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**ҚАЗАҚСТАН ТАРИХЫ
ИСТОРИЯ КАЗАХСТАНА
HISTORY OF KAZAKHSTAN**

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HISTORICAL ZOOTOPONYMS IN KAZAKH TOPONYMIC LEGENDS

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Abstract: The aim of the research is to analyze the importance of toponymic legends in the motivation of Kazakh historical zoonyms. The article examines versions of toponymic legends related to three different zoonyms included in the multi-volume work «Babalap sozi» (The Word of the Ancestors). In particular, an attempt is made to reveal the significance of the toponymic legends underlying the names of the sources Tarbagatai, Qonyrkulja, and Zhylandy Bulak, which provoke different opinions in scientific studies, and a comparative study is conducted with the conclusions presented in scientific etymology. In fact, toponymic legends make a significant contribution to the toponymic system of a people who have lived for centuries within the triad of human - nature - animals. The article analyzes recently published scientific and informational sources, as well as literature from the 19th-20th centuries related to the topic of this study. As a result, it should be emphasized that, along with the observations of scientific etymology, toponymic legends and folk etymology of the origin of names for various geographical objects can serve as consistent and evidential material when determining the origin of toponymic names.

Keywords: toponymy, folklore, toponymic legends, Kazakh land and water names, folk etymology, historical zootoponyms, motivation for naming toponyms

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ҚАЗАҚ ТОПОНИМДІК АҢЫЗДАРЫНДАҒЫ ТАРИХИ ЗООТОПОНИМДЕР

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Андатпа: Зерттеудің мақсаты — қазақ тарихи зоотопонимдерінің аталу уәжіндегі топонимдік аңыздардың маңыздылығын саралап талдау. Мақалада жүз томдық «Бабалар сөзі» жинағына енгізілген үш түрлі зоотопонимге қатысты топонимдік аңыз нұсқалары сарапталады. Атап айтқанда, ғылыми ізденістерде түрлі пікір тудырып жүрген Тарбағатай,

Қоңырқұлжа және Жыланды бұлақ атауларына негіз болған топонимдік аңыздардың мәнін ашуға ұмтылыс жасалып, атаулардың ғылыми этимологияда берілген түйіндеріне салыстырмалы зерттеу жүргізіледі. Себебі қандай да бір жер-су, тау-тас атауларының шығу төркінін іздестіруде топонимдік аңыздар халық этимологиясы деп саналып, көп көңіл бөліне бермейді. Шынтауайтында, ғасырлар бойы адам - табиғат - жан-жануар үштік байланысында өмір сүрген халықтың топожүйесі үшін топонимдік аңыздардың қосар үлесі зор. Мақалада тақырып нысанына қатысты XIX-XX ғасырларда жарық көрген, сондай-ақ соңғы уақытта жарияланған ғылыми-ақпараттық деректердегі тың ой-тұжырымдар сараланады. Нәтижесінде жер-су атауларының шығу төркіні мен этносемантикасын айқындауда ғылыми этимология жетістіктерімен қатар топонимдік аңыздардың да (халық этимологиясының) дәйекті материал бола алатындығы зерделенеді.

Кілт сөздер: топонимия, фольклор, топонимдік аңыз, қазақ жер-су атаулары, халық этимологиясы, тарихи зоотопонимдер, топонимдердің аталу уәжі

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ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ ЗООТОПОНИМЫ В КАЗАХСКИХ ТОПОНИМИЧЕСКИХ ПРЕДАНИЯХ

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Аннотация. Цель исследования заключается в комплексном анализе значения топонимических легенд в мотивации наименований казахских исторических зоотопонимов. В статье рассматриваются варианты топонимических легенд, связанных с тремя зоотопонимами, включёнными в стотомное собрание «Бабалар сөзі» («Слово предков»). В частности, предпринимается попытка раскрыть значение топонимических легенд, лежащих в основе названий Тарбағатай, Қонырқұлжа и Жыланды бұлақ, которые вызывают различные точки зрения в научных исследованиях, а также проводится их сравнительный анализ с выводами, представленными в научной этимологии. Это обусловлено тем, что при изучении происхождения названий географических объектов – рек, озёр, гор и других природных объектов – топонимические легенды нередко рассматриваются лишь как проявление народной этимологии и не получают должного внимания. Между тем для топонимической системы народа, на протяжении веков существовавшего в тесной взаимосвязи человека, природы и животного мира, топонимические легенды имеют большое значение. В статье анализируются научные и информационные источники XIX-XX веков, а также современные публикации, содержащие новые научные подходы и интерпретации по исследуемой теме. В результате обосновывается, что наряду с достижениями научной этимологии топонимические легенды (народная этимология) могут служить последовательным и доказательным материалом при установлении происхождения и этносемантики географических названий.

Ключевые слова: топонимия, фольклор, топонимическая легенда, казахские географические названия, народная этимология, исторические зоотопонимы, мотивация топонимов.

Introduction

It is evident that within the historical landscape of any country, there exists a vast repository of toponyms that reflect the cultural, economic, and everyday characteristics of its people.

Zootoponyms, in particular, provide rich empirical material for exploring the semantic dimensions of Kazakh historical toponyms from ancient times to the present. This is largely due to the Kazakh people's nomadic lifestyle, which involved grazing livestock in the summer and maintaining herds in the winter, practices that have profoundly influenced their philosophical and pragmatic worldview. As noted in one source, «the Altaic-speaking tribes that inhabited the lands of Southern Siberia, Central Asia, beyond Lake Baikal, and Mongolia began engaging in animal husbandry as early as the Bronze Age» [1, 39].

Throughout history, the Kazakh people not only adopted and advanced practices in animal husbandry, hunting, and irrigation as part of their material culture but also integrated these into their spiritual world. Because material and spiritual cultures are both products of human consciousness and accumulated knowledge. The coexistence of these two cultures is clearly reflected in the ethno-cultural interpretation of zootoponyms. In this context, the role of toponymic legends in motivating the naming of Kazakh zootoponyms is particularly significant. There is no doubt that the people's deep wisdom and pragmatic way of life are intertwined in these legends. Their primary function is, first, to preserve and transmit historical events from generation to generation, ensuring that the past is not forgotten, and second, to explain the motivation behind a toponym by associating it with a specific characteristic or sign. Therefore, it can be said that the national worldview is reflected in the zootoponyms that have been preserved to this day through toponymic legends.

Theoretical analysis

Legend is one of the oldest genres of folklore prose. In folklore science, legend is classified into two types, historical and toponymic. A toponymic legend is a subtype that explains the origins of land, water, mountain, and rock names, often in connection with specific events or with the names of heroes associated with those events.

The study of Kazakh toponymic Legends has a rather long history. Collecting, sorting, classifying and presenting the rich cultural heritage of the ancient people as a valuable empirical material and studying those materials from a scientific point of view dates back to the 19th century. Significant contributions in this field were made by scholars such as Sh.Valikhanov (1984), A.Divayev (1989), G.N.Potanin (1916), V.V.Radlov (1907). The results of these scholars' expeditionary work, which involved collecting various legends, myths, stories, and fairy tales from across the country, paved the way for further research. During these expeditions, they documented examples of oral literature from many Turkic peoples, including Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Khakas, Tuvans, Uyghurs, and Altaians, and produced encyclopedic works.

In the 20th century, toponymic legends were analyzed as part of the genre of legends in folkloristic science. The issue of toponymic traditions is addressed in the works of prominent Kazakh scholars such as A. Margulan, M. Auezov, M. Gabdullin, A. Konyratbayev, S. Kaskabasov and R. Berdibai. A. Margulan was the first to study Kazakh song legends as historical data [2, 151]. He was also the first scholar to discuss the development of the Kazakh people through songs and legends. M.Auezov categorized Kazakh legends into two groups: legends about historical figures and legends of the state [3, 55]. M. Gabdullin identified the genre of legend under the title «legend-story» [4, 141-142]). A.Konyratbayev approached legends from a different perspective, classifying them in a historical-geographical context as city and field legends [5, 74-97]). In the studies of S. Kaskabasov, the legend is treated as a distinct genre of folk prose, with detailed and extensive information about toponymic legends presented in his work [6, 144-150].

S.Kaskabasov classified legends as historical-toponymic and noted that this classification is somewhat conditional. He reckoned that if a legend exists, it is necessarily connected to a particular event, often based on historical truth, making the toponymic legend semi-historical. Otherwise, such a work would not belong to the genre of legends [6, 144].

The collection and study of toponymic legends within Turkology also require extensive work. The oral literature of Turkic countries is comprehensively examined in a collective work led by Sh.

Ibrayev. This study includes folklore materials from around thirty Turkic-speaking peoples, including those in the genre of legends [7].

Another noteworthy work on the connection between Kazakh toponymic legends and Turkish culture is a scientific article by S. Yıldırım. The article examines 20 Kazakh toponymic legends and their place in Turkish mythology and culture. Toponymic legends are categorized into three thematic groups: names of rivers and lakes, names of mountains and rocks, and names of cities. The analysis also includes some zootoponyms, such as Burabai, Shubar at, and Ala at [8, 2101-2121].

Additionally, the scientific articles of G. Tuyakbayev, S. Taiman, and Zh. Botabayeva explore the appearance of motifs typical of Turkic peoples in Kazakh toponymic legends [9, 144-153]. The article deals with the common motives of the toponymic legends «Qyryq qyz» and «Qyz Munarasy», found among the Turkic peoples (Kazakhs, Turks).

Materials and methods

Theoretical analysis

The main focus of our research is to differentiate and analyze the results of these and other scientific studies related to toponymic legends within the fields of Turkology and Kazakh folkloristics, as well as to highlight the significance of zootoponyms in the naming of land, rivers, lakes, and mountains. For the empirical material of our study, we used toponymic legends from the 80th volume of the 100-volume collection «Babalar Sozi» («The Word of Ancestors»), published during the years of Kazakhstan's independence (The Word of Ancestors, 2011).

Results and discussion

In Kazakh folkloristics and toponymy, various classifications of toponymic legends exist. Folklorist S. Kaskabasov distinguishes two types of toponymic legends: «One is connected with a historical event, more precisely, with wars against the Kalmyks and Kokands, describes the places where the battles took place, and tells about the plot. The second type includes works that explain the names of land and water, which are not tied to a specific historical fact but are generally true. These legends often narrate the origins of certain land and water features based on imagination or link them to mythical concepts» [6, 145-147]. B. Taspolatov, who studied the toponymy of Kazygurt (in the Turkistan region), conventionally divides toponymic legends into three categories: historical and toponymic, general toponymic, and mythological (religious-social) toponymy. According to him, «Historical and toponymic local stories are connected with specific or general events and figures. General toponymic legends tell stories that are not related to historical events (or era, period), but are based on events that are close to the truth and align with the understanding of the local people. Mythological (religious-social) toponymic stories incorporate ancient mythical concepts, understandings, and religious views» [10, 96].

In total, the «Babalar sozi» («The Word of Ancestors») contains 374 toponymic legends, of which 36 (9.7%) are related to animals (The Word of Ancestors, 2011). The frequent naming of places in connection with animals is, of course, explained by the Kazakh people's long history of animal husbandry. It is important to note that within these toponymic legends, the history, naming rationale, and reason for the establishment of the same toponym may not always be mentioned.

Legends related to animals in «Babalar sozi» («The Word of Ancestors») can be classified as *historical-toponymic*, *common toponymic*, or *mythological toponymic*, from a lexical-semantic perspective. In this paper, we aim to explore the content of the toponymic legends that gave rise to three specific names: *Tarbagatai*, *Konyrkulzha* and *Zhylandy bulak*. These names have been the subject of numerous scientific discussions. It is known that legends do not always provide a true basis for understanding the motivation behind the naming of a particular toponym. However, when analyzing historical data regarding the path taken by the people, it is true that toponymic legends also significantly contribute to the field of etymology.

Historical-toponymic legends related to toponyms

Historical events in the Kazakh steppe have significantly influenced its toponymic system. M. Tynyshpayev's observation highlights this: «Nomadic peoples, especially Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, have an exceptional ability to name places where significant events occurred» [11, 154]. The legends in this category hold ethno-cultural and local historical significance.

Kazakh historical and toponymic legends primarily emerged in connection with the Kalmyk and Dzungar invasions. These legends often recount the presence of the Kalmyks in the Kazakh steppe, the heroes of battles against the Dzungars, and their acts of bravery. Some legends also describe the linguistic traces left in places where the Kalmyks and Dzungars traveled. Numerous legends about such toponyms can be found across the country.

One such toponymic legend is associated with the Tarbagatai Mountain, located in eastern Kazakhstan. According to a popular version of the legend: «In ancient times, this mountain was inhabited by Kalmyks who had conquered Kazakh lands. However, this place was very inconvenient for habitation, especially at night. A large number of marmots would wail with sorrowful voices throughout the night. The Kalmyks call the marmot «tarbaga» and the mountain «tai». Because of this, this hill is called «Suyrlytau», that is, «Tarbagatai» [12, 241].

If we analyze the perspectives of researchers who have studied the Tarbagatai toponym from a scientific etymological standpoint, we find that their conclusions generally align with the legend preserved in oral literature.

One of the first scientists to comment on and analyze the etymology of the toponym Tarbagatai was G. Konkashpayev. He emphasizes that the toponym is derived from the Mongolian word «suyrly» [13, 109]. The etymological research by a number of subsequent scholars supports the assertion of the author. In particular, according to A. Abdrakhmanov, the name was formed from the Mongolian word «tarbaga(n)» and the suffix «-tai». The «n» sound at the end of a word is usually omitted when the suffix is added in Mongolian [14, 171-172]. According to the dictionary of E. Koishybayev «The oronym Tarbagatai is formed from the words Tarbagan («marmot») and tai «mountain» [15, 217]. G. Sagidoldakzy, who studied the reflection of Turkic-Mongolian historical and cultural connections in toponyms, has also suggested that the name was formed from Mongolian words *tarvaga* «marmot» + *tai* «-ly/-li» [16, 179]. According to the dictionary of historical toponyms, the name comes from the Mongolian *Tarvaagatai nu-ruu*. Mongolian *Tarvagaa* – «marmot». That is, «Marmots' mountain». Boiled marmot meat was a favorite dish of Mongolian hunters [17, 384]. Since there is no word *tarbagan* in the ancient Turkic language, it is possible to agree with the opinion that it was borrowed from the Mongolian language. Then the name Tarbagatai has a Mongolian designation *tarbaga* – «marmot», *tai* < *tag* («tau»), that is, the meaning is «Marmots' mountain» [18, 127].

According to the above etymological analyses, *Tarbagatai* is formed from the Mongolian word *tarbaga* – «suyr», *tai* – possessive meaning *-suyrly/-li* and, consequently, *suyrly tau*.

Some studies suggest that the history of the name *Tarbagatai* does not originate from the name of an animal. According to some researchers, the name Tarbagatai comes from ancient Chinese sources, where it appears as «Targun» or «Targut». The current name «Tarbagatai» is considered the Russified form of the original «Targybatai». In the fourth volume of Herodotus' nine-book work «History», it is written: «The first inhabitant of this uninhabited country was a man named Targytai». Based on this ancient inscription, some researchers associate the name Tarbagatai with the figure of Targytai, suggesting a connection to the mythical ancestor. [19, 96].

Several studies also propose that the suffix *-tai* in *Tarbagatai* is derived from the Mongolian language, where it corresponds to the Kazakh suffix *-ly/-li* (*-dy/-di*, *-ty/-ti*), which denotes possession. O.T. Molchanova states, «Here, the suffix *-tai* is probably a general addition, and its etymology can be said not to come from Turkic languages. It is widely used in Mongolian as a grammatical marker of relative adjectives or possessive nouns... Therefore, it is plausible to consider this as a result of Turkic-Mongolian linguistic interaction» [20, 83]. «In Kazakh, there is

the suffix *-lai/-dai/-tai*. However, this suffix does not have an attributive meaning, but rather an assimilative one. Unlike the Mongolian suffix *-tai* it doesn't truncate *-n* in the word. Therefore, there is no doubt that this word was borrowed from Mongolic languages» [21, 59]. Additionally, toponyms containing the Mongolian suffix *-tai* are found across a broad area of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, from Baikal to the Zhaiyk River. Therefore, it is possible to say that the historical truth of the toponymic tradition prevails in the name of *Tarbagatai*.

Historical toponymic legends should have a historical character. It should reflect the realities of a certain era. The zootoponym *Tarbagatai* embodies this feature: within the oronym, a historical marker is evident, rather than an artistic image. For instance, historical data indicate that following the invasion of Genghis Khan, the influence of the Mongolian language on Turkic languages was substantial. The introduction of the zootoponym *Tarbagatai* can be linked to this superstrate process, where the dominant language influences the language of the conquered. The origin of the name is thus tied to the history of this region. Consequently, by preserving the toponymic legend, future generations can gain a deeper and more accurate understanding of the landscape and geographical context of the area (which at one time was home to many marmots).

In general, legends often arise from the historical circumstances experienced by a people. S. Kaskabasov argues that the plots of legends are frequently national in character, and many are even regional or local [6, 122]. This observation is particularly relevant when considering the nature of historical and toponymic legends.

Common toponymic legends related to zootoponyms

This type of legend does not heavily rely on historical data but rather emerges from history, reflecting a certain reality among nations. Unlike other types, mythical imagery is not present in this category of legends. According to S. Kaskabasov, these legends often have a somber tone, with abrupt endings that leave the characters in unfortunate situations [6, 147].

The general toponymic type of legend is widely developed among Turkic peoples, and examples can be found in various collections of legends. One such example, which has not been extensively considered from a scientific etymological perspective, is the zootoponym *Konyrkulzha*.

The legend associated with *Konyrkulzha* in «Babalar Sozi» can be regarded as a typical example of a general toponymic legend.

According to the legend: «This is a mountain with a very high cliff. Long ago there were many arkhar on this mountain. Of course, where there is a steppe, there is also an arkhar, right? But the arkhar of Konyrkulzha was a very rare species. A hunter named Sabit, who lived and traveled around this mountain, was known for his accuracy – never missing a bird. One day, a coach told him, «Your death will be caused by a wild lamb or a kid of the arkhar goat that you raised yourself». Sabit, reluctant to kill the young arkhar, decided to wait until it grew up. Once, his children accidentally released the arkhar from its cage, hoping to play with it, and it escaped to the mountains. Sabit forgot the coach's warning and continued hunting, assuming the wolves would have eaten the arkhar. One day, while hunting again, he was shooting arkhar and saw a child of the arkhar that he raised. It had been away for about three years. Sabit encountered the now fully grown arkhar, its eyes blazing. Only then did Sabit remember the coach's words. He decided to kill the arkhar before it could fulfill the prophecy, but the arkhar vanished. Sabit climbed to the top of the cliff, intending to shoot it. As he admired the view of the village from the mountaintop, he heard a loud sound behind him. Turning around, he saw the same arkhar preparing to attack. Before Sabit could reach for his gun, the arkhar charged at him. The frightened Sabit doesn't even have time to get his gun out. In a frantic moment, Sabit managed to shoot the arkhar, but both tumbled down the cliff to their deaths. Thus, both the hunter and the arkhar died. Thus, the mountain's name, «Konyrkulzha» originates from the color of the arkhar and this legend» [12, 174-175].

The legend has a general character: it does not describe a specific historical event but rather originates from everyday life. Therefore, it can be classified as a general toponymic legend. The name of *Konyrkulzha* does not incorporate any mythical concepts or fantasy. Although the legend

begins as a positive story of heroism and hunting, it concludes tragically with the deaths of both the hunter and the arkhar (kulzha). This toponymic legend, which explains the mountain's name, serves educational, local, and informational purposes.

There is little scientific research on the etymology of the zootoponym *Konyrkulzha*. The origin of the toponymic legend *Konyrkulzha*, the name of a mountain in the modern Karaganda region, suggests that the *konyr* (brown) element of the oronym is used in its coloristic sense. Generally, the Kazakh people referred to *arkhar*, *kulzha*, *deer*, *elk*, and *mountain goats* as brown game, depending on their species and color. This term is also found among Mongolian Kazakhs, who considered animals such as arkhar, kulzha and mountain goats to be sacred, with a guardian in heaven, hence calling them «*konyr*» (brown). They had a guardian in heaven, so they were called «*konyr* (brown)». We believe that the basis for the toponym may be the term «*konyr* (brown)», found in mountain and forest areas where mountain goats, arkhar, and deer live [22, 208]. It is likely that this toponym reflects the long-term interaction between Turkic and Mongolian languages. And *kulzha*, which is part of the oronym, is a Turkic word; Kazakhs call a male arkhar *kulzha* [23, 303]. Although the legend typically uses the word *arkhar*, it seems that the name *kulzha* was adopted to maintain accuracy in the mountain's name. Thus, the legend logically explains why the mountain is called *Konyrkulzha* rather than *Konyrarkar*. The hunter, skilled in his craft, ultimately meets his fate at the hands of the more formidable kulzha. The oronym *Konyrkulzha* was thus formed, possibly based on a real-life event.

Mythological toponymic legends related to zootoponyms

In general, although some opinions suggest that toponymic legends are purely historical and do not reflect mythical concepts or actions of mythical characters [6, 125], it is important to acknowledge the presence of various mythological elements preserved in such legends. This is stated in scientific works on toponymy [10, 95; 8, 2120; 24, 9].

In mythological toponymic tales, the basis for naming a toponymic object often lies in fictional stories born from the collective imagination of the people, featuring mystical creatures. These legends differ from historical and general toponymic legends by their broader area of distribution. Folklorist A. Konyratbayev states, «The main characteristic of mythological legends is their commonality among different neighbouring countries and peoples» [5, 73]. This is because tribes and peoples often shared common ideas about mythical images created by human imagination. For example, in the early Turkic tribes, «the primary mythology was about a white horse, seven robbers, Urker, Zukhra, then legends were told about people, animals and beasts. Any fairy tale, legend, or epic is born from a depiction of life that initially has a real meaning, leaving its residue in the mind. Legends created in the form of figurative-logical thinking are a remarkable achievement of human imagination» [5, 73-74].

One of the most prevalent zootoponyms is associated with the *snake*, which holds an important place in Turkic, including Kazakh, mythological toponymic legends. «The snake is a symbol found in almost all mythological traditions. Mythological legends about snakes are widespread among the peoples of Central Africa, Central America, North America, and South and Southeast Asia. Archaeological findings suggest that the image of the snake held significant importance in the beliefs of ancient peoples across Asia, from Greece to Tibet» [25, 288-289].

In Kazakh mythological legends, the image of the snake is depicted both as a positive and negative character, reflecting various aspects of mythical knowledge. However, in Kazakh beliefs, there is a prevailing respect for snakes. For example, in the Kazakh language there is an expression: «if you see a snake, pour white». This means that «if a snake enters the house, it should not be killed; instead, milk should be poured into a bowl in front of it, or white liquid (milk, airan, or kumis) should be poured on its head, and it should be gently guided out of the house». This expression reflects an innate respect for the snake. Therefore, it can be assumed that the image of the snake is abundantly preserved in the mythological and folklore traditions of the Kazakh people.

The «Babalar sozi» («The Word of Ancestors») contains the following zootoponymic

mythological legend associated with the *snake*:

«During a time of war, the inhabitants of Tortkultobe faced capture by an enemy force. Desperate for a solution, they realized that their only hope lay in assassinating the Khan. But how could they achieve this? Seeking answers, a man named Sadi arrived from the conquered land. Sadi possessed a unique ability: he understood the language of snakes and could communicate with them, compelling them to obey his commands. Sadi spent three days in a vast cave near Tortkultobe, where he encountered a colossal serpent. The snake inquired about his purpose.

Sadi explained that the Khan's destructive actions were devastating the country, and he sought assistance:

- In my hand I have gold, like the eye of a button, which I took from a rich man during my service. In my opinion, there is no khan who would not be interested in gold. Let me go to the Khan, saying that I took that gold from your cave. He will come believing, and then you will send his soul to hell, he begged.

Satisfied with Sadi's arguments, the snake agrees. Sadi came to the khan early in the morning, showed him the gold in his hand, intrigued him and told him that the gold was in the snake cave.

- The huge snake wants you to come alone, – he said. At that very moment the khan, looking up, went alone to the snake's cave. At that very moment the khan, looking up, went alone to the snake's cave. When he approached the entrance to the cave, poison spurted from the snake's tongue:

- You have found your fate yourself! – she said.

The Khan, poisoned by a snake, announces to his country that he is going to move to another place and sets off on his journey. When poisoned khan reached the spring:

- I want to drink. Get me out of the cart! – he said, leaning on the bank of the spring. At this moment, the snake venom quickly spread throughout his body, stung by the icy spring water, and the khan died. The Grand Vizier saw this: - Oh, no! – he shouted. - We have lost our khan! This spring is «Zhylandy bulak (Snake's Spring)». Don't come any closer! Come on, let's get away from here quickly.

Since then, the place where the khan died was called «Zhylandy bulak» [12, 120-121].

The veracity of events within toponymic legends remains uncertain; in other words, they emerge from the realm of mythical knowledge. Consequently, we classify them as mythological toponymic legends. Many of these legends originate from the dreams and imaginations of people who yearn for justice and equality, often seeking aid from snakes. In ancient mythological beliefs, snakes are frequently depicted as guardians of humanity. S. Kondybai's research provides relevant insights: «In Kazakh folklore, a snake grants the person who aids it the ability to understand the language of animals, interpret dreams, and discern their meanings. Additionally, the snake bestows magical items such as stones or rings upon the helper. Toponymic legends even suggest that coins were left in houses where milk was offered, placed near the milk container» [25, 301-302].

The snake cult played a significant role in the beliefs of ancient civilizations. In Greek mythology, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, was associated with snakes. In the Kazakh language there is a concept of «Zhylyan-Kydyr» or Kydyr (Kyzыр), which appears in the image of a snake: that is, in the Muslim understanding, Kydyr, who gives happiness and good luck, can appear to a person in the form of a snake [25, 301-302].

There are several zootoponyms based on the name of the snake in the Turkic region, including within the toponymic space of Kazakhstan, where the snake was regarded as a cult symbol. Some of these have evolved into toponymic legends. The Kazakh land, especially the Central region, is rich in zootoponyms with the name of a snake. *Zhylyan*, *Zhylandy*, *Zhylyanshyk*, *Zhylyan zhailagan*, *Zhylyan bulak*, *Zhylandytobe*, *Zhylyantau*, *Zhylyantobe*, *Zhylandy kainar*, etc. The reason for the names of zootoponyms is explained by the presence of snakes in Central Kazakhstan (Ulytau) at one time. In this regard, Zh. Zhumabekov's research presents interesting and actual data. As for the history of the name *Zhylandy*, there is basically one answer: «because of the large number of snakes», «frequent hordes of snakes», «a place where snakes live». If we take this into account, then in the

Kazakh steppe a system of names related to other animals and birds was formed. For example, there are many wolves in the steppes of Saryarka, but there are no toponyms associated with wolf names [26, 36]. The author believes that the reason for the large number of zootoponyms with the name of a *snake* in the Central region is associated with the Kimyaks, who inhabited the region of modern Kazakhstan in the Middle Ages and created a powerful state. The Kimyaks, like other Turkic peoples, believed in the snake cult and considered themselves a snake people. Therefore, considering that in the Middle Ages Central Kazakhstan was the homeland of the Kimyaks, the name Zhylandy can be considered a legacy of the Kimyak era [26, 37].

In any case, zootoponyms with the name of a *snake* clearly encompass ancient mythical knowledge and folk beliefs. In this regard, we can fully agree with S. Yıldırım's opinion: «There are traces of mythical knowledge in toponymic legends» [8, 2120]. This is evidenced by some toponymic legends that have survived in the country.

Conclusion

Toponymic legends play a crucial role in uncovering the history and semantic significance of toponyms. These legends reveal that Kazakh place names – spanning steppes and regions – are deeply intertwined with the rich history and culture of the people. In Kazakh toponymic legends, the zootoponymic layer is particularly prominent, reflecting the lifestyle of a people who have long been engaged in cattle breeding, hunting, and irrigation agriculture. It can be said that in the legends, myths, traditions and stories of the Kazakh people, living in close contact with Mother Nature, a whole encyclopedia of the animal world has been created. Zootoponyms in Kazakh toponymic legends are typically classified into historical, general, and mythological toponyms. This classification of the zootoponymic layer is, of course, conditional. However, when analyzing the origins and semantic fields of toponyms within the context of legends, their historical, general, and mythological characteristics become apparent. This is clearly demonstrated in the interpretation of the zootoponyms *Tarbagatai*, *Konyrkulzha*, and *Zhylandy Bulak* in toponymic legends. The origin of the zootoponym *Tarbagatai*, for example, is linked to the once-large population of marmots (with *tarbaga* being the Mongolian word for marmot) in the eastern region of Kazakhstan. The Mongolian linguistic element in the name highlights the historical connections between the Kazakh and Mongolian (Kalmyk, Dzungar) peoples. The legend of *Konyrkulzha*, on the other hand, shows that its zootoponymic name was not derived from a specific historical event but rather from its common natural features. The presence of mythological elements in the creation of the zootoponym *Zhylandy Bulak* indicates that mythological motifs are preserved in toponymic legends.

As evidenced by the analysis, folk etymology is of particular importance in uncovering the origins and semantic meanings of toponyms associated with animal names in toponymic legends. It is clear that the basis for naming these differentiated zootoponyms is rooted in folk etymology, and that scientific interpretations often build upon this foundation. Therefore, it can be inferred that folk etymology plays a significant role in identifying the linguistic and historical underpinnings of zootoponyms.

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