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**COSMONYMY IN BASHKIR FOLKLORE: TRADITIONS AND  
MODERN PRESERVATION IN THE PEOPLE'S MEMORY**

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**Abstract**

The article provides an analysis of the materials on the cosmonomy of the Bashkirs. Against the background of historical realities, persecution of seers, mullahs, knowledgeable people and destruction of ancient manuscripts, this national system of knowledge is in danger of extinction. The factual basis of the article is beliefs, songs, religious chants, sayings, healing actions, rituals associated with the veneration of heavenly bodies fixed in the memory of modern folklore carriers. The information fund is studied in terms of forms of the Cosmos, the stellar world and the relationship between Man and the Universe. Meanings and intentions, the mythopoetics of folklore genres associated with Etegin-Big Dipper and the constellation “Аккoш yuly” (“Swan Roads”) (the Milky Way) are studied. In the memory of the people, beliefs about them are stable. Cosmonymic motives are reflected in acts of healing and calendar meanings; they were transformed into economic and everyday signs, sentences, embodied in artistic and poetic images (songs, chants). Folklore texts are presented as metaphors about peculiarities of location, glow, and influences of celestial bodies. The specifics of folklorization of celestial bodies is interpreted and the mythological semantics of images and genre motives is analyzed. The samples of different genres allow us to reproduce the modern state of the astral cult projected on antiquity, as well as origins of the worldview, in which the teaching about stars was crucial.

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## **1. Introduction**

Cosmonymy, veneration of celestial bodies are topical issues in the Bashkir studies. The system of this knowledge captured the centuries-old realities from the history of knowledge about the Universe, the celestial world and peculiarities of the ancients' awareness of movements, state and meanings of stars. Written sources, chronicles of Bashkir sages about the stars have been lost and destroyed. Folklore and ethnographic evidence collected in modern times fill the gap. Selectively presented genres describe the current state of astral folklore and reveal parallels with the world cosmonomy. Myths, legends, rituals, songs are unique in the transmission of the most ancient simulations of the Cosmos and knowledge of ancestors.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The concepts of mythologizing celestial bodies reveal common patterns of modeling images of celestial bodies. The article is aimed to reveal national characteristics of Bashkir folklore associated with the heavenly world and the specifics of folklorization of realities of the Cosmos; to determine the place in the world cosmonomy, the state of genetic memory, and the astral cult in the Bashkir folklore and establish motivating signs of cosmonyms in the typology with the world cosmonomy.

## **3. Research Questions**

The article aims to identify folklore genres, rituals, songs, beliefs and other units of cosmonymic content; to study parallels with world plots, the significance of Bashkir cosmonomy in world culture; to describe mythological, semantic, functional features of metaphors, figurative embodiment and poetics of genres connected with the Cosmos.

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

To present the experience of reconstruction of the national doctrine of the stellar world using samples of folklore and myths; to reveal features of metaphorization of the astral world, folklore worldviews, thematic and semantic links with realities, the state of stars and their movement.

## **5. Research Methods**

Purposeful collection, identification, systematization, analysis and mythological-semantic interpretation of materials with an emphasis on modern folklore records.

## **6. Findings**

The study presents the experience of reconstruction of the national cosmonomy, the meaning of the stars, teachings of the world of the Cosmos according based on Bashkir folklore. The analysis showed that folklore information is a vivid metaphor for the perception of the Universe, realities of life, location

of the Big Dipper stars, the Milky Way, the Moon, etc. It was revealed that the stellar symbolism retains information about the continuity of centuries-old traditions of mythologizing stars and the heavenly world. The main creative codes are anthropomorphization, metaphorization, and symbolism. Folklore materials, as a valuable information fund, create new layers of knowledge about the human's awareness of the universe, life of the astral world. New information on spiritual culture is being broadcast for the sake of further understanding and research.

Knowledge about the heavenly bodies, as well as information collected from the people are an important part of folk art, reflecting peculiarities of understanding the universe and realities. However, they diachronically do not coincide with the current state of the planets, because celestial bodies are in constant motion. Nine thousand years ago, the pole of the world was near the star of the Draco constellation; according to astronomical charts, the Polar Star is a Ursa Minor, and in 12 thousand years Vega (a Lyra) will become the polar star (Kondybai, 2011). Hence the folklore information is relative in spatial and temporal terms. However, the establishment of specific dates for precessions and movements of cosmic bodies is the task of other disciplines. Folklore materials project geographic, household, and creative realities and artifacts, but are not used in hard sciences.

The information obtained during targeted surveys is a fragmentary form of teaching, which was an integral part of the worldview and life science of the Bashkir. The difficulties of collecting national cosmonymics materials were affected by the depletion of knowledge (persecution of mullahs, religious persons). Astrological calendars were confiscated and burned, and the wise men and mullahs were exiled to Siberia. The Bashkir mythology of the stars have almost disappeared.

The great educator Umetbaev (1994) pointed out to the special value of astral knowledge, its significance for the indigenous people: a Bashkir must know his origin and genealogy, be able to explain the names of stars, know legends, epics about his native land. In the medieval epic "Idukai and Muradym" knowledge of the world of stars is the main feature of a brave ruler and a real batyr

Өлкәр менән Сулпанды  
Тағы айырып белмәйсә,  
Тимер казык йондозон  
Юлға билдә кылмайса,  
Батырмын тип ир-егет  
Яуға атын менерме?

The materials of the recent expeditions made it possible to reproduce information on Bashkir cosmology: meanings, ethnic names of stars, sacredness, motives, models of metaphorizations, etc. The analysis shows that the Bashkir cosmology has its own ethnic specificity and ancient traditions. The zoomorphs of the stars determined the plots and mythopoetics of the Bashkir epics "Kara-Yurga", "Akhak-kola", "Kungyr-Buga", "Minyay-batyr and Shulgen-batsha" (Sultangareeva, 2018). Materials are unique, but typological, because they reflect ethnic contacts, informational connections, peoples' perception of the universe.

The movements and positions of the stars served as landmarks in both spiritual and household lives. "Count the stars, it helps to strengthen the memory and spirit" (PMA, 2018); "When the star

Ygezjondo3 (Taurus) from the east shines directly at your door, it's time to sow" (PMA, 2010), "if all seven stars of Etegin (Big Dipper) are burning brightly in the sky, a it's time to start haymaking" (PMA, 2019).

The largest part of folk knowledge is made up of folklore stories about constellations of the Big Dipper (Etegin-yondo3), the Milky Way ("Kosh Yuli"), the Moon (Ay). In Bashkir cosmonomy, there are parallels with one of the "well-known objects characteristic of the cosmonymic representations of Northern Eurasia and North America" (Berezkin, 2017). According to legends, Etegin ("ete" – seven + "yәn" – soul) arose from a ladle that the giant threw into the sky or these are "girls who ascended into the sky, running away from the deva". The month took a beauty named Zukhra and the Star Venus (Zöhre yondoонд) arose (Nadrshina, 1987). Some materials concern the belief in the magic of power of a star: "If at midnight you see a bright strip of the Milky Way, stay and look for a long time, you will gain new strength"; "This is the road of the Aruach ancestors, pray for the souls of the dead when you look at" (PMA, 2011). It is interesting to correlate the Milky Way to the road of the dead to another world, which is found in Africa, among the aborigines of Australia (Peck, 2010) and is built on the community of associative perception of the celestial trait separating "that" and "this" worlds.

Illustrative coincidences of the American Milky Way with the cosmonyms of the Turkic and Mongol peoples of Southern Siberia and Central Asia (Berezkin, 2006), parallels common with the Andamanians, Papua and Australian aborigines identified by geneticists (Skoglund et al., 2015) and population studies (Moreno-Mayar et al., 2018) actualize new approaches, in-depth studies of folklore, linguistic culture, worldview of ethnic groups. All this will reveal the archaic layers, patterns of understanding of the universe, their connections, ethnosemantics of their own local creations, as well as information about movements of peoples around the world.

Real pictures of the arrangement of stars, features of the glow, structure, numbers form poetics, figurative and semantic specifics of folklore plots. The constellation Ulkar (Pleiade, Stozhary), due to its plurality in the Bashkir song, is symbol of the sacred unity of tuganlyk: "Ursa Major-seven stars cannot leave the Pleiades. A virgin can't leave her native land"; the brightest and loneliest star near the Moon personifies Love and longing for a beloved. The bucket-like nature of Etegin is metaphorized in everyday signs. "You cannot make plans when the ladle of the star Etegun is below, because it turns over in the morning. It pours out blessings and abundance to people. The grandmothers were strictly forbidden to say or do anything bad at this time" (PMA, 2018). The constellation was associated with healing power "Seven living sacred souls Etegin help in the fulfillment of desires, protect from the evil eye (PMA, 2014). The ancient tradition of looking, wishing strength and blessings is explained by visible features of the celestial body: "There are many stars in the Milky Way, that is why the enormous power of the Cosmos is united there" (PMA, 2018). Another name for the Pleiades is "Iläk = yondo3" ("Sieve-star"), because the motivating feature is multiplicity of holes. The nomination corresponds to the cosmonomy of the Koryaks, Chukchi, and Japanese. In the Yakut, the Pleiades have holes from which cold blows; in the Oroch and Sakhalin Uilt (Oroks), the Pleiades have "seven holes" (Podmaskin, 2004). The economic model of nominations is stable: among the Armenians, the starry sky is associated with a sieve or a colander for filtering dairy products, and the same applies to the Pleiades (Abeghyan, 2012). The Bashkirs sift flour using this sieve (Pleiades) – seven beauties (stars) (PMA, 2003)

The philosophy of anthropomorphizing the constellation in a microimage is unique. "The Big Dipper will fly like a butterfly near you, but you will not see it," said the grandmother. "The meaning of the statement is associated with beliefs in the spirits of ancestors, "flying" butterflies, because in folk etymology, "Etegin" means "seven souls".

In lyric songs, a vivid metaphor of the constellation conveys a symbol of unity and love. "Ursa Major includes seven stars, and Orion – five stars. The stars are Kharat and Buzat. There are only two of them. There are a lot of friends during the fun, but if trouble comes, we are left only together, Tansulpan" (PMA, 2014). The naming (beast, bird, thunder, spirit of illness, ancestor, etc.) in folklore means the influence on the will of the object. This song had ritual functions, having lost them over time. In the song composed by Mullah Hamidullah, the bitterness of a break with home is reflected in the symbolism of the Big Dipper: "Like Etegin-Big Dipper in the sky, we lived together amicably. But in the year of the leopard we were torn apart, We are forced to leave our homelands" (PMA, 2019, V.A. Akkubekova, Ishimbaysky district). I.A. Migranov (born in 1930, the village of Arkaulovo, Salavat District) helped us to record a spell-sentence about the constellation Etegin. The text turned out to be unique in terms of completeness of learning, linguistic transmission and ritual integrity: "Ursa Major includes seven stars. All seven stars are fast stars. If you wake up seven times in the middle of the night and repeat the name of the star seven times, you will receive the goodness seven times". I. Migranov pronounced the incantatory text in the eastern Aisky dialect. Instead of literary "е", he pronounced "ж" (жите, житегән), thereby strengthening the value of the text. The affricate дж, according to linguists, originated in the Купчак languages (Kormushin et al., 2006). It goes back to the most ancient sources. The text observes the obligatory sevenfold repetition of the number 7 (which was lost). The healing act associated with the magic of the star suggests its "incredibly strong" beneficial effect on the person of Yetenen. "In case of insomnia, you need to drink 7 sips of water, and in the remaining water, wet your hands, repeating this recitation of the star" Yondožhamazhy". Everything gives such relief, strength, health for a long life!". Astral folklore as archaic codes of worldviews can be found in metaphors. According to the legend "Seven girls" (Етекуз), seven beauties drowned in the lake in order to save their honor-Namys (Nadrshina, 1987). I. Mihranov's version brings the more ancient layer of this legend. "The father forced his seven daughters to marry, they did not agree and decided to commit suicide. In order to prevent this sin, Hudai, took the girls to heaven. Seven girls became Etegin". The motive of preventing suicide by the Supreme Deity and the theme of celibacy reveal the primary astral layer of the cosmogonic legend. The images of seven girls who killed themselves in the name of honor (namys) are a metaphor for the reflection of constellation in the lake water. It is not the reality about fidelity of seven girls to one yegetu (this illogicality is contained in the first version of the legend). A direct interpretation of the meaning of the legend does not correspond to the astral mythological concept of the work.

The plot based on the motive "a girl with a yoke on the moon" is widespread in folklore and still active in the memory of the people. The well-known motive "the Month, taking pity on the girl dragging water into a bottomless barrel, takes her to himself" is based on an unusual version: "the girl crossed the rainbow – that's why she stayed on the moon." The "lunar water carrier" motif, known in all Siberian versions (Berezkin, 2017) and ascending to the connections between the South Siberia and the mountain families of Central Asia in the Bronze Age" (Sokolova, 2012), reveals parallels in the Bashkir

cosmonomy: “The Girl and the Month” (Nadrshina, 1987), “The Stepdaughter and the Moon” (PMA, 2003). The stories act as metaphorical warnings against long admiration and contemplation of the night luminary during its full phase, absorbing human energy. An analysis of the versions shows that this “ascent to the moon” takes place when the Moon is full.

The rainbow (y  f  r) is a sacred border. When crossing it, “a person changes sex,” “the old is rejuvenated,” “meets with ancestors.” Hence, the neighborhood of enthusiastic and wary attitudes to a picturesque celestial phenomenon is reflected in the rules of behavior: “when looking at the rainbow, one should read the Salavat-Sura prayer from the Koran” (PMA, 2019). Semantically, the Bashkir's second name for the rainbow is “Salauat kypere” (salavat bridge). It is associated with the name of the national hero Salavat Yulaev. In the cosmonomy of the Germans, Tibetans, Chuvashes, Russians, Kachins, Andamanders, natives of Taiwan, parallels with the “rainbow-road of souls” motif (Dobrovolskaya, 2011) characterize the creative universals of perception of the sacredness of the heavenly line.

In some mythological legends about seven stars (PMA, 2018), Etegen is an anthropomorph of seven brothers who ascended into heaven, and their sister Zukhra, who begged the full moon to take her from a malevolent stepmother. Zukhra persuaded Luna to take her, said goodbye to her native river Kogihel (Dema), native mountains Satyr-tau, Durtkel-tau, Susak-tau, Kuktimertau. At that time, bright rays and sparkling staircases appeared. All seven Zukhra’s brothers descended and took their sister to heaven. “This legend about the Sulpan-Zukhra star echoes the famous legend about the girl on the moon. The typology of wide areas, when the story of seven brothers and one sister who ascended to heaven is known in the Great Plains and North America (Berezkin, 2017). The legend about the star Sulpan (the favorite star of the Bashkirs, the Arabic name “Zur  ” is Zukhra) echoes the well-known stories “about the lunar water-carrier”. The brightest, most beautiful star is personified against the background of the symbols of seven men and a beautiful sister. In the mythologeme, “Virgo – bottomless barrel – the Moon”, realities of the infinity of the River of Time, special power of the full moon and the cyclicity of phases ruled by the Moon have been modified.

Sulpan in the astral-cult sphere of the T  rks (Bashkirs). It occupies a central place. Sholpan is the foremother of the Kazakh people. Her female appearance, “is associated with water, ideas of beauty, love, fertility” (Kondybai, 2011). Munazhat is a religious chant, which captures the love symbolism of Sulpan and her movement in the sky: “One star, two stars, the third star is called Mahup-star. When these stars descend to the earth, noon will come” (PMA, 2019, Z. Kh. Utyaganova). In Arabic, Mahup means “beloved, desired”.

By the time of their appearance in the sky, there are   n  rge (Evening Sulpan) and Ta  f  y (Morning Sulpan), the patrons of peace and prosperity: they believed that “during the Great Patriotic War, Venus disappeared, and when the Germans were defeated, it reappeared” (Sultangareeva & Suleimanov, 2010). It was noted that during the periods of wars, civil unrest, famine, and strife, Sulpan is “offended” and goes out of sight. Against the background of Sumerian Inanna, Greek Aphrodite, Roman Venus, Akkadian Ishtar (goddess of fertility and carnal love), Avestan Anahita, united by the female appearance and mythological functions (productivity, carnal love, patronage of the world, women in labor, etc.), the correspondences are obvious. In the epic “Ural-Batyr”, the celestial origin of Humay / the swan goddess is evident. She “illuminates the moon in the evening, and the sun – during the day”, which implies her

identity with Sulpan, the evening and dawn star. In our opinion, in the epic, the astral goddess Humay, whose archetype belongs to the primordial strata was modified; the name of the highest status of the spiritual foremother of the Bashkirs was different.

The Bashkir cosmology absorbs evidence of precivilization, reveals broad intercontinental parallels, uniqueness and similarities, which determines its very significant place in the system of ancient cultures. Folklore material provides valuable data for systematic and in-depth studies of national cosmology.

## 7. Conclusion

The materials of the astral cult and mythology of the Bashkirs have preserved an extensive fund of historical, ethnographic, folklore evidence of cosmogonic views and myth-like comprehension of the life of the Cosmos by the ancestors. The symbolism of stars captured the globality of the worldview, the breadth of vital interests of the ethnos, the vivid imagery of creative thoughts. Folklore conveyed the images of cosmology, realities of the astral world in the language of metaphors, becoming a valuable informative collection for new ideas about the Man-Cosmos relationship. The problems of deep philosophy, causal, spatial and temporal symbolism, meanings of popular names of stars and their mythological functions remain relevant in folklore studies.

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