the confines of the Kazakh people. Embedded within is a pivotal comprehension of the cosmos, natural principles, and vitality, deeply entrenched in an ardent thirst for life. In this overarching context, the prediction of such an era resonates with motifs akin to the Day of Judgment and the Apocalypse, as echoed in diverse religious mythologies.

Within this narrative framework, Korkyt assumes dual roles as both a prophetic visionary and a mentor of his people. He embodies not solely the attributes of a sage and a minstrel but equally encapsulates the essence of a guardian entrusted with spiritual treasures. His sagacity finds articulate expression through proverbs, which in turn illuminate pathways for forthcoming generations to navigate. The contemporary individual shoulders the profound responsibility of safeguarding and bequeathing this

reservoir of wisdom to posterity, recognizing its profound significance for the spiritual trajectory of the nation yet to unfold.

The life and legacy of Korkyt Ata mirror not only the collective spiritual quests of his people, but also epitomize courage, sagacity, and unwavering dedication to the realm of art. His destiny becomes an embodiment of spiritual heritage, one that imparts profound lessons to every individual – lessons about upholding values, championing goodness, and surmounting the inevitable adversities of life. Thus, Korkyt Ata not only personifies archaic mythological dimensions but equally serves as a perennial inspiration for contemporary generations. These successors undertake the noble task of preserving and propagating spiritual principles, thereby enriching the cultural tapestry and enduring legacy of their cherished homeland.

The core saga encapsulating the life of Korkyt Ata revolves around his valiant quest to evade the inexorable clutches of death. Confronted with the impending specter of mortality, Korkyt embarks on a sweeping odyssey that traverses the farthest reaches of the world, spanning every corner in his fervent bid for survival. Yet, despite his tireless journey, the somber shadow of death continues to linger, casting an unrelenting pall over his path. Faced with the desperation of his plight, Korkyt gazes heavenward, his voice rising in supplication to the celestial realm, beseeching for guidance on how to escape the relentless grasp of death.

In response to his earnest plea, a resonant voice descends from the heavens, its ethereal tones carrying a message of both wisdom and admonition: "O Foolish Seeker, turn thy steps in retreat! It is only upon the soil from whence you emerged that the refuge of eternal peace shall be found. The very place that cradled your existence is the nexus of the earth's core." Heeding this celestial counsel, Korkyt reverses his arduous journey, retracing his steps until he once again stands upon the familiar banks of the Syr Darya, his homeland and the epicenter of his being.

Within the confines of this narrative, two profound religious motifs intertwine and resonate. First, the futility of evading the implacable hand of fate is underscored, a timeless reminder that the inexorable march of destiny cannot be thwarted by mortal endeavors. Second, the sanctity of one's homeland emerges as an enduring theme, elevated to the level of sacred significance. Korkyt's homeland is imbued with divine reverence, denoted as the "navel of the earth", evoking its pivotal role in the

cosmic tapestry and the profound interconnectedness of all life.

As alluded to previously, water emerges as a dominant and symbolic motif within the rich fabric of Korkyt's legends, an element that resurfaces once more in this particular narrative. The Syr Darya, a powerful and life-sustaining river, occupies a central role in this tale, bestowed with a sacred status as the very embodiment of the earth's navel. This characterization finds its roots in the river's vital importance to the nomadic cultures of the steppe, where it serves as both a source of sustenance and a conduit of life itself.

The symbology of water takes on profound dimensions, encapsulating the essence of Korkyt's birth and eventual passage from this world. On his arrival, thunderstorms and torrential rains herald his emergence, mirroring the elemental forces of creation itself. Likewise, his departure occurs by the river's edge, where the currents of the Syr Darya carry him on his final journey, reminiscent of the sacred rivers that guide souls to the beyond in various mythologies.

In this intricate narrative tapestry, the figure of Korkyt Ata transcends the boundaries of individuality, embodying archetypal themes that resonate across cultures and epochs. His odyssey becomes a canvas on which the interplay of fate, the sanctity of homeland, and the symbolism of water are vividly painted. Korkyt's journey becomes a timeless reminder of the human quest to understand mortality, destiny, and the profound interconnectedness of all existence. His name reverberates not only through the annals of Kazakh folklore but also through the universal currents of mythic symbolism, inspiring contemplation and exploration of life's most profound mysteries.

It is worth noting that among the Kazakh shamans, there is still a conspiracy that sounds like:

“You frighten misfortune and damage,
Perished in the water - Korkyt!”
(Mamedova, 2022).

In the context of the Islamic faith, the principle “Remember death” is extremely important. It carries with it a deep meaning: to encourage a person to consider his insufficiency and to raise in him the spirit of repentance. History records cases when, before death, people turned to the Deity, dig a grave for themselves, and spent the night in it. All this, of course, reflects the desire to understand the limits of life and its conjugation with the mystery of death.

So, according to legend, Korkyt, trying to gain immortality, returns to the shores of the Syr Darya and plays the kobyz until he is mortally stung by a snake, which, by the way, is also a symbol of human mortality in many religions of the world. Death in this legend should be perceived as gaining freedom, and the music of the Korkyt sounding in the vast expanses of the steppe is a symbol of the achievement of immortality.

In Kazakh mythology, music, the steppe, and freedom hold significant importance, symbolizing the profound cultural, spiritual, and historical dimensions of the people. These concepts intricately tie into collective identity, worldview, and values. Musical instruments like the kobyz, dombra, and saz were regarded as sacred, capable of bridging the visible and invisible realms. Music served as a conduit to communicate with nature spirits, ancestors, and deities. Moreover, it functioned as a conduit for transmitting knowledge, stories, rituals, and safeguarding cultural heritage. The steppe, as the prominent landscape feature of Kazakhstan, carries profound cultural and symbolic significance. It embodies notions of space, liberty, and boundlessness. The steppe constituted the backdrop for the nomadic lifestyle of the Kazakhs, serving as the locus for their identity and communion with nature. The expanses of the steppe also mirror the grandeur of human existence within the universe's context. Freedom holds a pivotal role in Kazakh mythology and culture. As a nomadic people, the Kazakhs esteemed their autonomy and freedom to roam. This notion of freedom extends to the spiritual realm, signifying the opportunity for self-expression and the preservation of cultural traditions and faith. In the account of Korkyt's demise, one can discern the philosophical notion of humanity's pursuit of immortality through the creation of beauty - specifically, music that encapsulates the spirit of steppe freedom across millennia. Thus, the age-old folk legend illustrates the human struggle against mortality through mythic portrayals and embodies the fundamental principles of achieving immortality found in existentialist philosophy.

Existentialists often urge a person to face the reality of death, to realize its proximity and uncertainty. Their works usually do not offer simple answers but are aimed at inner reflection, self-reflection, and the search for meaning in the face of uncertainty and absurdity.

Some philosophers believe that creativity allows a person to prolong his existence through works of

art. They believe that works can preserve a part of the spiritual heritage and worldview of the author, which allows him to live in the hearts and minds of people even after physical death.

If we consider the image of Korkyt ata as a classic mythical hero can be seen to correspond to the image of the hero described by Joseph Campbell in his work "The Hero with a Thousand Faces". This image is an archetypal template that we can observe in various myths and tales of different cultures. It is important to pay attention to how the main features of the hero in "The Hero with a Thousand Faces" correspond to the image of Korkyt Ata (Campbell, 2012).

Calling: Right from birth, the hero possesses extraordinary abilities that set him apart from the ordinary individual, and his entrance into the world is accompanied by miraculous phenomena. Refusal: Korkyt embarks on his journey with lingering doubts and apprehensions. Initially, he struggles to fully comprehend the significance of his divine calling. Mentor: Various renditions of the legends surrounding Korkyt Ata frequently feature dialogues with the demiurge, who assumes the role of a mentor in this mythos, akin to the archetype delineated in Campbell's framework. Crossing the Threshold: Embracing his destined path, Korkyt delves into the realms of art and spiritual exploration, signifying the crossing of the threshold from the mundane reality into the uncharted. Tests: Korkyt's ultimate trial comes in the form of confronting the inevitability of death and the limits of mortal existence. Return home: By surmounting his trial, which in this context is death, Korkyt symbolically returns to the demiurge. The portrayal of Korkyt Ata magnificently epitomizes the universality and significance of mythological archetypes. Through this image, we gain insight into the profound universal themes interwoven in diverse myths, elucidating their connection to the voyage of human life, self-discovery, and spiritual maturation.

Conclusion

The multifaceted image of Korkyt Ata emerges as a remarkable cross-cultural phenomenon, embodying both heroic and spiritual dimensions across various cultures. The analysis of Korkyt Ata's portrayal in Kazakh, Azerbaijani, and other cultural contexts underscores the diverse interpretations and symbolic nuances attributed to this legendary figure. The dual nature of Korkyt Ata, as a heroic warrior and a spiritual guide, exemplifies the complexity of mythological archetypes that resonate across time and space. These variations in interpretation provide valuable insights into the cultural values, historical contexts, and spiritual aspirations of different societies. By bridging the realms of heroism and spirituality, Korkyt Ata's image unites humanity's collective quest for identity, meaning, and connection to the cosmos. This study not only enriches our understanding of mythological symbolism but also highlights the universality of certain themes that persist in shaping human narratives throughout history. As diverse cultures continue to explore and reinterpret Korkyt Ata's image, his legacy remains a testament to the enduring power of myth to inspire, guide, and transcend cultural boundaries.

Simultaneously, across the folk epics of other Turkic peoples, Korkyt Ata assumes a more pragmatic historical stance - an epic hero, a storyteller. Within Kazakh mythology, he acquires intricate spiritual and symbolic attributes, yet in the epics of these other cultures, he epitomizes heroism and the confrontations with adversity. This dual nature of the image potentially lays the groundwork for a more comprehensive exploration of Korkyt Ata's portrayal across diverse ethnic folklore.

This duality not only reflects the diverse cultural perspectives but also highlights the evolving nature of mythology and storytelling as they intersect with historical, spiritual, and social contexts. The multifaceted nature of Korkyt Ata's image makes it a compelling subject for further cross-cultural analysis and comparative mythology studies.

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Information about authors

Zhuldyz Zhanadil – PhD in Chinese studies, interpreter at Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Turkish-Kazakh University, Kazakhstan, Almaty, e-mail: zhuldiz_zhanadil@hotmail.com

Авторлар туралы мәлімет

Жұлдыз Жанадил – Қожа Ахмет Ясауи атындағы Халықаралық қазақ-түрік университеті Еуразия ғылыми-зерттеу институты аудармашысы, PhD докторы, Қазақстан, Алматы, e-mail: zhuldiz_zhanadil@hotmail.com

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