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THE LINGUOCULTURAL FIELD OF THE ETHNOCULTURAL CONNOTATION OF THE MYTHOPHYTONYM “BAITEREK” (BASED ON KAZAKH FAIRY-TALE NARRATIVES)

Abstract. The article analyzes ethnocultural connotation of the mythophytonym “baiterek” in Kazakh fairy-tale narratives from the perspective of the linguocultural field. The aim of the research is to investigate the linguocultural field of the ethnocultural connotation associated with the mythophytonym “baiterek” in Kazakh fairy tales. The relevance of the study is explained by the lack of specialized research examining the ethnocultural connotation of “baiterek” through Kazakh fairy-tale material. The article identifies the ethnocultural features, historical-linguistic context, and linguocultural field of the mythophytonym “baiterek” in fairy-tale narratives, and analyzes them using concrete examples selected from Kazakh tales. In the course of the research, methods such as collection, systematization, description, analysis, and comparison of linguistic data were used. As a result, the ethnocultural connotation and the linguocultural field of the mythophytonym “baiterek” were identified and structured as follows: “Baiterek – a tall tree / poplar”, “Baiterek – strength, height, shelter”, “Baiterek – support (pillar, reliance), protection, refuge, nest”, “Baiterek – a connector between the upper, middle, and lower worlds”, and “Baiterek – continuity of generations, genealogy”. The article contributes to a deeper understanding of theoretical and practical issues in the modern fields of linguistic folklore studies, cultural linguistics, ethnolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and related disciplines within Kazakh linguistics.

Keywords: linguocultural field, connotation, ethnocultural connotation, baiterek, mythophytonym, fairy-tale narrative.

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Introduction

The worldview, culture, history, lifestyle, and identity of a nation are reflected in its language. The knowledge accumulated over centuries and the collective experience, also known as the treasury of the Kazakh national code, have been preserved in folklore and passed down to the present day.

In recent years, the field of linguofolkloristics, which studies the relationship between language and folklore within Kazakh linguistics, has been developing rapidly. Linguofolkloristics is an interdisciplinary branch of the humanities that examines the linguistic, structural, genre-related, stylistic, and other features of oral folk literature texts.

In his work “Linguistics and Folkloristics”, William O. Hendricks notes that the earliest linguistic studies of folklore emerged in the XIX century and continued to develop in the XX century. He discusses the works of American linguist-folklorists such as Franz Boas, Thomas Sebeok, Alan Dundes, and others, who conducted linguistic analyses of folk tales, legends, and myths (Abramson, 1974).

The term linguofolkloristics first appeared in Russian linguistics in 1974 in A.T. Khrolenko’s article “What Is Linguofolkloristics?” published in the journal “Russkaya Rech”. According to the scholar, the heightened interest in folklore led to the emergence of a new area within the humanities – linguofolkloristics (Khrolenko, 1974).

In Kazakh linguistics, scholars such as A. Baitursynuly, Q. Zhubanov, S. Amanzholov, I. Kenesbayev, and others have examined the rich heritage of the Kazakh people both linguistically and literarily, providing significant conclusions.

Folklore genres have been widely studied from the perspectives of literary studies and folklore studies. The works of M. Auezov, M. Gabdullin, E. Ismailov, B. Kenzhebayev, S. Qaskabasov, among others, are notable in this regard. However, research specifically within the framework of linguofolkloristics remains limited. Nevertheless, the collective monograph “Kazakh Linguofolkloristics: Linguistic and Genre Analysis” (edited by Doctor of Philology, Professor Zh.A. Zhakypov), published in 2020, presents linguofolkloristic analyses of various genres of Kazakh oral literature.

Today, conducting linguistic analyses of folklore, particularly of fairy tales belonging to the fantastic genre, is especially relevant.

Within the framework of linguofolkloristics, exploring the linguocultural field of the mythophytonym “Baiterek”, which carries ethnocultural connotations in Kazakh fantastic fairy tales, presents significant scholarly interest

The aim of the study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the linguocultural field of the ethnocultural connotation of the mythophytonym “Baiterek” found in Kazakh fantastic fairy tales.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set:

- to examine the theoretical foundations of connotation;
- to identify the place and distinctive features of the mythophytonym “Baiterek” within the worldview, culture, and folklore of the Kazakh people;
- to perform linguistic analysis of the ethnocultural connotation of the mythophytonym “Baiterek” in Kazakh fantastic fairy tales;
- to determine the linguocultural field of the ethnocultural connotation of the mythophytonym “Baiterek.”

The research object consists of fantastic fairy tales in which the mythophytonym “Baiterek” appears.

Materials and Methods

In analyzing the ethnocultural connotation of the mythophytonym “Baiterek” in Kazakh fantastic fairy tales from the perspective of its linguocultural field, the theoretical views on connotation expressed in the works of foreign scholars such as the Port-Royal Grammar, William of Ockham, John Stuart Mill, Leonard Bloomfield, V.N. Teliya, O. Bykova, A.T. Khrolenko, and others were examined. The concept of connotation in the works of A. Salkynbay, E. Abakan, G. Qaliev, and other Kazakh researchers was also analyzed.

In studying the linguocultural field of the word “Baiterek,” works by A. Ysraqov, R. Syzdykova, Sh. Sarybayev, S. Qaskabasov, Zh. Zhakypov, G. Sagidolda, M. Akhmetova, and others were used.

To elucidate the linguistic, philosophical, religious, cultural, and mythological meanings of “Baiterek”, data and dictionaries from the fields of linguistics, ethnography, cultural studies, literary studies, cognitive science, and history were employed.

During the research, the methods of collecting, systematizing, describing, analyzing, and comparing linguistic data were utilized.

The research material included linguistic data extracted from fantastic fairy tales such as “Altyn Saka” (*The Golden Knucklebone*) “Qaskyrdyñ jasagan qamqorlyghy” (*The Wolf’s Act of Care*), “The Giant Bird Samruk,” “Ker Qula Atty Kendebai” (*Kendebai and His Horse Ker Qula*), “Kün astyndağy Künikeý qyz” (*Kunikeý Girl Beneath the Sun*), “Er Töstik” (*proper name*), “Jarty Töstik” (*proper name*) and others.

Results and Discussion

Looking back at history, the term “connotation” has been known since the XII century. The emergence and usage of this term were closely connected with the fields of philosophy, logic, and theology. In the early stages, philosophers widely employed the notion of connotation when interpreting the meanings of words; later, in scholastic logic, it became evident that words, in addition to their direct or primary meanings, also express additional, secondary, or supplementary meanings.

The term “connotation” appears in one of the most significant works on logic by the English philosopher and logician William of Ockham, “Summa logicae” (“Compendium of Logic”) (XIV century), published in Paris. In this treatise, Ockham examines essential concepts in logic and semantics. He distinguishes between “absolute” and “connotative” terms, assigning “absolute terms” to words that denote the object itself in its primary meaning, whereas “connotative terms” are those that indicate “the capacities of the soul.” To explain connotative terms, Ockham provides and analyzes the example “father = a man who has a son or daughter” (Ockham, 1957).

Although the term “connotation” is not explicitly used in the Port-Royal Grammar (*Grammaire générale et raisonnée de Port-Royal*, XVII century), published in France, the work contains important observations regarding the meaning of words. For instance, it clearly reflects the understanding that words may acquire additional emotional shades of meaning within certain contexts. The notion of additional emotional meaning is illustrated through the distinction between “substance” (state) and “accident” (attribute) (Yartseva & et al., 1998).

English philosopher John Stuart Mill, in his work “A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: being a connected view of the principles of evidence, and the methods of scientific investigation” (XIX century), defines denotation as the extensional meaning of a sign (the set of actual objects) and connotation as the intensional meaning (the attributes and characteristics of an object). According to Mill, the sign itself functions as an object, a referent, and a meaning (Mill, 2008).

American linguist Leonard Bloomfield, in his book “Language”, associates the term “connotation” with the pragmatic aspect of speech. He describes connotation as an “element that provides additional information about significant properties and features of an object”. Bloomfield argues that connotation arises in the speaker’s mind within certain communicative situations and is linked to social, regional, and cultural factors (Bloomfield, 1984).

Researchers such as V.V. Vinogradov, V.N. Teliya, V.I. Goverdovsky, Charles Bally, I.V. Arnold, Yu.D. Apresyan, N.A. Lukyanova, E.S. Aznaurova, N.D. Arutyunova, V. Maslova, and others have studied connotation from systemic-structural, semantic-stylistic, and pragmatic perspectives.

In her work “The Connotative Aspect of the Semantics of Nominative Units”, V.N. Teliya describes connotation as “a trace-imprint of the inner form of a word” (Teliya, 1986). According to Teliya, the inner form “creates anew a certain significant connection within a holistic situation, and at the same time allows associative links to arise in consciousness. Moreover, the typified situation represented through the inner form contains a value orientation. Behind this orientation lies the collective social experience that developed throughout the course of historical evolution and became deeply rooted in the consciousness of previous generations” (Teliya, 91). Teliya explains the preservation of connotative features as the need “to maintain the connection between the word’s newly derived meaning and the original name that served as its basis” (Teliya, 1986).

In Kazakh linguistics, connotation has not been extensively investigated as an independent theoretical concept; however, the issue has been addressed within the study of lexical meaning, types of linguistic meaning, narrowing and broadening of meaning, secondary nomination and its types, and various aspects of linguostylistics. In this regard, significant contributions were made by scholars such as A. Qaidar, B. Abilqasimov, R. Syzdyq, S. Isaev, M. Orazov, G. Qaliev, O. Burkitov, N. Uali, E. Suleimenova, J. Mankeeva, R. Avakova, D. Alkebaeva, B. Momynova, A. Salqynbai, E. Abaqan, G. Khasanov, and others.

In the “Linguistic Explanatory Dictionary” published by A. Salkynbai and E. Abakan in 2002, connotation is defined as follows: “Connotation (Latin *connotatio*, *connoto* – having an additional meaning) is the emotional, evaluative, or stylistic shade of a linguistic unit. In a broad sense, connotation is any component that complements the grammatical and denotative (object-conceptual) meaning of a linguistic unit and gives it expressive quality. Connotation is a phenomenon related to the speaker’s empirical (experiential) historical-cultural and cognitive knowledge, their approval or disapproval (evaluation) of the referent, stylistic level, sphere of language use, social attitude, and so on. In a narrow sense, it is the part of meaning that arises from understanding the associative-figurative inner form of the unit- that is, a secondary, figurative meaning typical of tropes or figures of speech. The subjectivity of connotation can be observed when the same word is used in opposite meanings. Since the late 19th century, the term has been applied to words with emotional coloring (O. Erdmann, L. Bloomfield)” (Salkynbai & Abakan, 2002).

In G. Qaliev’s “Explanatory Dictionary of Linguistic Terms”, connotation is defined as follows: “Connotation (Latin *connotatio*, *connato* – possessing an additional meaning) is the emotional and stylistic shade of a linguistic unit. In a broad sense, connotation is any type of expressive nuance that supplements the grammatical and denotative meaning of a linguistic unit. In a narrow sense, connotation is the part of meaning that arises from understanding the associative-imagery inner form of that meaning—i.e. a figurative meaning characteristic of a trope or figure of speech. For instance, in the word *azamat*, the meaning ‘an adult male’ is the

denotative (primary) meaning, while the meaning ‘*a morally upright, responsible person*’ is the connotative, elevated meaning” (Qaliev, 2010).

In the “Dictionary of the Kazakh Literary Language” published in 2011, the following definition of connotation is provided: “Connotation [Old Latin *connotare*] – noun, linguistics. The emotional, evaluative, or stylistic shade expressed by a linguistic unit. Connotation is a phenomenon that depends on the speaker’s experiential, historical, cultural, and cognitive knowledge, their approval or disapproval (evaluation) of the referent, stylistic level, sphere of language use, social relations, and so on (‘Kazakh Language’ Encyclopedia). The subjectivity of connotation can be observed in the ability of a word to be used in opposite meanings” (Kuderinova & et al., 2011).

A special type of connotation is ethnocultural connotation, which is based on the culture, worldview, traditions, customs, lifestyle, and centuries-old knowledge and experience of a particular ethnic group.

According to O. Bykova, who specifically studied ethnoconnotations, an ethnoconnotation is “a special type of cultural connotation that includes the heterochronous and heterofunctional features of an ethnoconnoteme, indicating in the speaker’s consciousness the association of a linguistic unit with a particular ethnocultural space” (Bykova, 2005).

One of the important issues in the field of linguo-folklore studies is the investigation of the ethnocultural connotation of the mythophytonym “Baiterek”, which frequently appears in Kazakh wonder tales, and the identification of its linguocultural domain.

Many cultures, worldviews, and mythologies contain the concepts known as the “world tree” or “tree of life”. These concepts carry deep philosophical, religious, cultural, and mythological meanings. In the Qur’an, the holy book of Muslims, mention is made of the tree that grows in paradise and the Zaqqūm tree (“the tree of hell”). In the Bible, the sacred text of Judaism and Christianity, there appears the concept of the “tree of life” (*Etz ha-Hayim* in Hebrew), whose fruits bestow eternal life. In Hinduism, the Ashvattha (banyan tree) is considered the “world tree”. Prince Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. In ancient Egyptian myths, the goddess Isis- associated with fertility, water, and wind- is depicted with the tree of life from whose roots flows the “water of eternity”.

In the historical work “Shezhire-i Turk” (“Genealogy of the Turks”), written in the XVII century by Abu’l-Ghazi Bahadur Khan, it is stated: “In the Turkic language, a hollow tree was called kypchak, and since the child was born inside the tree, he was named Kypchak. At present, a hollow tree is called shypchak. The common people could not pronounce the ‘k’ sound and instead pronounced it as ‘sh’... The Kypchaks ruled for three hundred years along the banks of the two great rivers Don and Volga. All Kypchak people descended from him. From the time of Oghuz Khan to the era of Genghis Khan, there was no people other than the Kypchaks living along the three rivers known as Don, Volga, and Ural. The Kypchaks dwelled in that region for nearly four thousand years; thus, the territory became known as Desht-i Qipchaq (the Kypchak Steppe)” (Abilqasymuly, 2011).

From this, we can see that the history, worldview, way of life, consciousness, and identity of the Kazakh people are deeply connected with nature, particularly with the tree. Among Turkic peoples, including the Kazakhs, myths, tales, and legends regarding the sacred and revered Baiterek tree have been preserved to this day.

The semantic field of the word “baiterek” in Kazakh fairy tales is extremely broad. Based on the analysis of collected linguistic data, we have systematized the semantic components of the word “baiterek” that carry ethnocultural connotations as follows:

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1. Baiterek – a towering tree / poplar.
 2. Baiterek – strength, height, shade.
 3. Baiterek – support (pillar, reliance), shelter, refuge, nest.
 4. Baiterek – a connector between the upper, middle, and lower worlds.
 5. Baiterek – generational continuity, genealogy.

Now, we will examine each of these connotations in detail.

Baiterek – a towering tree / poplar

In “The dictionary of the Kazakh literary language”, the word “baiterek” is defined as follows: “Baiterek, noun <Lat. *populus italica*> – a tree of the poplar family, about 40 meters tall, with thick bark, upright growth without branching, broad leaves; also referred to as myrzaterik” (Suyerkulova & et al., 2011). Here, myrza terik is defined as “a stately, straight-growing white poplar” (Mankeeva & et al., 2011).

The encyclopedia “The traditional system of ethnographic categories, concepts, and names of the Kazakh people” explains the structural and word-formation nature of the word “baiterek”: “Baiterek” is an ancient Turkic word: ‘bai’ means ‘big’; it is also a phonetic variation of ‘bai’ (‘wealthy’), as in ‘baibishe’ or ‘baisheshek’, conveying meanings of ‘large’ or ‘first’. ‘Terek’ (Persian: daraq) means ‘tree’. Thus, baiterek combines these two words to signify a ‘towering tree” (Alimbay & et al., 2011). From this, it is clear that the word “baiterek” is formed from the adjective bai (‘large’) and the noun terik (‘tree’), and can be semantically decomposed into several components: “big”, “first”, “upright”, “tree”, and “poplar”.

In the “Linguocultural dictionary”, the term daraq is defined as: “Daraq [Pers. darakht] – a tall, fruit-bearing tree. In Persian, daraq refers to any tree, especially tall and fruitful ones. For instance, in Saadi Shirazi’s Gulistan, there is the saying: ‘*Daraxt harché pīrtar, bar bishtar*’ - ‘*The older the tree, the more abundant its fruit*’. This proverb concerns human life, meaning that people with greater life experience do more good, and their knowledge and wisdom benefit others. In Persian culture, the daraq symbolizes continuity of life and wisdom. This understanding influenced Kazakh worldview and broadened its cultural-semantic field. In the Kazakh tradition, a lone tree in the steppe was referred to as *daraq* or *sacred tree* (*äulie aǵash*). In Kazakh oral literature, “daraq” frequently appears in the meaning ‘large, tall tree’. Some mythological narratives describe such an enormous daraq that only an exceptionally strong hero could move it, symbolizing the unmatched power of a mythical hero” (Seitbekova & et al., 2024). Additionally, in Kazakh culture the term baiterek is often used synonymously with *myqan tree*, *myrzaterik*, and *seter tal*. For example: “*Myqan: myqan tree. myth. A sacred giant tree that connects the earth and the sky, the baiterek, the tree of life. ‘*The one who searches, finds the myqan tree*’ (Proverb)” (Mankeeva & et al., 2011). In the expression “seter tal”, the word “seter” is defined in the dictionary of the Kazakh literary language as follows: “Seter, adj., myth. Sacred, holy (livestock). [Such animals are not touched, their mane and tail are not cut, they are not ridden or used for work, and they are kept with special reverence. Mostly used regarding horses]” (Fazylzhanova & et al., 2011).

In the “Regional dictionary of the Kazakh language”, two explanations are given for the word seter: “Seter¹ (*Turkm.: Krasn., Nebid., Ashkh., Tash., Koneur.*) – a line of writing. Seter² (MPR) — a ritual in which a blue or white cloth is tied to livestock as a sign of reverence, after which the animal must not be ridden or slaughtered. Seter mal (MPR) – particularly respected, valued livestock. The word seter entered this dialect from Mongolian (seter). The Mongols, being a people traditionally engaged in animal husbandry, have long respected their livestock. From religious beliefs connected to safeguarding ‘the well-being of livestock and people,’ a chosen

animal would have a khadag (ornamented silk cloth, amulet) or sakhyus tied around its neck. Such an animal must not be slaughtered, and if it is a large animal such as a camel, cow, or horse, it is not put to work” (Here MPR stands for the Mongolian People’s Republic) (Qaliev & et al., 2005). In Kazakh culture, there is a similar tradition of tying a piece of cloth to a tree. Sh. Ualikhanov writes: “A solitary tree or bush growing in the steppe is revered, and people spend the night beneath it. When passing by, people tie pieces of cloth to its branches. They leave vessels. Sometimes they even offer a sacrifice. Or they knot a horse’s mane.” He also notes that the long-standing custom of not cutting lone trees and not breaking young saplings – the belief that “the spirit of the forest will punish” – has survived to this day as a remnant of ancient perceptions” (Qasqabasov, 2002). The ritual of tying cloth to a tree originates from ancient beliefs, spiritual notions and worldviews. Cloth was tied to a tree regarded as sacred and revered, usually one growing alone in the open steppe. While the word seter is often associated with livestock, it may also combine with the word tal (“tree”), acquiring the meaning “sacred, revered tree”.

In the fairy tale “Altyn Saka”, we encounter the following episode: “The colt, running on two legs, comes upon a baiterek. The colt begins to weaken. When they reach the tree, the boy jumps off and climbs to the top of the baiterek. The witch begins digging around the base of the baiterek... As she keeps digging and digging, she gets closer to toppling it”. Similarly, in Kazakh wonder tales, the baiterek mythophytonym appears very frequently.

According to ancient beliefs, the baiterek is a towering tree endowed with mystical power. In the wonder tale “The Wolf’s Act of Care”, we read: “On their way, they encounter a large baiterek. Sakty wishes to rest at the foot of this tree. His companion does not allow it, but ignoring her words, he comes to the base of the tree, ties his horse, and falls asleep. After some time, Sakty suddenly feels his eyes go dark and his ears ring. Startled, he awakens to find his eyes gone, the empty sockets in their place, and his companion missing. Thus Sakty, having lost all his belongings and his horse, becomes blind and wanders aimlessly with no refuge or direction left to him”. This excerpt shows the sacred nature and supernatural force of the baiterek. It is not merely a tree but a revered, mighty, mystical being.

The ethnocultural connotations of the baiterek mythophytonym in wonder tales highlight the unity and harmony between humans and nature and the presence of mystical forces within the natural world.

Baiterek – strength, height, shelter.

The dictionary of the Kazakh literary language gives the following figurative meaning of the word baiterek: “Baiterek, n., fig. Strength, mightiness, giving abundant shade” (Suyerkulova & et al., 2011).

In the wonder tale “The Giant Black Bird – Samuryq”, we find the following passage: “After a while the Samuryq bird arrived and perched on the top of the baiterek. Under the weight of the Samuryq, the baiterek bent down and touched the ground”. In Kazakh tales, it is often said that “when Samuryq spreads its wings, it covers a full month’s distance”, and its enormous weight causes the baiterek to bend until it reaches the earth. Only a tree as mighty as the baiterek is capable of supporting such a colossal bird and its high nest. This example reveals the semantic component of “strength” in the meaning of baiterek.

In the wonder tale “Ker Qula Atty Kendebai”, the following excerpt appears: “When Kendebai opened his eyes, he found himself on an island in the middle of a great sea. On the island stood eight foals with golden tails and one foal without a tail, all drinking water from a golden trough. The horse Kerqula spoke again: “At the top of that baiterek, which reaches the sky, there is the nest of the Samuryq bird. Once every six months it goes in search of food and returns after fifteen

days". The tale uses the expression "reaching the sky" to describe the baiterek, emphasizing its immense height and grandeur. In addition, the phrases "great sea", "golden trough", "foals with golden tails" etc., highlight the abundance and richness of the place where the baiterek grows, showing its sheltering and prosperous nature.

In the wonder tale "Kün astyndağı Künikei qyz", we encounter the following scene: "As they walked, they came upon a great baiterek. At its base were two wells, one filled with golden water, the other with silver water".

That the waters beneath the baiterek are gold and silver is not accidental. In Kazakh culture, the words "gold" and "silver" hold special significance; they carry ethnocultural connotations that denote wealth, preciousness, value, and rarity.

The concise etymological dictionary of the Kazakh language presents several hypotheses regarding the origin of the word *altyn* ("gold"): 1. According to some researchers, the word derives from the Mongolian *altın / altin*, meaning "reddish copper". 2. Others link it to the Turkic root *al* ("bright red, fiery color") used for various bright-red objects. 3. Some scholars claim that the word *altyn* originates from the Turkic word *altı* ('six') (Yskakov & et al., 1966).

In Kazakh cultural cognition, the word "gold" signifies not only a metal but also the most valuable aspects of human life. For example: "golden time", "golden heart", "golden character", "golden soul," etc. These ethnocultural connotations of *altyn* hold an important place in Kazakh worldview, representing not only material wealth but also spiritual virtue, carrying strong positive connotations.

The word *kümis* ("silver") also holds a special place in Kazakh culture, worldview, and daily life. "Kümis is one of the white metals widely used in traditional crafts. Silver is soft, easily melted, light, and malleable. Pure silver has also been referred to as *aq kumis* (pure silver), *naqyra kumis* (high-grade silver), *aq jamby* (pure silver bar), *quyma kumis* (cast silver), *kesek kumis* (chunk silver), and *urğashy kumis* (soft silver). In the traditional environment, silver was regarded as a symbol of purity. Since women frequently handled cookware and household utensils, they were required to wear silver as a sign of cleanliness" (Alimbay & et al., 2011). On the one hand, it denotes a precious metal; on the other, it conveys positive connotations such as "beauty, purity, delicacy, brightness": *kümis köl* ("silver lake"), *kümis tañ* ("silver dawn"), *kümis küy* ("silver tune/mood"), etc.

The gold and silver water in the well at the foot of the Baiterek signifies the abundance of its shade, its richness, and its fertility, indicating a positive ethnocultural connotation. Examples drawn from wonder tales show that the word Baiterek carries semantic features of "abundant shade" and "prosperity."

Baiterek – support (pillar, prop), protection, refuge, nest.

The dictionary of the Kazakh literary language provides another figurative meaning of Baiterek: "Baiterek, fig. Support, pillar, prop, protection, refuge" (Suyerkulova & et al., 2011).

In many wonder tales, the Samruk bird lives atop the Baiterek. Samruk is a giant bird frequently encountered in Kazakh mythology, serving as a being that connects the two worlds. In the wonder tale "Er Töstik", the Samruk bird is described as follows: "When Er Töstik woke up suddenly, a strong storm was raging; after the storm came rain mixed with hail, accompanied by a whistling sound, and soon after, a gigantic black bird appeared. As the giant black bird, whistling, landed on the Baiterek, the tree bent and almost broke. This giant black bird turned out to be the Samruk. Its size was such that when it fully spread its wings, just one wing covered the distance of one aylyq", "The giant black bird lays only one chick per year. Afterward, it flies far away in search of food and can return only once a month. While it is gone, a nearby dragon

devours its chicks every year. The giant black bird, distressed by this, returns crying. The earlier storm was the wind created by the flapping of its wings, and the rain was the tears falling from its eyes”, “The giant black bird lifted Er Töstik onto its wing and flew with him through a narrow crevice, bringing him to the surface of the earth”. These passages clearly show how enormous and wondrous the Samruk bird is.

The Samruk bird that takes shelter in the Baiterek originates from the imagination and aspirations of the Kazakh people. However, in recent years, archaeological excavations and studies have revealed that giant birds once inhabited the territory of Kazakhstan. For example, in 2012, the skeleton of a giant bird was discovered in Akkorgan. Scientists consider this giant bird to be a pterosaur belonging to the *Azhdarchidae* family that lived during the Early Cretaceous period (145–66 million years ago). Pterosaurs of the *Azhdarchidae* family were among the largest creatures on Earth (Averianov & et al., 2015). The discovery of “Samrukia Nessovi” pterosaurs proves that the myth and fairy-tale narratives about the Samruk bird, which nests and shelters in the Baiterek, are extremely ancient. Of course, humans did not exist in the Early Cretaceous period; however, the giant bird skeletons found in the vast Kazakh steppe must have inspired people’s imagination, stimulating fantasies and dreams that later became embedded in myths and tales. In myths and wonder tales, the giant bird Samruk nests and lays eggs in the colossal Baiterek tree, and in this context the word baiterek reveals clear semantic indicators of ethnocultural connotations such as “shelter, protection, support, nest”.

Baiterek functions as a connector between the upper world, the middle world, and the lower world.

“According to ancient beliefs, Baiterek is a giant tree endowed with mystical properties. In the traditional worldview, Baiterek grows precisely at the ‘navel’ of the earth: its roots belong to the underground realm, its trunk to the human world, and its crown to the realm of spirits that reaches the sky” (Alimbay & et al., 2011).

G. Sagidolda, in the monograph “Linguistic fragments of the turkic-mongolian worldview, writes: “Dividing the structure of the universe into three parts (upper world, middle world, lower world) is a foundational principle of humanity’s understanding of the cosmos. The upper world is the world of Tengri. As sunlight comes from above and spreads warmth through the universe, so does this layer correspond symbolically to the head region of the human body. The middle world is the surface of the earth and all living beings upon it; the lower world is the underworld- darkness, death, the realm of the dead.

The division of the human body into upper (head), middle (torso), and lower (legs) parts corresponds to the tripartite cosmic structure of Turkic and Mongolian mythology:

1. Upper world – the celestial realm, dwelling of the Creator - linked with the upper body (head, hair, crown, forehead, eyes, etc.);
2. Middle world – the earthly realm of humans, animals, and birds - linked with the central parts of the body (arms, chest, liver, lungs, waist, navel, etc.);
3. Lower world – the underworld, realm of the dead – linked with the lower parts of the body (hips, legs, knees, heels, soles, etc.)” (Sagidolda, 2011).

In fairy tales, Baiterek is the entity that connects the upper, middle, and lower worlds. In the wonder tale “Er Töstik”, when Töstik descends into the underworld, he, Shalkuyryk, and Künke search for a way back to the surface: “At the head of the spring stands a great baiterek. Suddenly, a sorrowful, noisy sound comes from its crown. Looking up, they see frightened nestlings. Er Töstik takes his bow and shoots the dragon climbing toward the nest straight between the eyes; the dragon falls to the ground with a thud. Seeing the dragon fall, the nestlings stop trembling”.

For saving the chicks, Samruk helps Er Töstik ascend to the surface: “After hearing all that Er Töstik had gone through and learning that he was lost and wanted to return to the surface, the great black bird placed him upon its wings, flew up, passed through the narrow opening, and brought him back to the upper world”.

“Concepts about Baiterek have existed in folk mythology since ancient times. In the mythologies of various peoples, the world model appears in two basic forms: vertical and horizontal structures. Both appear in Kazakh mythology. ... Depictions of a three-layered world supported by a giant cosmic tree are widespread globally. Baiterek, or the sacred Tree, vertically connects the sky, the earth, and the underworld. In scholarship, it is referred to as the World Tree. The fate of the entire cosmos is linked to this tree. It holds the three layers without mixing them, maintaining the purity of the universe and influencing the destinies of beings in each realm. At the tree’s roots – the lower realm – lies a great serpent; at its crown – the upper realm – dwells the king of birds. These images are deeply rooted in mythic consciousness.

In ancient Kazakh mythology, Baiterek represents the image of the entire universe: it rises from the underworld, traverses the earthly plane, and touches the sky. ... It symbolizes eternity. ... Baiterek is not merely a connector of the three realms but also a guide for humans toward goodness. It is no ordinary tree; it is enormous, “as thick as the wall of a house”, comparable to the width of a six-winged yurt. Its benevolent function in mythology shaped collective imagination, giving rise to the idea of the marvelous tree, and the word baiterek acquired additional symbolic meanings. In language, the term appears with several senses: a tall giant tree; the World Tree; strength, power, might; support, refuge, protection” (Alimbay & et al., 2011).

“In Kazakh mythology, Baiterek is symbolized as the cosmic tree. Smaller models of Baiterek appear in ritual objects such as staffs, adalbakans (a traditional wooden clothes-drying stand), ceremonial sticks, and whips, all considered sacred tools. As the connector of three worlds, Baiterek is deeply revered. A widespread belief among Kazakhs holds that a person’s soul is preserved in a sacred tree. A myth says: “Forty days before death, the soul leaves the body, turning into a bird (often a dove) and perching upon the branch of Baiterek bearing the leaf inscribed with that person’s name. These countless leaves continually sprout and wither in turn. When a person dies, the soul departs the body in the form of a tiny insect and wanders the house. Only after forty days does it leave completely. Through the trunk of Baiterek, the soul descends or ascends and, when the time comes, enters a woman’s womb, beginning a new life. Animals and plants, too, are reborn in this manner.

A similar myth is widespread among Turkic peoples. Another Kazakh variant says: “At the axis of the world grows a solitary sacred Baiterek. Its crown touches the sky, and its roots reach the underworld. It is invisible to the human eye. Each leaf symbolizes the life of a human being. When a leaf bursts open, a child is born; as it verdantly grows, the person matures; when it turns yellow prematurely, misfortune befalls; when it dries, the person ages; and when the leaf falls, the person dies”. These narratives reflect the vegetative model of the universe – the world tree” (Alimbay & et al., 2011).

In Kazakh wonder tales, the ethnocultural connotations of the mythophytonym “baiterek” include harmony between humans and nature, the cycles of life and death, the connection between the upper, middle, and lower worlds, and the linkage between the sky and the earth – all of which form the Kazakh mythological worldview.

Baiterek as lineage and genealogy

Kazakh worldview, culture, and folklore frequently represent lineage continuity using images of nature. “In Kazakh, the expression ‘*a baiterek with flourishing leaves*’ is common.

Here, baiterek symbolizes generational continuity: its roots represent ancestors, its trunk a person, its branches descendants, and its leaves traces of life” (Uali & et al., 2024). The saying “The father is the baiterek, the child is the leaf” also reflects not only biological succession but spiritual and social continuity. Genealogies (shezhire) are likewise depicted as trees.

In the tale “Jarty Töstik”: “They named the child Jarty Töstik. Several years passed; the boy reached fourteen or fifteen. In front of the house stood a cluster of baiterek trees- one root, two crowns. When his father went out in the morning, he returned at noon; when he went out at noon, he returned at dusk”. In this tale, climbing the top of the tree reveals a “mirage world”: “One day the boy thought for a long time and decided to climb the tree. At its crown he saw a migrating people: young boys and girls walking in rows, singing songs; behind them, young men and women; behind them, elderly men and women.” He tells his father, who replies: “My son, what you saw was the mirage of the passing world. Neither the living nor the dead can reach it”. This tale illustrates the ethnocultural connotations of baiterek: “lineage continuity”, “the link between father and son”, and the reflection of the life cycle within the cosmic tree.

The concepts “World Tree,” “Baiterek,” “Sacred Tree,” and “Holy Tree” are widespread in the ethnocultures, worldviews, and philosophies of many peoples. In the Turkic literary monument The Book of Dede Korkut, reverence for the tree reflects ancient beliefs: “Oraz said:

– Hey, infidel, spare me! There is no doubt that God is One! Wait, let me speak to this tree. Then he raised his voice and spoke to the tree. Let us see, Your Highness, what he said:

– O tree, do not be offended when I call you ‘tree.’

The gates of Mecca and Medina are made of wood.

The staff of Prophet Moses was wood.

Bridges over vast waters are wood.

Ships that cross the dark seas are wood.

The saddle of Shahmaran Ali’s Dudül is wood.

The scabbard and hilt of Zulfiqar are wood.

The cradle of Shah Hasan and Husayn was wood” (Zholdasbekov & Shadieva, 2019).

In Germanic–Scandinavian mythology, the “world tree” is called Yggdrasil (Lérad). Yggdrasil connects the nine worlds. This tree is located in Midgard (the Middle World), its crown is in Asgard (the Upper World), and its roots are in Niflhel (the Underworld). At the top of Yggdrasil sits an eagle, the “king of birds”, while at its roots dwells the serpent (dragon) Nidhogg (Korolev, 2004).

A tree with similar characteristics appears in Slavic and Chuvash mythology in the form of an oak. In the mythology of Indo-Iranian peoples, the “world tree” grows beside Ardivisura, the goddess of waters and fertility, and the bird Senmurv lives at its top.

In Arab-Persian mythology, there is also the Tuba tree, which grows in paradise and bears dates. According to the religious beliefs of the Sakha-Yakut people, the sacred tree is called Aal Luuk Mas; it is the creator of the entire universe, that is, of the Middle World (Popova, 2019).

As M. K. Akhmetova notes, “Ethnocultural units in fantasy fairy tales preserve ancient conceptions of the world and transmit them to future generations, while also shaping national identity. In the current era of spiritual renewal, they are essential for revealing the national code. The language of fairy tales not only clarifies archetypal understandings but also revives our national memory, helps present our native culture, and expands our conceptual space”, showing that the deep study of the relationship between language and folklore is one of today’s most relevant scholarly issues (Zhakypov & et al., 2020).

The ethnocultural connotations and linguocultural scope of the mythophytonym Baiterek in the Kazakh fantasy fairy tales under study proved to be multifaceted and wide-ranging.

Conclusion

Based on the issues discussed in the article, the following conclusions were drawn:

– the theoretical foundations of connotation were examined and the history of its study was analyzed;

– it was determined that the mythophytonym Baiterek occupies a special place in the worldview, culture, and folklore of the Kazakh people;

– the ethnocultural connotations of the mythophytonym Baiterek in Kazakh fantasy fairy tales were analyzed through linguistic examples;

– the linguocultural scope of the ethnocultural connotations of the mythophytonym Baiterek was analyzed and studied:

1. *Baiterek* – a tall tree / poplar.
2. *Baiterek* – strength, height, sheltering.
3. *Baiterek* – support (pillar, buttress), protection, refuge, nest.
4. *Baiterek* – a link connecting the Upper, Middle, and Lower worlds.
5. *Baiterek* – continuity of generations, genealogy.

The ethnocultural connotations in Kazakh fantasy fairy tales reflect the uniqueness and distinctive features of the folklore, worldview, and culture of the Kazakh people. Research into the linguocultural scope of these connotations is one of the key approaches to understanding the perception and conception of the surrounding world, summarizing centuries of accumulated knowledge, and gaining deeper insight into the linguistic picture of the world.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this article.

Contributions of the authors.

A.K. Zhuniskali defined the main idea and concept of the research article, collected and analyzed the research results. She examined linguistic data and wrote the main part of the article. **G.O. Syzdykova** critically reviewed the content of the article and verified the accuracy of all data. **L.A. Yespekova** assessed the coherence of the article and the consistency of the data.

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«Бәйтерек» мифофитонимінің этномәдени коннотациясының лингвомәдени өрісі (қазақ қиял-ғажайып ертегілері бойынша)

Аңдатпа. Мақалада қазақ қиял-ғажайып ертегілеріндегі «бәйтерек» мифофитонимінің этномәдени коннотациясы лингвомәдени өріс тұрғысынан сараланады. Ғылыми зерттеудің мақсаты – «бәйтерек» мифофитонимінің қазақ қиял-ғажайып ертегілеріндегі этномәдени коннотациясының лингвомәдени өрісін зерттеу. Зерттеудің өзектілігі «бәйтерек» мифофитонимінің этномәдени коннотациясын қазақ қиял-ғажайып ертегілері арқылы арнайы зерттеу жұмыстарының болмауымен түсіндіріледі. Мақалада «коннотация», «этномәдени

коннотация» терминдерінің шығу және зерттелу тарихы, анықтамалары берілді, қиял-ғажайып ертегілеріндегі «бәйтерек» мифофитонимінің этномәдени ерекшеліктері, тарихи-тілдік контексті, лингвомәдени өрісі анықталып, қазақ ертегілерінен терілген нақты мысалдар негізінде зерделенді. Тақырыпты зерттеу барысында тілдік деректерді жинақтау, жүйелеу, баяндау, талдау, салыстыру әдістері пайдаланылды. Нәтижесінде «бәйтерек» мифофитонимінің этномәдени коннотациясы анықталып, лингвомәдени өрісі құрылды: «Бәйтерек – зәулім ағаш / терек», «Бәйтерек – мықтылық, биіктік, саялы», «Бәйтерек – тірек (таяныш, сүйеніш), қорған, пана, ұя», «Бәйтерек – жоғары әлем, ортаңғы әлем, төменгі әлемді байланыстырушы дәнекер», «Бәйтерек – ұрпақ сабақтастығы, шежіре». «Бәйтерек» мифофитонимінің этномәдени коннотациясы және оның лингвомәдени өрісінің фольклор тілі тұрғысынан зерттелуі қазақ тіл білімінің лингвофольклортану, лингвомәдениеттану, этнолингвистика, когнитивтік лингвистика және т.б. жаңа бағыттарының теориялық және практикалық мәселелерін тереңдете қарастыруға көмектеседі.

Түйін сөздер: лингвомәдени өріс, коннотация, этномәдени коннотация, бәйтерек, мифофитоним, қиял-ғажайып ертегі.

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Лингвокультурное поле этнокультурной коннотации мифофитонима «байтерек» (по казахским волшебным сказкам)

Аннотация. В статье этнокультурная коннотация мифофитонима «Байтерек» в казахских волшебных сказках дифференцируется с точки зрения лингвокультурного поля. Цель научного исследования – изучение лингвокультурного поля этнокультурной коннотации мифофитонима «байтерек» в казахских волшебных сказках. Актуальность исследования объясняется отсутствием специальных исследований этнокультурной коннотации мифофитонима «байтерек» в казахских волшебных сказках. В статье определены этнокультурные особенности, историко-языковой контекст, лингвокультурное поле мифофитонима «байтерек» в волшебных сказках, изучены на конкретных примерах из казахских сказок. При изучении темы использовались методы сбора, систематизации, изложения, анализа, сравнения языковых данных. В результате была выявлена этнокультурная коннотация мифофитонима «байтерек» и создано лингвокультурное поле: «Байтерек – величественное дерево / тополь», «Байтерек – сила, высота, изобилие», «Байтерек – опора, крепость, убежище (укрытие), гнездо», «Байтерек – связующее звено высшего мира, среднего мира, нижнего мира», «Байтерек – преемственность поколений, шежіре». Результатом исследования является этнокультурная коннотация мифофитонима «байтерек», изучение его лингвокультурного поля с точки зрения языка фольклора, что способствует углубленному изучению теоретических и практических проблем новых направлений казахского языкознания, лингвокультурологии, этнолингвистики, когнитивной лингвистики и др.

Ключевые слова: лингвокультурное поле, коннотация, этнокультурная коннотация, байтерек, мифофитоним, волшебная сказка.

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