

**THE PLACE OF TOPONYMS IN FOLK PROSE GENRES  
(ON THE EXAMPLE OF REGIONAL TOPONYMIC LEGENDS)**

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**Abstract.** This article discusses the relevance and importance of studying toponymic legends as a genre of oral folklore, peculiar stories about the reasons for naming certain regional geographical objects.

The aim of the work is to examine toponymic legends as the basis for geographical names of places and to identify regional specificity. The study of the connection between toponymy and folklore, which is a phenomenon containing historical realities, cultural values and national originality of a given ethnic group, allows to discover a unique worldview in the folklore-language world picture of the Kazakh people.

The main research methods were historical-cultural and descriptive.

The novelty of the study lies in determining the specificity of the relationship between folklore and toponymy, which manifests itself in the form of antique worldview, or in the sense of antique culture, which includes the fact that the examples of geographical objects used in folklore were originally named and recognized as mythical, based on myths and legends. For example, toponymic names are not specified in fairy tales, they come in the form of mountains, water, rivers.

The scientific significance of this work lies in the fact that the study has established that the toponymic legends can be considered an important component of the spiritual and cultural heritage not only of a particular people, but also of the region. Genre features of toponymic plots were revealed. The material for the study includes fragments of toponymic texts related to the naming of certain geographical objects in Mangistau and Aktobe regions of Western Kazakhstan.

The conclusions reached during the research work allow us to determine that the genres of non-fiction folk prose, the main purpose of which is to reveal the features of ancient cultural heritage, are learned through toponyms.

**Keywords:** folklore, toponymic folklore, toponymic legend, toponym, folk prose, folklore text, toponimic plot, folk etymology

### **Basic provisions**

Folklore is the gold fund of the national and aesthetic heritage of the Kazakh people. As a kind of syncretic art, it is closely connected with other sciences. It is the science that studies geographical names, among them toponymy. One can say that it is a natural phenomenon, since the unifying part of folklore subjects is connected with the names of lands and waters, even if the subject has a different meaning. In folklore texts, the use of toponyms tries to give a complete picture of the events depicted, seeking to specify the place where the action unfolds. Until now, such a close connection between folklore and toponymy has not been the subject of special research.

The abundance of toponymic names in folklore works, their influence on the plot, peculiarities of their use, and attitudes towards the characters is one of the factors that inevitably attract attention to the subject of research. Thus, the names of geographical objects, occurring in samples of folklore, having poetic character and cognitive value in the form of works of oral folklore, can become the basis for the genre of toponymic folklore and its formation.

Among folklore genres, the legend stands out for its versatility. Academician S. Kaskabassov, breaking the long-standing tradition of classifying all oral prose works as legends, has carefully analyzed this field and divided legends into historical and toponymic legends. The academician states: “The legends that we know as toponymic also have historical grounds, facts. And the legends that are called historical have a toponymic motif. Not the work itself in the genre of legend, but only the motifs in it can have a toponymic character”. Therefore, the name “toponymic legend” should only be taken conventionally; it should include stories that tell about an event associated with a particular place, a place of habitat.

Kazakh folklore texts contain distinctive plots that provide unique material for folklore, historical, ethnographic and linguistic research, as they reflect historical events, mythology and traditional culture.

### **Introduction**

The folklore works of Kazakh people reflect their ethnic history, everyday life, traditions and rituals, mentality and, of course, the greatest treasure - national language. The reflection of national cultural specificity and peculiarities of folklore language picture of the world is shown in the use of toponyms in the texts of works of oral folklore.

When reading Kazakh folklore works such as fairy tales, legends, legends, epic poems and other examples of the folklore genre, the reader learns not only the events but also the lives of the main characters and creators of the works. However, folklore works present the reader with a comprehensive picture of the places of summer and winter migration, and the names of places, rivers and mountains as the protagonists of the works. Therefore, such information portrays the relationship between folklore and toponymy, resulting in a new genre - toponymic folklore.

The toponyms, preserved in folklore works, can provide material for studying the political, economic and spiritual relations of the Kazakh people with other peoples, and make it possible to recreate a picture of the world of the Turkic peoples.

D. I. Yermolovich notes that toponyms do help to overcome linguistic barriers, but in their original linguistic environment they have a complex semantic structure, unique features of form and etymology, abilities to modification and word-formation, and numerous links with other units and categories of language [1, p.3].

### **Methods and methodology**

Many Kazakh scientists in their early studies prove that if the concept of “folklore studies” exists, it does not fully define new perception of folklore works, shows inconsistency of detailed research in relation to resources of other sciences

[2, p. 33]. Hence, the question arises – revealing the connection between folklore and toponymy.

In the large number of onomastic studies of Kazakh scholars, not many works have been dedicated to the study of toponyms in folklore texts. Among them are the works of S. Kaskabassov, where the scientist managed to identify this genre among the diversity of oral prose works, dividing it into two parts: historical legend and toponymic legend [3, p. 72-73].

In his work aimed at revealing the cognitive aspects of toponymy, A. Seydimbekov argues that in the names of geographic objects one can catch not only the human attitude to the environment, the concept of this environment, but also echoes of various genealogies, starting from individual people and ending with the life of an entire family, tribe, country [4, p. 73-74]. The scholar notes that the geographical names trace the continuity of generations that stretched from distant times in their native land, the way in which they viewed the world, how they admired the diversity of the beauty of nature.

M. Myrzakhmetuly in his book writes about reasons for various changes of names of lands, reservoirs and settlements in the Kazakh steppe, comparing them with names from folklore texts [5, p. 91].

At present, the dissertation of A. Pangereyev on “Kazakh toponymic folklore” is considered to be the only scientific work on the study of toponyms in folklore texts of the Kazakh people [6]. Based on the current state of study of folklore genres, the scientist characterizes toponymic folklore, defines its genre nature, identifies its intra-genre forms and clarifies the relationship with other folklore genres.

At the present stage of scientific development an increasing interest in the study of toponyms should be noted. Despite the existing research at the level of scientific articles, nevertheless, there are still no works dedicated to an in-depth study of toponyms in folklore texts in Kazakh philology.

The main research methods used in this paper are historical-cultural and descriptive.

## **Results and discussion**

Among other folklore genres, toponymic legends, as a genre of oral non-fictional prose, are notable for their versatility. Initially, with an emphasis on authenticity, toponymic legends explain the origin of the names of geographical objects. Toponymic legends contribute to cognitive information and play an entertaining role, which explains their popularity among the people.

T. N. Dmitrieva notes: “Legends may have a real basis, preserving the memory of actual events that took place in the history of the people in the distant past, and often the historical reality is presented in refraction through the prism of mythology and folklore” [7, p. 116].

Studying the issues of differentiation of folk prose genres depending on their relation to epic location, the Uzbek scholar U.F. Sattarov points out that “in toponymic legends there is an interpretation of exact geographical location” [8, p. 154 ].

It should be noted that in our material, legends are attached to certain persons and events as well as to certain historical periods. In most cases, legends are the result of a popular reinterpretation of certain historical events. Hence, they can be stories related to lovers' struggles for happiness, attacks of enemies on Kazakh lands, stories about batyrs. These stories cannot be taken as a source of reliable information, although sometimes the legends can be a true story.

Nevertheless, as a manifestation of the spiritual culture of the people who created them, they reflect their uniqueness, language, life and livelihood, economic activity, geographical characteristics of the territory of residence. Therefore, we are inclined to call the legends toponymic. As a proof of the above explanations, here are fragments of texts.

On the territory of Mangistau Region, 192 km north of Aktau city, on the shores of the Caspian Sea, on the peninsula of *Bozashchi* there is a village named after a girl named *Kalamkas* [9, p. 26-29]. According to legend, due to the long absence of men from the village who went on a campaign, a girl named *Kalamkas* goes saiga hunting to feed her elders and children. On the horse of her barat, *Kalamkas* gets a herd of saigas into a specially dug trench and helps her fellow villagers to survive. But one day *Kalamkas* falls herself into the pit and tragically dies. Later the area was named after the dead girl *Kalamkas*. Now it is known that the area is a large oil field. The area is now known to be a large oil field.

While studying the toponymic legends, we paid particular attention to the legends associated with the female names *Botakoz* and *Akbota*. In Aktobe Region there are places named after these two girls and there are many legends about the reasons for their naming [10, p.73]. The history of legends about the origin of these places is very diverse, but has similar plots.

Both lines of stories are connected with one of the Kalmyk troops, who, taking advantage of the absence of men in the village attacked in order to seize horses and take the residents captive. In any case, the place names associated with the names of *Botakoz* and *Akbota* point to the reality of this historical event.

The history of the legend is linked to a historical event in the history of the Kazakh people – the struggle against the Kalmyk invaders. The plot of the legend is as follows: in the summer of 1742, when Yesset batyr's village stops at a fertile pasture, Abulhair Khan invites Yesset batyr to a council to decide the war against Kalmyks. At this time Yesset's brother Karabas, his son Kenzhaly and Yesset's son Akzhol went to a neighboring village. When they found out they were not in the village, the Kalmyks chased away all the horses. Yesset batyr's daughter, *Botakoz*, who remains in the village, disguised as a man, chases the Kalmyks with her fellow villagers. Unexpectedly the Kalmyks attack them and *Botakoz* is killed.

The place where *Botakoz* died, and the tributary flowing into the Oyl River here, has been called *Botakoz* ever since [11, p. 46]. This is undoubtedly a legend; it can be called a toponymic one, because it is devoted to the meaning of the name of the geographical object. Moreover, anthroponyms present in the text are historical figures. The involvement of these people in the legend seems to give it a true character.

We have already mentioned that the storylines recounting such heroic deeds of Kazakh girls are linked to toponyms. This is because the motif of naming places is the same – the war between Kazakhs and Kalmyks. Witnesses of this war are the toponymic names, which have been preserved in the steppe as an integral part of history.

Let us now consider the legend of the Akbota girl. One day, in spring, Sankibai batyr, as usual to welcome Abulkhair Khan, goes to the Irgiz steppe with gifts. But at that time the Khan is wintering in the winter pastures of Turkestan. When the men, led by Yesset batyr, set off for the Khan's winter pasture, the Kalmyks, who have long pursued the departure of Yesset batyr and his companions for revenge, attack.

At that time, the lower reaches of the Zhem River and the mouth of the Zhaiyk River were still in the hands of the Kalmyks. It is a historical fact that before the Kalmyks were defeated in the 1780s, they suddenly attacked Kazakh tribes every year [12, pp. 144-146].

The Kalmyks, long waiting such an opportune moment, attacked Sankibai batyr's village and hijacked the cattle. These were the Kalmyks who inhabited the tributaries of the Zhem River. Sankibai's daughter Akbota gathers the remaining herdsman, relatives and brothers in the village, changes into man's clothes and rushes off in pursuit. The brave girl succeeds in resisting her enemies, but tragically dies, being mortally wounded in the chest, but she brings the cattle back to the village. Sankibai orders his daughter's body to be buried on a mountain top.

The mountaintop, which became the dead heroine's eternal home, has been called Akbota since that day. The area was probably named Akbota-Sankibai, short for the inscription “Akbota Sankibai kyzy” on the tombstone. From afar, the white cliff of isolated sand on the right side of the gorge looks as beautiful as the image of Akbota [13, p. 84].

In the folklore texts of the Kazakh people there are many toponymic legends related to the love story of two lovers. The next legend is related to a hill called *Mendibolat*. The reason why this hill is so named is attributed by the people to the story of the unhappy love of two young men, Mendi and Bolat. According to the legend, long ago, a rich man had a beautiful daughter named Mendi. A lad from a poor family called Bolat fell in love with her. Noticing that the two young people were dating, the father decided to marry off his daughter to a rich man. Having heard about their father's cruel choice, the two lovers – Mendi and Bolat – sacrificed their lives on the hilltop [14, p. 215].

In general, the Kazakh people gave toponymic names according to the nature of geographical objects and landscape features. It is very rare to find places named after people. The names after people are mostly micro-toponyms, hills, hillocks, tracts, wells. Among them is the hill, where the names of Mendi girl and Bolat poor lad are combined. The social conditions in the society have caused the origin of the name of this hill.

Another point to consider in the origin and formation of toponymic legends is the problem of the material world. A general toponymic name is not given for a specific purpose. Giving a place a specific name describing a situation can generate a toponymic legend.

Sometimes toponymic legends are associated with a specific object. Usually the topography itself is the basis for the origin of the toponym, while certain historical events, some details or even material attributes of the event may give rise to the name of the locality. Such cause-and-effect relationships suggest that modern researchers are creating a linguistic picture of the world.

To show that this notion of the material world is also characteristic of toponymic folklore, we will give the following example.

Once upon a time, a rich merchant had an only daughter called Ayman. Everyone who saw Aimeken admired her unearthly beauty. It was not only Aimeken's beauty in her that fascinated people, but also her distinctive, free nature and her intelligence. The men who admired her sang in praise: «*Айманның арбалушы еді жүзін көрген, Ай ма екен қараңғыда сәуле берген*» // Like the moon, Ayman is beautiful, in a quiet lagoon, reflecting her face on a clear night. (*The author's subscript translation*).

But a cruel father, blinded by wealth, marries the beautiful Aiman off to a rich old man for a huge ransom for his daughter. Desperate Aiman disappears overnight, leaving no trace. After a long, fruitless search, Aiman's shawl is found floating in the wind on a branch of a huge poplar tree. Since then the song of the beautiful Aiman has been sung by the people without a trace:

*Шәлісін бәйтерекке іліп кеткен  
Сұлудың құмда жалғыз ізі жатты.  
«Аймекен», «Қызыл шәлі» – жердің аты,  
Осындай құм нарында аңыз қапты [15, p.159].*

Tied her shawl on a poplar branch. The only trace of the beautiful Aimeken. Aimeken, Kyzyl Shal the name of the place. There is such a legend in the sands of the Naryn. (*The author's subscript translation*).

This legend tells the story of the origin of the toponyms Aimeken, Kyzyl Shal in the Naryn dunes. It is thanks to such poetic intelligence of the people that various toponymic legends have been passed on to the present generation through extensive use of folklore. The legend of the beautiful Aimeken is a confirmation of this.

The motif of the birth of the toponymic legend is very well represented here. Toponymic names have become one part of the picture of the material world. In fact, a toponymic name is not an abstract concept, but an actual concept, real and original. It can therefore be seen in the context of the material world.

By the factors of toponymic legends formation, based on the texts of the Kazakh oral folklore, we can say that the most numerous use of toponyms and micro-toponyms we observe in toponymic legends, in which the origin of names of certain geographical objects is explained with an emphasis on truthfulness.

The following analysis in the table has been carried out with these factors in mind. To this end, the frequency of the use of toponyms in the plots of toponymic legends was analyzed:

Table 1 – Analysis of the frequency of toponymic legends in folk prose genres

	Toponymic legends	Reasons for the origin of the legends	Proliferation area	Toponyms found in the plot of legends
1	Kalamkas	the legend is linked to a historical figure	Mangistau region	Mangistau, Bozashchi
2	Akbota-Sankibai	the legend is linked to a historical event	Aktobe region	Zhem, Sagyz
3	Botakoz	the legend is linked to a historical event	Aktobe region	Oiyl, Temir, Mugalzhar, Shalkar
4	Mendibolat	the legend is linked to social conditions in society	Aktobe region	Zhem, Nogaity
5	Aimeken	the legend is linked to specific object i.e material attributes	Aktobe region	Naryn Kum, Karatokai,
6	Kyzyl shal	the legend is linked to specific object i.e material attributes	Aktobe region	Meshit Kum, Bokei Orda

An analysis of the formation factor of toponymic legends, in terms of the frequency of its use in folklore, showed the following: based on the texts of Kazakh oral folklore, the most numerous uses of toponyms and micro-toponyms is observed in toponymic legends, in which the origin of names of certain geographical objects is explained with an emphasis on truthfulness. Every legend that carries certain information is inherently interesting. If a folklore text lacks the names of geographical objects, it loses its authenticity and is perceived as a kind of abstraction.

In any case, the warriors for freedom, people's chronicles, patriotism and brave girls as a symbol of heroism, preserved by the people as toponyms, seem to be the core of a legend that will forever remain in the people's memory. The reason why we call it a legend lies in the works of S. Kaskabassov, where he divides Kazakh legends into historical and toponymic legends. The academician reveals the historical and social nature of the above legends, one end of which rests with the toponymic legends, and the other with historical legends. We believe that the plot of these legends possesses both of these characteristics. Such examples show that the names of geographical objects, in addition to forming the core of the legend, play a significant role in the life of society.

### **Conclusion**

In this way, we can conclude that toponymic legends are of certain linguistic-cultural value, as they allow us to see not only the nomination process, but also the features of the worldview of the creators of the toponymic plots. As one of the genres of oral folklore, they have a number of features that reveal their folklore specificity. First and foremost, they are historical and reflective of reality. Toponyms in folklore texts are a reliable source for revealing the historical past, changes in religious beliefs, economic and cultural development of the area under study, and sometimes

they help to fill in those or other previously available data about a particular locality with new facts. The examples of toponymic legends presented in the article confirm that toponyms are an integral part of Kazakh folk prose. They are closely tied to the national mentality and woven into the storyline of folk works. Toponyms add colour to legends and help to convey their content better, creating a distinctive national cultural backdrop. There is no doubt that Kazakh folk toponyms are the unique material to study national mentality and reconstruct the world picture of the whole ethnos.

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#### ХАЛЫҚ ПРОЗАСЫ ЖАНРЫНДАҒЫ ТОПОНИМДЕРДІҢ ОРНЫ (АЙМАҚТЫҚ ТОПОНИМИКАЛЫҚ АҢЫЗДАР МЫСАЛЫНДА)

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**Андатпа.** Мақалада топонимикалық аңыздарды ауызша халық шығармашылығы жанры ретінде зерттеудің өзектілігі мен маңыздылығы қарастырылады.

Жұмыстың мақсаты топонимикалық аңыздарды аймақ атауларының географиялық негіздері ретінде қарастыра отырып, аймақтық ерекшелікті анықтау. Белгілі бір ұлттың мәдени құндылықтарын, ұлттық ерекшеліктерін, тарихи шындықтарын бойына сіңірген феномен ретінде топонимия мен фольклордың байланысын зерттеу қазақ халқының фольклорлық-тілдік бейнесіндегі өзіндік дүниетанымын ашуға мүмкіндік береді.

Зерттеу жұмысы тарихи-мәдени және сипаттамалық әдістерді пайдалана отырып жүргізілді.

Зерттеудің өзектілігі фольклор мен топонимиканың арасындағы байланыстың ерекшелігін анықтауда болып табылады. Бұл ерекшелік антикалық дүниетаным формасында немесе антикалық мәдениет мағынасында көрінуі мүмкін, себебі фольклорда қолданылған географиялық нысандардың атаулары мифтер мен аңыздарға негізделген. Мысалы, ертегілерде топонимикалық атаулар көрсетілмеген, олар тау, су, өзен түрінде келтірілген.

Зерттеу жұмысының ғылыми маңыздылығы топонимикалық аңыздар белгілі бір жеке халықтың ғана емес, бүкіл аймақтың рухани және мәдени мұрасының маңызды бөлігі екендігін анықтауда болып отыр. Мақалада топонимикалық сюжеттердің жанрлық ерекшелігі көрсетілген. Зерттеу материалы ретінде Батыс Қазақстан аймағының Маңғыстау және Ақтөбе облыстарындағы географиялық нысандардың атауымен байланысты топонимикалық мәтіндердегі фрагменттер алынды.

Зерттеу жұмысының соңында алынған нәтижелер халық прозасында кездесетін топонимикалық атаулар халықтың мәдени мұрасының ерекшеліктерін айқындайды деген қорытынды жасауға мүмкіндік береді.

**Тірек сөздер:** фольклор, топонимикалық фольклор, топонимикалық аңыз, топоним, халық прозасы, фольклорлық мәтін, топонимикалық сюжет, халықтық этимология

## **МЕСТО ТОПОНИМОВ В ЖАНРАХ НАРОДНОЙ ПРОЗЫ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫХ ТОПОНИМИЧЕСКИХ ЛЕГЕНД)**

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**Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматриваются актуальность и значимость изучения топонимических легенд как жанра устного народного творчества, своеобразных сюжетных рассказов о причинах наименования отдельных региональных географических объектов.

Целью работы является рассмотрение топонимических легенд как основы географических названий местностей, выявление региональной специфики. Изучение связи топонимии и фольклора, которая является феноменом, содержащим исторические реалии,

культурные ценности и национальное своеобразие данного этноса, позволяет открыть уникальное мировидение в фольклорно-языковой картине мира казахского народа.

Основными методами исследования выступили историко-культурный и описательный методы.

Новизна исследования заключается в определении особенности взаимосвязи фольклора и топонимики, которая проявляется в форме античного мировоззрения, или в смысле античной культуры, включающей в себя то, что используемые в фольклоре примеры географических объектов первоначально именовались и признавались мифическими, основанными на мифах и легендах. Например, в сказках топонимические названия не указаны, они бывают в виде гор, воды, рек.

Научная значимость данной работы заключается в том, что в результате исследования установлено, что топонимические легенды могут считаться важной составляющей духовного и культурного наследия не только отдельного народа, но и региона. Выявлены жанровые особенности топонимических сюжетов. Материалом для исследования явились фрагменты из топонимических текстов, связанные с наименованием отдельных географических объектов Мангистауской и Актюбинской областей Западного Казахстана.

Выводы, полученные во время исследовательской работы, позволяют определить, что жанры нехудожественной народной прозы, основной целью которой является выявление особенностей древнего культурного наследия, познаются по топонимам.

**Ключевые слова:** фольклор, топонимический фольклор, топонимическая легенда, топоним, народная проза, фольклорный текст, топонимический сюжет, народная этимология

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