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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# ETHNIC IDENTITY IN FICTION

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### ABSTRACT

For each nation, due to the occupied territory and a peculiar animal, plant environment, it has a centuries-old experience of communicating or taming these animals and using plants for medicinal purposes. Images of these animals migrate from national folklore to national literature. For example, for a Chinese, the image of a dragon is significant, for a Russian – a bear, for a Kazakh – a horse. If one takes an excursion into history, the image of a horse originates from prehistoric times. The horse has accompanied man since the Stone Age; the domestication of the horse marks a turning point in world history. The above-mentioned image is still in demand in world literature. Horse accompanied a person, both in worldly life and in the afterlife. So, the horse symbolizes both life and death. The article analyzes the works, the central image of which is devoted to the archetypal image of a horse. As an example, a detailed analysis of the work *Centaur* by A. Altai, *Man-Deer* by O. Bokeev and *Village of Centaurs* by A. Kim is given. As a rule, authors in connection with the problem of centaurism raise the question of the **otherness** of their characters; this difference affects both the external and internal world of the character.

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## INTRODUCTION

Wars, conquests and liberation campaigns were an integral part of the formation of any state. The main goal of all the campaigns was to establish and preserve independence. The theme of independence and freedom has been relevant at all times for representatives of the best minds of the nation. Probably, there is not a single legendary commander, poet, zhyrau, writer who would not touch on the theme of independence, love for his native land, language, rituals and traditions. These themes have been embodied in the form of images in folklore, myth, symbols. In all national cultures, folklore and mythical components play an important role in the formation and development of personal and national consciousness. Myths, symbols and prototypes constantly remind us of absolute values, of forgotten norms that make up the national nature of man. As M. Eliade writes "< ... > the myth goes towards the mythical need of man" (1, p. 9). The functioning of myths in modern culture is interpreted as an endless "work on the myth" (this is the name of the book by H. Blumenberg), as an endless production of its new interpretations. The oral creativity of the Kazakhs was based mainly on folklore and mythological elements of the worldview of the Turks as followers of Tengrism. The most important of these ideological elements is harmony with nature, understanding of the sky, earth, animal, plant and man as a whole.

The climate, the mode of life, rituals and traditions played an important role. It can be said that nomadism as the main activity has left its trace on the minds of its participants. Certain animals inherent in a particular region played a key role in their consciousness. Such animals as a wolf, a horse, a deer, a dog, etc. were (and in many ways remains) a friend, a companion, a source of food and clothing.

The veneration of a certain area and an animal served to form cosmogonic myths, totemism, shamanism and other ritual and symbolic systems. Animalistic attitude and anthropomorphization of nature is a characteristic sign of the worldview of the ancient Kazakhs. As well as specific mythological representations of a totemic nature about the kinship (based on the identity) of a particular genus (tribe) and breed of animals or plants, about the origin of a person from plants or animals, etc. For representatives of the Kazakh ethnic group, the image of a horse has a special symbolic meaning. This image is very relevant in modern Kazakh literature. Evidenced by the central characters of the works of A. Altai, O. Bokeev, A. Kim is close in that they emphasize their totemic connection with animals: the character of O. Bokeev is associated with a deer, the characters of A. Altai and A. Kim is centaurs – a half-man-half-horse. The folklore-mythical beginning in the character and consciousness of the main characters is emphasized.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Through comparative analysis, the general and specific features of the reproduction of mythological elements are revealed. Through the historical and typological method, the regularities of myth transformation in the studied modern texts are investigated. For the analysis of archetypes, mythologems, mythologies and mythological motives and their integration into a single system of representations of Kazakh authors, a mosaic methodology of classification is used. And genetic, figurative-associative, structural methods, as well as the method of psychoanalytic literary criticism were also used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative and typological analysis of works whose very titles refer to zoomorphic images from myth and folklore is especially fruitful. Askar Altai's *Centaur*, Anatoly Kim's *Village of Centaurs* and OralkhanBokeev's *Man-Deer*. Myth restoration as a method of analyses a literary text, in which the researcher restores its mythological primordial basis, is relevant for these texts. In search of an organic, integral person (and this is the main direction of Kazakh prose of recent decades), writers turned to myths as an "arsenal" of ready-made figurative forms. The works of A. Altai narrates the habits of animals living in the Altai and the unique plants of this region. As a result, the story *Centaur* contained both the identity of the life of the Kazakhs and universal problems, first of all, environmental problems (2, 65).

The title of the work – *Centaur* – draws a parallel to ancient Greek mythology, to creatures with a human head and torso and the body of a horse. As the researcher of neo-mythological tendencies, Ya.V.Pogrebnyaya aptly noted, "neo-mythology exists only in the context and is generated through the conjugation of at least two texts, one of which belongs to an archaic culture, and the other to a modern one" (3, p. 5). The main character of the story of Askar Altai both externally and internally combines the signs of a person and an animal. It can be argued that the narrative is completely structured with the help of an ancient mythological plot by the author's decision, but these transformations do not destroy the structure of the myth. In the universal sense, the characters of Askar Altai, to the same extent as OralkhanBokeev are people who live in harmony with nature, connected by unbreakable ties of human and natural kinship and loyalty (4, p.410). This is the philosophical and ideological message of the texts. The description of the birth of a centaur-half-man-half-horse boy synthesizes elements of a fairy tale, myth and fantastic imagery, which are closely intertwined with the realities of modernity. But the depth and perspective of what is depicted in the story are given not only by ancient Greek and Kazakh folklore and mythological parallels but also by literary ones.

Let us turn to the plot of the story *Centaur* (5). The family, in which the centaur child was born, went away from people and hid in mountains. The protagonist of A. Altai, like any mythological character, is extraordinary, there is a folklore element "growing by leaps and bounds". Over time, "just as all living things in nature grow and become stronger, "the child" with a human torso and the body of a horse quickly got on his feet, and soon, as if he were a foal. He was loved by his family. He lived among old rocks, among three mortals, and was hidden from human eyes.

He grew up in love and harmony." (5, p. 109). The elements of fabulousness are confirmed by the fact that the author introduces the motive of the long-awaited child, which is very popular both in Kazakh and world folklore. It should be noted that horses are especially revered in the Kazakh environment to this day; it is an important component of the ethnic spiritual world, the "core of the soul" of nomads. "In the everyday life of Kazakhs, among the four varieties of domestic animals, the horse has always been valued above others and occupied its special place" (6, p. 8). The image of the centaur is also known in Russian mythology as Kitovras. For European culture, the centaur is an image, an archetype of a nomad. History has proved that the chain mail, stirrup and saddle were invented by the Turkic world. This invention gave an impetus to the perfection of riding a horse and the subsequent conquest of the world. This image has become so symbolic that it has become popular in world literature. This image is always used by writers with a positive sign, the good and contemplative penetrates the fabric of the work through this image. The image of a centaur is often found in world literature, this is confirmed by the novels of J. Updike *Centaur*, A. Kim *The Village of Centaurs*, W. Faulkner *Copper Centaur*, etc. The semantic field of the archetypal image of a horse is a centaur (half-man, half-horse) – a symbol of healing and mentoring; a Unicorn (a horse with one horn) – a symbol of chastity, prudence, purity; Pegasus (a winged horse) – symbolizes glory and contemplation; A Trojan horse – through which the Troy city was conquered by Greeks.

The above-mentioned authors raise the question of the *Otherness*, in connection with the problem of centaurism. A born centaur child is different from his fellow tribesmen. Such a dual opposition of "friend/alien", inherent to the myth, has an ancient origin. Note that various kinds of dual oppositions form the foundation of any society: "Dual opposition is the result of people's desire to turn chaos into order, to dismember the world and synthesize the results of dismemberment" (7, p. 124). A person perceives the world through structuring binaries: man - woman, animal - man, cosmos - chaos, good-evil, friend – alien, etc. Bipolar consciousness is an integral feature of social life; relations between peoples, social groups and individuals are built based on the polarization of friend and alien, the collision of two types of cultures - "civilizational" and "natural". The question of the inner essence of a person is added to the problem of social and personal self-identification. And in this regard, the appeal to literary and mythological plots is important for revealing the irrational in modern man.

According to O.A. Karmadonov, "In a comparison of one's "we" "with other" "they", the social self-identification of individuals is developed. Social self-identification is formed spontaneously in the process of socialization for each person and, subsequently, affects the choice of life strategies and models, the degree of readiness of people to interact with representatives of other social groups" (8, p.128). O. Bokeev's character in *Man-Deer* differs only by his inner world associated with the image of a deer. In literary work, the animalistic image of a deer, traditional for Kazakh folklore and mythology, becomes a productive explanatory scheme for depicting the consciousness of the central character and his behaviour. His name is Aktan is man-deer, which is explained quite ordinarily – the character's love for deer from his early childhood: "...It was beautiful in the taiga, mysterious and scary at night, but Aktan was not afraid. At the foot of

Karashoky, he saw a large herd of marals (deers), crept up from the side and hid near a large larch tree, laying a warm sheepskin under him. The battle of the deer began when the late autumn sun emerged from behind the top of Akshoky. The bulls fought mercilessly, furiously, from morning until noon. Exhausted, staggering, falling to the ground, they left the battlefield; and only the most powerful, indefatigable-there were two bulls left-fought for another hour and a half, then one overcame the other, drove him away and, trumpeting his victory to the sky, headed for the does standing at a distance. Having gathered them all into a herd, he drove them to the slopes of Karashoky... Aktan returned to the village (wasn't it from that day that they called him the Deer?) and only a week later he was able to return to the taiga to Karashoky" (9, p. 117).

Mythological dictionaries and encyclopedias indicate that the veneration of the deer dates back to the oldest layers of human culture in Europe and Asia. In the mythology of the Siberians, Mongols, Celts, the deer was a sacred animal associated with the afterlife, with the World Tree, with solar symbols (10, p.122). There is evidence of this in the mythological representations of the ancestors of the Kazakhs-Sak-nomads: the image of a deer dominates on the gold jewellery found in the Saka mounds made in the Scythian-Siberian "animal style". But to a greater extent, the symbolism of the deer among the Kazakhs is associated with the categories of impetuosity, grace and beauty. The portrait characteristic of Aktan correlates with such concepts: "... the incredibly long legs of Aktan, hanging far, touch the grass. The horseman is broad-shouldered, tall ... " (9, p. 118). However, the author is not limited to external allusions. In the story, the mytheme of the deer acts as an element of a special form of perception of the world – mythological. Aktan, like the central character of the Altai *Centaur* Basarys, acts as a mediator, in whom the animal and the human are intertwined. Therefore, the mythological consciousness of the deer character comes into conflict with the moral consciousness of the human. Quotation from the story: "<...>And for the first time, he experienced mental anguish because it turns out, he does not know how to distinguish bad from good. And not being able to do this, he remains helpless <...>The border that separates a person from an animal passed exactly here: in this ability to distinguish between good and evil. And Aktan now presented this border as clearly as a border between life and death, poverty and wealth" (9, p.156).

In the myth, there is still no awareness of good and evil, but there is a certain reality. Does this mean that O. Bokeev tried to create the newest equivalent of mythological consciousness? It seems that everything is not so simple. With the help of folklore and mythological imagery, existential questions are raised in the story; the deep reactions of a person who is looking for salvation from the horror of death, from being orphaned are actualized. Life condemns Aktan (as well as Basarys in *Centaur*) despite the loneliness; the characters of O. Bokeev and A. Altai are unsociable, dreamy, immersed in the natural world around them. The author gives a dialogue between a deer and Aktan about the meaning of life and the choice of a life strategy: the protagonist together with his faithful friend, the white-eyed horse, undertakes to protect his native village, abandoned by the inhabitants. "He did not move, no <...> He was smart enough to understand - although they called him a Beast, that he would not change in the mysterious, impenetrable depth of his soul, no matter how they

moved him around the earth, he knew that the main and irreplaceable thing for him was the heavenly height above the Altai, the feeling of flight and cold mountain water from the river, which would completely quench his thirst" (9, p.140). "Let it be," Aktan reflects, "I don't know how to think and cry. But I will live in my way, as I can, and I will never give up my freedom... Every day he gets up before dawn. He will go out the door and, like a wolf sniffing the flying wind, looks out for the weather" (9, p. 120). In these fragments, the voice of the narrator (impossible in the myth and appearing for the first time in an ancient tragedy in the form of an anonymous chorus) merges with the voice of the character. In the mythological picture of the world, a person is not free – he is a toy in the hands of gods or demons. The ontology of the modern man is determined by his/her thirst for freedom, the thirst to be "himself/herself". In O. Bokeev's interpretation, the concept of freedom is interpreted by a deer-man, while the question of human freedom is initially associated with the characteristics inherent in a person, and not an animal. The truth about a person is determined by the ethical principle. Therefore, the finales of the narratives of O. Bokeev and A. Altai are similar in their tragedy: Aktan sacrifices his freedom, forced to return to the city, to the people, and Basarys tragically dies.

O. Bokeev and A. Altai turned to the myth as a building material and as a way to solve the problems of modern life, reacting to the dramatic processes of a social and historical nature – the alienation of a person from his freedom, his/her "I". In Kazakh mythological legends, the division of the world into upper (heavenly), middle (earthly) and lower (underground), characteristic of all ancient peoples, is traced. According to this scheme, the deer and the horse are representatives of the middle world, where man lives. In this regard, we can agree with the statements of K.G. Jung that the collective unconscious conceptualizes "relics of archaic experience that live in the unconscious of modern man" (11, p.58). The works under consideration also have parallels with ancient myths. V.P. Rudnev writes that "The main features of this structure are cyclic time, the game at the junction between illusion and reality, the likening of the language of a literary text to a mythological pre-language with its "meaningful tongue". "Mythological twins, trickster intermediaries, gods and heroes populate world literature sometimes under the guise of ordinary villagers. Sometimes a writer comes up with his original mythology, which has the features of traditional mythology <...>" (12, p.185). The method of comparative analysis of the literary texts of these authors can also be designated as "myth restoration", that is, the restoration of the mythological primordial basis of the studied works (13, p. 5). The mythological image of the centaur contained in both literary texts largely determines the structure and semantics of the author's myths of A. Kim and A. Altai. According to E.M. Meletinsky, "the "poetics of myth-making" acquires a special meaning in connection with the conscious appeal to mythology <...> usually as an instrument of artistic organization of material and a means of expressing certain "eternal" psychological principles or at least persistent national cultural models <...>" (14, p.3). A. Kim is the author of stories about the Kazakh and Kyrgyz mentality ("Kazakh on horseback", "Under the shade of walnut trees", etc.), the compiler of the collection "To where the sun ends", which contains declassified documents from Party archives and stories of victims of the deportation of Koreans from the Far East to Central Asia and Kazakhstan.



The cult of the great mother among the agricultural peoples represented in the novel by the wild horde of horses is transformed in A. Kim simultaneously into the Oedipal God-fighting of centaurs with Amazons (phallic mothers) and horses (agricultural fathers): "Cruel wars between centaurs and horses have been going on since time immemorial" (15, p. 267). Centaurs (ancient nomads) "As they used to <...> to exist on horseback on animals, and conquer the agricultural peoples, peaceful herbivores, and exist, or rather, coexist with them as their second floor: making up the estate of military leaders, mounting on farmers-artisans, as before on their horses and sheep" (16, p. 363). The motives of the persecution in the "Village of Centaurs" ("All enemies, thought Pudu; who is not a centaur, then the enemy" (15, p. 189)) inherits the plot of initiation, expressing a state of depression and getting out of it. Depression associated with the initiation rite is like a temporary death: A. Kim's centaurs live in *a dull melancholy and hopelessness under the dim dawns*, and die in a depressive pose, "crouching on the ground with their animal half and stooping with their human half, thrusting their crossed arms under their armpits, and freezing in a monotonous form throughout the valley around the village" (15, p. 207). The initiated person in myth and folklore must go through a system of successive psychological tests: the loss of parents/ closest relatives, then, having retired to the initiation house (the village of centaurs), the loss of "the whole world", and then, for a short time, as it were, "lose" life. Such is the plot outline of A. Kim's novel. Another form of initiation is the absorption of the initiated by the monster and then the eruption from its womb. A variant of such absorption can be sewing the initiated into the skin of an animal (17) (see also the work of B. Dzhylibayev *Kazakh Erotic Novel*). The purpose of temporary death is to create a depressive position, which has the function of an initiation test, after passing through the character will be able to do without a mother, that is, to become a real, strong man. Here the connection between initiation, depression and the trauma of birth in Kim's novel is clarified, that is, according to V.P. Rudnev, the connection between introjection-the absorption of one's Self, the story of the prophet Jonah (the motive/complex of redemption-return) and the desire "back to the womb" (18, p. 95)), in other words, the absorption of an ethnic group by historical time in the process of the formation of world history according to the mythological model of the "gigantic wooden wheel" (A. Kim). A. Kim seems to be experimenting, trying to unite the West and the East, heaven and earth, nomads and farmers: "According to the father (heaven, top), the west and the east are the equal, only according to the mothers' wombs (bottom, earth) are different" (16, p.360).

## CONCLUSION

As a result of the research, we concluded that myth, mythological images, mythological consciousness was, and will be present in the works of writers. This platform reflects the following issues in an allegorical, symbolic form: identity, existentialism, social and moral behaviour of a person, environmental problems created by a person. Classical, national archetypal images will be interpreted in a new way by their extraordinary nature. The main character of A. Altai successfully fits into modern realities. The environmental problems associated with the testing of nuclear weapons, which were carried out in East Kazakhstan, were not chosen by chance, the author himself is a native of this region, who is

firsthand familiar with the consequences of a natural disaster. O. Bokeev's image of a deer, a graceful, beautiful animal that is on the verge of extinction. The author draws a parallel between the external and internal image of the main character of a high, kind, honest, nobleman with a red deer, by the fact that the moral qualities of a person like a selflessness, justice, personal responsibility are gradually disappearing in modern society. The work of A. Kim is also built on the opposition of animal and human, worldly and profane, traditional and modern, based on mythological consciousness, the work has a cyclic structure. All the above-mentioned elements are peculiar to the myth; the author transforms the subjective through the objective. The frequency of using a certain image in national literature can serve as a marker of ethnic identity.

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