

MYTHICAL COGNITION AND POETIC CONSCIOUSNESS ABOUT STARS

Макалада заманбап поэзияда мифопоэтикалык акыл эс каралып жатат. Акын Е. Раушановдун «Жомоктун өлүмү» ыры талданат. Ушул эле учурда космогендик миф менен көркөм ой жүгүртүү системасынын байланышы оболу илимий көз караш менен каралат.

В статье рассматривается мифопоэтическое сознание в современной поэзии. Анализируются стихи поэта Е.Раушанова «Смерть сказки», при этом в научном аспекте предусматривается связь космогонического мифа с системой художественного мышления.

The article gives a thorough examination into mythic-epical cognition in modern poetry. The verse “Death of the Fairytale” of the poet E. Raushanov is being analyzed here. At the same time the relation between the cosmogonical myth and the system of imagery thinking is scrutinized from the scientific point of view.

Introduction. Stars have an important role in the Kazakh mythology, with roots reaching back to the era of Tengrianstvo.¹ Several scientists, including S. Kondybai, made valuable contributions to the research of Kazakh mythology, approaching it from different points of view. However, the issues of mythical cognition in Kazakh poetry remain poorly researched. These facts emphasize the importance of researching the Kazakh mythopoetics.

This essay deals with mythical cognition as related to stars, as well as with poetical consciousness in Kazakh literature. The research is based on the poem “The Death of the Fairy Tale” by E. Raushanov, a Kazakh poet, and on its meaning in light of mythical cognition. In addition, the works of S. Kaskabasov, a specialist in Kazakh folklore, and of S. Kondybay, a mythologist, are examined. The poems of N.Maukenuly, a Kazakh poet, and Raushanov’s “The Night Song” are used to support the research.

Urker (the Pleiades) and Sholpan (Venus) in Raushanov’s “The Death of a Fairy Tale”. Raushanov wrote the poem “The Death of a Fairy Tale” in the manner of a cosmogonic

¹ Tengri is the Turkish/Mongolian god of the sky and their creator deity. Tengrianstvo is worshipping the god of the sky and the creator deity

myth.ⁱ In the myths about creation of stars, there is a recurrent narrative about climbing to the sky and turning into a star of the Pleiades, the Great Bear, or into Venus. The main characters of the poem are the Urker (the Pleiades) and Sholpan (Venus).

In many myths and fairy tales, the Pleiades were conceived of as a human being, who, in trying to escape from pursuit, turned into stars. Systematizing the mythical stories found among people, Kaskabasov states that Urker, “is a girl who fled to the sky because of being scared by danger; the seven robbers, who scared her, also climbed to the sky pursuing her.”ⁱⁱ One story recounts that the number of Urker constellations is seven, and that only one of them is girl. According to another story, Urker is a son and Sholpan is a daughter of the Moon. The Great Bear is considered to be the pursuer of Urker and Akbozat and Kokbozat (“White Horse” and “Blue Horse” – two stars in the Dog’s Tail constellation). Myths also consider Urker to be a constellation of stars. In his works, mythologist S.Kondybai reveals facts about the name, “rise,” and “recess” of Urker. In addition, he analyses the forms of “human embodiment” of the star, which are mostly those of a woman’s image.ⁱⁱⁱ At the same time, there are some cases where Urker is treated as a man. Despite being described from different perspectives in mythical stories, in Raushanov’s poems, Urker is referred to as a man – “Urker-aga” (elder brother Pleiades).

Analysis of the plot. The plot versified in the poem is unusual for Kazakh poetry. The character (Urker) is a person close to the lyric hero (in the poem, the lyric hero is a boy who hears the fairy tales of the “Urker-aga” from his grandmother or a younger brother). In the first stanza of the poem which is built in the form of a folklore-style dialog, the recess of Urker (that is the time when it is lying on the Earth surface and cannot be seen in the sky), is described in the form of a fairy tale. The moment of Urker’s recess, when the star disappears from the horizon and comes back 40 days later, is expressed in the poem as the following dialog between a boy and his grandmother:

- Where is my elder brother Urker?
- He is in the ravine with girls.
- What he is doing in the ravine?
- He is gleaning wheat.
- Why has he left the sky?
- Because his neighbor hurt his feelings.
- Who is his neighbor?
- A girl named Sholpan.

In the myths about Urker, Great Bear, and Pole Star, they are all usually treated as linked to each other. S. Kondybai gives several examples of the connection of Urker and Sholpan.^{iv} In addition, the “mythologized” image of Urker has served as a basis for N.Maukenuly’s poem.

Forty days lies Urker on the Earth,
One in forty is holy.
Urker, went down to the abyss,
I look at you with sadness.^v

In this poem, the laws of life and the movements of stars are interconnected. The evidence of “lying on the Earth” of Urker is linked to the grief of the lonely lyric hero.

In Raushanov’s poem, the reason for Urker’s disappearance from the sky is that Sholpan hurt his feelings. Other mythical variants link this evidence to the Great Bear whose pursuit forced Urker to fall on to the Earth. Then, Urker “rests for forty days without trouble.”^{vi} According to archaic consciousness, Sholpan, who hurt Urker's feelings, was originally also a woman; it then climbed into the sky, turning to a star.

In eastern mythology, Sholpan, who is running away from the harm expected on Earth to become a star, is a sacred figure. S. Kondybai mentions that “The most popular star of Kazakhs and Turkic nations in general is Sholpan.”^{vii} He also argues that in the folklore memory of Kazakhs, Sholpan is perceived in the image of a woman. Moreover, using various examples he tries to explain that Sholpan turns out to become a “sacred mother” of the whole Kazakh nation. In the early archaic myths, one of the examples of linking the “sacred mother” role to the Moon and Sholpan lies in the Kazakh names Aiman (Moon) and Sholpan (Venus), as well as in the fact that such names are given only to sisters or twins.

In “The Death of the Fairy Tale,” as seen from the perspective of the lyric hero, who is impressed by the stars through the stories of his grandmother, Space is marvelously represented:

The stories of my grandmother are wonderful.
The July night,
The moonbeam caresses my face

In the poetic language wrapped in the lyric melody, the mythical functions of the stars of the two Milky Way stars, Akbozat and Kokbozat (of the Dog’s Tail and Great Bear constellations, respectively), are multifariously versified.

The Milky Way is stretched out as a stripped rope
“Akboz-Kokboz” race together
The Great Bear stands out aside
And is trying to abduct them both

As stated above, in the myths about them, stars originally lived as human beings; after their changing shape, the terrestrial relationships between people were entirely moved to the sky. In the poem, the world of stars is similarly turned into human life as described in the triad – Urker-Sholpan-Lyric Hero. The narrated story and the excitement within the world of mood and feeling are what unite the sky and the Earth.

“Omirezaya” (most likely Mars) shines out before my eyes
As a kid plays on the lawn
“Sholpan” hurt my brother’s feelings
[He] does not pay any attention to me.

In the poem, the alignment of the movement of the stars in the sky and the flow of time on Earth has found its representative harmony in creative thinking. Full of lyrical feelings, the poem/fairy tale is intended to imply the condition of wistful feelings from its very first lines. In the poem’s introduction, Urker is described as a victim. In the culmination of the story, Sholpan, who hurt Urker’s feelings, takes on that role.

The myths about Omirezaya indicate its connection to the fate of mankind. According to the assumption of S. Kondybai, Kazakhs do not define the exact role of Omirezaya. For instance, in different instances the term, Omirezaya is referred to as Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn; sometimes Omirezaya is even believed to be each person’s own star.^{viii} In most cases, Omirezaya is an evening star that rises during the full moon and quickly disappears. By turning each star in the sky into a hero on a mythical basis and attributing to them feelings particular to a boy and girl, the poet describes the deep recesses of the human soul – a fundamental property of lyrics.

...It was Sumbile (Virgo).
The earth was turning pale.
I went to the ravine to assuage my elder brother
And Sholpan is moving towards me.

“When Sumbile is born, water cools” is a well known saying among Kazakhs. The turning pale of the earth indicates the time when summer is passing and autumn is approaching. At this time Urker, who earlier had vanished underneath the horizon, reappears in the sky. In the poetic language, this period is illustrated in the form of human activity and contradiction in the internal world. Virgo, which had preserved its image of star, served to determine the time. In the beginning, “Beautiful Sholpan,” who hurt Urker’s feelings, ignores the lyric hero – the “younger brother of Urker.” Then, Sholpan, seeing the lyric hero who went to the ravine to assuage his elder brother Urker, moves towards him.

The lyric hero intensely feels Sholpan’s turning to Urker without receiving any reciprocal response.

It turned out that Urker fell in love with Moon,
And he went back to the sky.
Sholpan disappointingly turned back.
All is done.
I have been left in the ravine alone.

The story that has been developing in the mythical motive, over time changes towards the inner world's phenomena. Sholpan felt resentment due to Urker's going away from her and being closer to the Moon, and she turned back from him. The lyric hero's 'staying alone in the ravine' expresses his attitude towards the relationship between Urker and Sholpan.

The sky has grown dark,
...Crying alone, I buried my story.
Why did I not feel sorry for Sholpan,
For my fairy tale, for my grandmother, and me?
Ah, my elder brother Urker!

The Poet's fairy tale, which began with myth, ends with regret and an instability of feelings and of love. This signifies the unreliability of life, the transitivity of fate, and the instability of time. The poet describes the solid special thoughts and through feelings and the activity of stars. This story is not consistent with the usual happy ending style of fairy tales. The unusual end of the story in a sense answers the issue of the poem. That is, 'the death of a fairy tale' simultaneously symbolizes a failure to reach the goal, the volatility of Urker's feelings towards Sholpan, the despondency of Sholpan, and the indignation of the lyric hero:

Why, why did you not have mercy
On Sholpan, my grandmother, and me?

Urker in Ruashanov's poem "The Night Song". Raushanov's poem "The Night Song" also contains the metaphor "Urker-aga" (Urker-elder brother).^{ix} This poem contains elements of a trust which derives its origin from myths. The sky elements: the Great Bear, Akbozat and Kokbozat (Dog's Tail), and Pole Star find their own places in the poem and serve as a mythical/poetical method of description which is particular to the poet's style.

"The Great Bear is seven stars,
Akbozat and Kokbozat are two stars..."

The pictorial renaissance of the faith of ancestors who foresaw all their fates by the means of the movement of stars illustrates the connection between the past and present, as well as the width and depth of the thinking system of Kazakhs. It is impossible to draw a clear assertion about the mysteries of the essence. Nevertheless, in the depicted delivery of thoughts

which relate to the flow of life, a deep and intimate knowledge is necessary for the intended realization of a system of mythical consciousness which attempts to understand those mysteries.

Akbozat and Kokbozat – two my racers,
If only they be safe from robbers.

Keeping in mind these lines when re-parsing the mythical story, the poet describes a different idea. The birth and recess of stars are related to the changes and phenomena in nature.

“My elder brother Urker is standing alone,
Perhaps he is going on a journey.”

The fact that the poet describes Urker not only as a constellation, but also as a brother, is reminiscent of the archaic consciousness which considers the world of the skies and that of human beings as a unity.

The North Star, which is a symbol of stability and eternity, is metaphorical of the poet's character. The inner world of the poet, which derives from and highly values the ancient national origins, is best described in his own lines:

“The motionless time of ancient people,
You are special as well as me.”

In Kazakh myths, the North Star is also associated with verity. Is a national basis, a tradition. In general, in carrying on the ideas of connection to the past and in remembering the origins of the nation, the Kazakh poet refers to myths and poetics.

Conclusion. This article analyzes the poem “The Death of the Fairy Tale” by E. Raushanov, one of the prominent poets of Kazakhstan. The issues of mythopoetics, mythical cognition, and poetic consciousness about Stars are addressed by exploring the poetical meaning of the myths about Stars in the poem. In addition, the work evaluates the role of myths and their artistic and ideological use in contemporary Kazakh poetry.

For the future, this research work may serve as a basis for a better understanding of and further research on the mythical and poetic traditions of Kazakh literature.

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