

MAIN DEITIES, SPIRITS, AND HEROIC ARCHETYPES IN TURKIC MYTHOLOGY

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Abstract. This article examines the main deities, spirits, and heroic archetypes in Turkic mythology as parts of a unified system of traditional beliefs. Turkic mythology is presented as an important element of the spiritual and cultural heritage of Turkic peoples, reflecting their understanding of the world, nature, and humanity's place in the universe. The study focuses on the mythological structure, including the pantheon led by Tengri, the supreme sky god, and Umai, the protector of family and fertility. It also explores nature and ancestral spirits as intermediaries between humans and the supernatural realm. Special attention is given to heroic archetypes such as the warrior-defender, the cultural hero, and the shaman, as well as female archetypes symbolizing life, protection, and harmony. The article analyzes how deities, spirits, and heroes together form a coherent worldview based on balance between humans, nature, and higher powers. The findings show that Turkic mythology strongly influenced social norms, rituals, and cultural identity, helping preserve the historical memory of Turkic societies.

Keywords: *Turkic mythology, Tengri, spirits, heroic archetypes, shamanism, cultural identity, worldview*

I. Introduction. Turkic mythology is an important part of the spiritual heritage of the Turkic peoples, reflecting their conceptions of the world, nature, and the place of humans in the system of the universe. Through the images of deities, spirits, and heroes, the basic elements of a worldview regulating social norms and everyday behavior were formed (*Eliade, 1963*). The study of mythology allows us to identify deep cultural codes and understand the features of the historical development of Turkic societies (*Gumilev, 1967*).

The relevance of the topic is due to the growing interest in traditional forms of culture in the context of globalization. Turning to the mythological heritage contributes to the preservation of the cultural identity and historical memory of peoples (*Tokarev, 1990*). Furthermore, the analysis of mythological conceptions opens opportunities for

interdisciplinary research in the fields of cultural studies, anthropology, and history (*Eliade, 1963*).

The aim of this research is to analyze the main deities, spirits, and heroic archetypes in Turkic mythology. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to address the following tasks: examine the pantheon of deities, study the system of spirits, and identify the key heroic images (*Gumilev, 1967; Tokarev, 1990*).

II. Pantheon of Deities in Turkic Mythology. The pantheon of Turkic mythology represents a complex system of religious beliefs, at the center of which is the supreme deity Tengri. Tengri was revered as the sky god, governing the fate of the world, natural processes, and human life. He embodied cosmic order, justice, and supreme authority, and also served as a source of legitimation for the power of rulers (*Eliade, 1963; Gumilev, 1967*). As J.-P. Roux notes, the cult of Tengri was closely connected with conceptions of the sky as a sacred space determining the structure of the universe (*Roux, 1984*).

A significant place in the mythological system is occupied by the goddess Umai, patroness of the family, motherhood, and children. Her image is linked to ideas of fertility, protection of newborns, and the continuation of the lineage. Umai symbolizes the feminine principle and life force, playing an important role in the formation of family and social values (*Tokarev, 1990; Roux, 1984*).

In addition to Tengri and Umai, other deities and spirits associated with natural elements and various aspects of life existed in Turkic mythology. Among them are the spirits of earth, water, and fire, as well as patrons of specific places and clans. These forces were perceived as intermediaries between humans and the higher deities, ensuring harmony between nature and society (*Eliade, 1963; Roux, 1984*).

III. The World of Spirits and Its Structure. In Turkic mythology, the world of spirits occupies an important place and represents a complex system of interaction between supernatural forces and humans. A significant role is played by nature spirits, which are associated with various elements of the environment, such as mountains, rivers, forests, and steeps. These spirits were perceived as guardians of natural balance, capable of both helping humans and causing harm when established norms were violated (*Basilov, 1989; Klyashtorny & Sultanov, 2009*).

Particular importance was attached to ancestral spirits, who were considered patrons of the clan and intermediaries between the world of the living and higher powers. The veneration of ancestors was expressed in ceremonies and rituals aimed at maintaining connection with them and receiving their protection. It was believed that the well-being

of the family directly depended on respectful treatment of ancestral spirits (*Klyashtorny & Sultanov, 2009*).

In mythological conceptions, there also existed a division into good and evil spirits. Good spirits contributed to the protection and well-being of humans, while evil spirits could cause illnesses, misfortunes, and various disasters. Interaction with these forces required the observance of certain rituals and taboos (*Basilov, 1989*).

A key role in the system of interaction with the world of spirits was played by the shaman, who acted as an intermediary between people and supernatural forces. The shaman possessed special knowledge and abilities allowing him to contact spirits, perform rituals, and restore disturbed balance (*Hoppál, 2007*).

IV. Heroic Archetypes in Turkic Mythology. Heroic archetypes occupy an important place in Turkic mythology, reflecting the ideals of strength, wisdom, and social responsibility. One of the central figures is the bogatyr-defender, who embodies courage, military valor, and devotion to his people. Such heroes often act as defenders of their native land against external threats and symbolize the collective values of society (*Reichl, 2000; Zhirmunsky, 1969*).

Equally significant is the figure of the cultural hero, who brings knowledge to people, establishes social norms, and contributes to the development of society. In the Turkic tradition, such characters are often associated with the origin of crafts, laws, and rituals, playing the role of intermediaries between the human world and higher powers (*Reichl, 2000*).

A special place is occupied by the figure of the sage and shaman, who possesses sacred knowledge and the ability to interact with the spiritual world. The shaman acts not only as a religious leader but also as a keeper of traditions, passing down knowledge from generation to generation (*Hoppál, 2007*).

An important role is also played by female archetypes, represented by figures of mothers, patronesses, and warrior women. These figures symbolize life force, protection of the lineage, and harmony, emphasizing the significance of the feminine principle in the Turkic mythological system (*Balogh, 2010*).

V. Interconnection of Deities, Spirits, and Heroes. In Turkic mythology, deities, spirits, and heroic figures form an integrated system of conceptions in which each element performs a specific function. Deities such as Tengri and Umai establish the highest level of the sacred order, while spirits of nature and ancestors provide the connection between the human world and the supernatural realm. Heroes, in turn, act as intermediaries, realizing the will of the higher powers in the human world and maintaining the established cosmic order (*Roux, 1984; Klyashtorny, 2005*).

The unity of this system is manifested in the close interconnection of all its elements: heroes often receive support from deities and spirits, and their exploits are interpreted as part of a broader sacred structure. Thus, the mythological thinking of the Turkic peoples is based on the idea of harmony between humans, nature, and higher powers (*Beckwith, 2009*).

The influence of mythology extended to daily life and traditions. Rituals, ceremonies, and behavioral norms were formed based on belief in spirits and deities, as well as through emulation of heroic models. These conceptions determined social values such as respect for elders, protection of the clan, and preservation of natural balance (*Klyashtorny, 2005; Beckwith, 2009*).

VI. Conclusion. Thus, Turkic mythology represents an integrated system of conceptions in which deities, spirits, and heroic archetypes are closely interconnected and perform important functions in the formation of a worldview. The supreme deities establish the cosmic order, spirits provide the connection between the worlds, and heroes embody ideals and transmit sacred values. This system exerted a significant influence on daily life, determining behavioral norms, rituals, and traditions. The study of Turkic mythology allows for a deeper understanding of the cultural identity of peoples and the features of their historical development (*Roux, 1984; Beckwith, 2009*).

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