

АСПЕКТИ СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНОЇ ПРОБЛЕМАТИКИ СХІДНИХ МОВ ТА ЛІТЕРАТУР

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THE WORLDVIEW FOUNDATIONS OF AZERBAIJANI COSMOGONIC AND ETHNOGONIC MYTHS

Актуальність дослідження визначається значущістю питань розвитку людського світогляду через засвоєння міфів космогонічного та етногонічного характеру як уявлень про навколишній світ. Метою роботи є дослідження світоглядних основ космогонічних і етногонічних міфів Азербайджану, а також філософсько-естетичний аналіз аспектів поетики міфів. Досягнення заявленої мети передбачає використання культурно-історичного, філософсько-естетичного та міфопоетичного методів дослідження.

Азербайджанські космогонічні та етногонічні міфи дають уявлення про витoki зародження світу, життя на Землі, про провідні принципи розвитку відносин між людською спільнотою і природою, формуючи світоглядні підстави кожної людини. Ці уявлення мають свідомості сучасників фантастичний характер, разом з тим вони практичні і показують, як слід осмислювати і сприймати навколишній світ, оцінювати і освоювати його. Вічні істини в уявленні давніх людей – це картина зоряного неба, з сонцем, місяцем і зірками, характер їх впливу на соціальне життя, взаємини між природними явищами і подіями. Пояснення поведінки природних об'єктів мають прагматичний характер, позаяк саме розуміння причинно-наслідкових відносин тут проєктується на життя людей, систему управління і духовно-моральні цінності.

Філософсько-естетична специфіка азербайджанських космогонічних і етногонічних міфів визначається антропоцентричною і теоцентричною спрямованістю, в тому сенсі, що Бог або людина постають як ядро міфологічної картини світу і міфологічної оповіді. Властива міфам антропологізація природного світу, що характеризує первісний синкретизм, організовує міфологічну оповідь, в якій героєм міфу постає людина, Бог або оживотворений природний світ. Проте при цьому семантично головним в оповіданні є не герой, а дія або вчинок. Як і міфи інших народів, азербайджанські міфи включають етичний момент, в них присутня оціночна складова, проте об'єктом оцінювання є не герой, а дія, процес, вчинок – саме вони є смисловою домінантою в описі космо- та етногенезу.

Специфіку композиції азербайджанських міфів визначають повтори, синтаксичний і образний паралелізм, імпліцитні і експліцитні зіставлення, популярні мотиви викрадення сонця і місяця, всесвітнього потопу, смерті і безсмертя, світла і темряви, велетнів, що вони тримають на своїх плечах світ, тощо. Сюжетна схема вибудовується на бінарних опозиціях, що відповідають просторової і чуттєвої орієнтації людини; відображають співвідношення в космічному, соціальному або сакральному континуумі. Сюжети міфів про створення світу характеризуються варіативністю зачинів і подієвої послідовності. При цьому, на відміну від європейських міфів, інваріантом міфологічної події виступає концепція монотеїзму.

Ключові слова: азербайджанська міфологічна система, космогонічні та етногонічні міфи, міфологічний світогляд, композиція міфу, сюжети міфу.

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Introuduction

It is known that myths contain the knowledge of people related to their created worldview, its spatial-temporal framework, within which all the most important information about the existing reality, including human existence, is contained. Mythological imagination develops under the influence of the factor of time: the further away in time the events being discussed, the more imagination and creativity are involved, driven by the real desires of the bearers of mythological knowledge. Myth, in general, is regarded as the ancestral memory of humanity. Every region of the planet, through the people who inhabit it, holds such a memory. The content of a myth directly influences the evolution of social memory. Mental memory, that is, national self-awareness, is most sensitive in this regard. Under the conditions of socialization, the myth itself undergoes changes with each subsequent generation, eventually leading to a crisis of archaic consciousness. Researchers emphasize the significance of myth as a fundamental building block of the genesis of basic forms of human activity, primarily worldviews: "Starting from the 20th century, myth begins to occupy a privileged place in culture, and mythological consciousness becomes a significant component of historical, ideological, and artistic consciousness", as noted by N. Khrenov [Хренов, 2011, p. 79]. Philosophical worldview, as the most general perspective on the world and humanity, including its place in this world, has various prerequisites for its formation, including those associated with archaic thinking in the form of myth-making, traces of which we will attempt to explore in the further study.

The influence of various social factors (for example, paleocontacts, their interpretation, which can be reflected in the legends and myths of different peoples) on the development of human worldview can occur, in our view, through the following directions:

- The development of scientific views on the world, scientific (rational) thinking;
- The formation of stable stereotypes (beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, customs, traditions) related to the impressions of ancient contacts with other civilizations;
- Practical skills that have influenced the development of technology, technology, and various other applied tasks;
- The formation of skills in managing social structures, personal qualities related to power relations;
- The settling of esoteric memory in the subconscious, expressed in the ability to manipulate various energy structures in different dimensions (such as extrasensory perception, parapsychology, etc.).

It is known that myths and narratives about the Universe, Cosmos, humanity, and the Earth and their interrelationships have a universal character and are widespread throughout the world. Apparently, even in ancient times, there were communication channels that, although they did not "surpass" the capabilities of today's Internet and other telecommunications, nevertheless, they existed because the history of many regions is similar in terms of their divine pantheon, legends, and myths about the origin of life on Earth, and certain dimensions of the historical memory of the people, including archetypes embedded in the collective consciousness.

The degree of research on the issue

Exploring ancient ways of perceiving the world is important in many respects, particularly for addressing the issues of personal maturation in the younger generation. Departing from such premises in the formation of individuality for various reasons, members of society involuntarily become nihilists, lacking an understanding of their origins and roots. The technical aesthetics constructed around them contributes to the pragmatization of thinking, focused on the present day, and the current event. The diminishment of earthly existence renders all thoughts and considerations about the world and humanity at the level of global unity, its development, and the meaning of life unnecessary. And if such reflections do appear, their level reflects a one-sided, unidimensional understanding of these issues.

By acquiring knowledge about the surrounding world, individuals have thereby facilitated their perception of their own essence (today, given the diversity of value judgments, we are aware of the multiplicity and pluralism of opinions in this regard). The world now primarily consists, for each person, in their uniqueness (let us recall Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of the Übermensch, or the "Superman") [Nietzsche, 2022].

It is known, as noted by D. Nesterov and M. Fedorova, that “The surrounding world has always been interesting for humans, evoked images and fantasies in the consciousness of ancient people. Unusual and inexplicable natural phenomena spawned numerous legends and myths which was reflected in the ancient art and architecture” [Nesterov, Fedorova, 2017, p. 1].

The possibilities of artistic analysis of mythological texts expanded after the systematic publication of written myth texts and their classification. Such work began towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century [Ögəl, 2004; Bəydili, 2003; Əliyev, 2005; Ağbaba, 2008]. Anthological collections were published [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005; Qafarlı, 2015]. Some elements of mythological thinking were touched upon in the analysis of other forms of oral folklore, especially in fairy tales, as it is in fairy tales that elements of mythological knowledge are most commonly used [Məmmədov, 1998, pp. 47–68; Rzasoy, 2008, pp. 13–34]. In addition to this, mythological consciousness, as an element of societal thought and reality perception, has been studied from historical, philosophical, sociological, and psychological perspectives. Among them are the studies of S. Rzakupizade [Rzakupizade, 2011, pp. 12–52], A. Gajiev and V. Sultanzade [Гаджиев, Султанзаде, 2004] and other authors, including the works of the most renowned researchers such as M. Eliade [Eliade, 1986], D. Campbell [Campbell, 2004], A. Camus [Camus, 1955], C. Jung [Jung, 1959], E. Meletinsky [Мелетинский, 2012], R. Bart [Bart, 1994], A.F. Losev [Лосев, 2001], K. Armstrong [Armstrong, 2022], K. Huebner [Huebner, 1996], and others. Each of them, to some extent, touched upon the peculiarities of the artistic style in myths, the nature of their language, and their genre uniqueness, attempting to determine the place of this spiritual heritage of humanity in contemporary forms of societal consciousness. This thereby defines the contribution of the spiritual culture of one or another people to our modern world [Arumainayagam, 2021].

In general, rationality in consciousness, manifested through the progressive development of economic, political, and spiritual forms of life unified by common expressions of self-awareness in the form of philosophy, religion, and art, has passed through numerous crisis phases associated with the emergence of new phenomena in theoretical thinking and human relationships. It is our view that this has led to the formation of mythological beliefs about oneself and the world. These issues have been the subject of study by numerous authors in the fields of humanities and social sciences. In this regard, Azerbaijani literary studies have not adequately addressed the problem. As mentioned above, the analysis has touched upon the systematization of myths by types and directions [Qafarlı, 2015; Bəydili, 2003; Acalov, 1988], as well as their connection with other forms of oral folklore [Ögəl, 2004; Əliyev, 2005; Cəfərli, 2001; Qafarlı, 2011b]. In general, the artistic features of cosmogonic and ethnogonic myths, as the foundation of people’s worldviews, including contemporary ones, have not been examined by domestic researchers.

The research *aim* to explore the worldview foundations of cosmogonic and ethnogonic myths in Azerbaijan, as well as to conduct a philosophical and aesthetic analysis of mythological poetic aspects. Achieving the stated goal involves using cultural-historical, philosophical-aesthetic, and mythopoetic research *methods*.

Fantasy in Myths

Discussing the possibilities of fantasy as a creative basis for myths from a modern thinker’s perspective is quite complex. Ancient people exhibited syncretism in their assessment of the world, especially at the highest level, which was most apparent in cosmogonic myths. They considered the intervention of celestial bodies and luminaries in human life as natural, as well as their involvement in the creative process of shaping the earthly and celestial realms. Their “relationships” with these celestial bodies were viewed through anthropomorphism. However, fantasy can be identified as a specific approach to evaluating events from the perspective of primitive consciousness closely linked to the surrounding world.

For contemporary individuals, the imaginative nature of their ancestors’ consciousness, as manifested in mythological thinking, may appear as a sober but naive assessment of the processes and events in the surrounding world. It is expressed through phantasmagoria, grotesque depictions, and a naive belief in the reality of the presented ideas. Ultimately, all of this fits into the logical and semantic frameworks of their thinking, which later formed their worldview.

Hence, there is a direct connection to subsequent forms of collective consciousness, including aesthetic, moral, political, economic forms, and their combinations. The formation of everyday consciousness is closely related to rituals and beliefs.

Such beliefs, no matter how fantastic they may seem today, continue to exist in the subconscious at the level of archetypes. In folk culture, this is evident in the admiration for certain heroic qualities and deeds of people, such as bravery, courage, patience, generosity, perseverance, and so on. This is also accomplished by comparing actions or character traits with mythical heroes, extraordinary figures, and phenomena. Today, imagination as a quality of thinking has many foundations, including archetypes. By the way, a fertile ground for enhancing the imaginative element in the minds of individuals, especially children, is animated films, where any character created by human imagination can be encountered.

In the cognition of ancient civilizations, the world was construed with reference to the events and causal relationships that enveloped their milieu. These causal relationships were considered intrinsic, emanating from the interplay of natural elements, and found their narrative expression within cosmogonic myths. An illustrative example from such myths posits a scenario where a singular deity initially reigned supreme in a watery expanse, with the Earth submerged beneath these waters. Subsequently, the deity transformed this primordial water into primordial mud and subsequently into terrestrial soil. This fertile soil then served as the bedrock for the growth of plant life. The deity proceeded to craft human beings from this earthly substance, breathing life into them to animate their existence [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, p. 26].

In the context of these mythological narratives, it becomes challenging to ascribe notions of fantasy or imaginative constructs, for they pertain to the material realm governed by divine forces. Instead, these accounts assume the form of hypotheses, underpinned by a conceptual framework firmly entrenched within the cognitive paradigms of ancient societies. Importantly, it is noteworthy that the verification or negation of these beliefs in the contemporary era remains an elusive endeavor. Consequently, it becomes imperative to elucidate the salient attributes of the imaginative faculties, or creative imagination, as they manifested during the formative period of mythogenesis. It merits highlighting that the preeminent role in this narrative milieu was undeniably vested in the exigent exigencies of human existence and the idiosyncrasies of the surrounding environment. In the words of Caroline Larrington, “Our shared biology and universally analogous life cycles – commencing with birth, marriage, child-rearing, aging, and culminating in death – often yield narratives of a strikingly congruent nature. These narratives encompass themes ranging from profound love to the perils of child-rearing and even futile endeavors to transcend the threshold demarcating life from death” [Larrington, 2019]. The imperative to explicate the phenomena encapsulating their lived experience impelled ancient civilizations to embark on a journey of speculative inquiry, seeking to fathom the causal tapestry underpinning these occurrences.

One could contend that, essentially, what is at stake here is the genesis of primitive thought based on a close correlation between logical frameworks of real phenomena and events, and their reflection in the human consciousness. This reflection does not take the form of abstract analytical concepts; rather, it embodies imaginary actions that could easily be visualized as feasible and practical. It is noteworthy that over time, this capacity for visualization and abstraction has continually evolved through the transition from one sociocultural epoch to another.

It is crucial to emphasize that in subsequent cosmogonic myths, evaluative judgments emerged because these myths increasingly incorporated the human factor. In the beginning, there was nothing. Then animals, insects, herbs, and trees appeared, and finally, humans were created. There were so many of them that the world became too small, leading to conflicts among humans, which bred envy and malice. Observing this, the heavens separated from the earth and ascended. Since then, the power of goodness diminished, and obtaining the necessities of life, symbolized by “daily bread”, became an arduous task, almost as if extracted from stone. This evaluative aspect is evident in the realization of the confined nature of the world, the ensuing envy and enmity, the diminished force of goodness, and the increased toil required for sustenance. The comprehension of interdependence and interconnectedness in the world served as the foundation for the further development of human civilization and the formation of the humanistic underpinnings of idealized concepts concerning human existence.

An examination of later cosmogonic myths reveals their incorporation of religious elements, particularly drawing from Islamic traditions. For instance, one such myth recounts the primordial state of the universe: *“In the beginning, an ocean existed. God fashioned a diverse array of gemstones within this ocean. Subsequently, He created the jinn, tasking them with the retrieval of these gemstones. Following this, the heavens, stars, and the moon were brought into existence. Then, the angels were created, their purpose being to elevate the heavens above the Earth. Their initial attempt at this endeavor encountered difficulties. In response, God instructed, ‘Recite Surah Yasin from the Quran’. Upon their recitation of this sacred text, they successfully raised the heavens, which continue to rest upon their shoulders”*. Subsequent segments of the narrative expound upon the insufflation of the soul into Adam, accomplished through Quranic prayers. It is also noteworthy that Shaytan (Satan), in his endeavors to meddle in human affairs, is condemned and consigned to eternal obscurity [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, pp. 26–27].

This mythic account signifies the enduring dichotomy of good and evil in the world and imparts this recognition to human consciousness by exemplifying the potency of unwavering faith in a singular divine entity, characterized by omnipotence and benevolence. The spiritual dimension within the human experience originally finds resonance in cosmocentric notions of existence, subsequently coalescing with theocentric conceptions, particularly those associated with monotheism. These multifaceted themes materialize within myths through a rich tapestry of artistic expressions.

In essence, one can discuss the incremental integration of ideas and concepts related to a hypothetical (rather than fantastical) perception of self and the world into the human worldview. In the nascent human consciousness, prior to the establishment of a scientific worldview, a prevailing awareness was the recognition of one’s interconnectedness with the living natural world. Notions about this world took shape through hylomorphism, anthropomorphism, and the personification of natural forces as a whole. Subsequently, this evolved into an understanding of the imperative need for harmony with nature, a realization already comprehended by ancient Greeks. While the ancient thinkers may have possessed a scope of understanding of the world and humanity comparable to modern thinkers, the diversity of life and the pace of unfolding processes in their milieu were markedly distinct.

During the Middle Ages, the perception of the surrounding world was enriched with religious ideas concerning the origin of the world and its Creator. All of this persisted in the collective consciousness through mythological conceptions passed down from generation to generation, which continue to endure in contemporary times. Finally, commencing with the Modern Era, when rationalism unequivocally triumphed in human worldviews, mythological imagery, particularly of a cosmological nature, began to be perceived as a component of spiritual culture, ingrained in national self-awareness.

However, it is worth noting that as humanity progressed into periods closer to the contemporary era, the creation of myths increasingly became intertwined with elements of imagination. In this regard, there exists an entire class of myths directly associated with the miraculous power of the Islamic faith.

It is important to emphasize that the narrative style predominates in myths. This is highly significant as such a style renders the material accessible to virtually every individual. Moreover, it facilitated the assimilation and transmission of mythological plots to other cultures. Consequently, at times, it becomes nearly impossible to trace the original source of a myth: the plot, characters, and narrative structure replicate one another. Exceptions may be found in the idiosyncrasies of the narrator’s speech (dialect), indicators linked to their religious affiliation, and some embellishments in language, albeit in limited quantity. Notably, certain myths, primarily those concerning the origins of the Universe and life on Earth, stand out for their brevity and the scarcity of stylistic adornments.

The element of imagination becomes particularly salient when contemplating the interactions that transpire between humanity and the encompassing environment across various tiers of existence, extending all the way to the divine Creator. Within this context, the narrative unfolds upon the substrate of ethnic self-consciousness and assorted cognitive frameworks interwoven with facets such as religion, domesticity, familial traditions, and the nature of labor. These factors, in turn, harmonize with geographical parameters, environmental topography, the

distribution of natural resources, and so forth. It is at this juncture that discernible evaluative judgments, endowed with profound spiritual and moral connotations, begin to manifest. Such assessments encompass the dichotomous realm of good and evil, the repercussions attendant to transgressions, and the ultimate triumph of virtue within the human experience. These multifaceted dimensions find expression in cosmogonic myths that expound upon the genesis of the cosmos.

For instance, consider the myth that narrates, *“The Lord issued a command unto the Archangel Gabriel, instructing him to proceed and shape two beings from the very clay of the Earth. With exacting fidelity to the divine directive, Archangel Gabriel meticulously fashioned two entities – a male and a female – sculpted from the very elemental clay. Thereafter, God, in His omnipotence, conferred the breath of life upon these beings, bestowing upon them a sentient soul. The male was christened as Adam, while the female was bestowed with the name Eve. As the annals of their existence unfurled, they begot forty sons. Alas, harmony amongst them proved elusive, and discord marred their relations. In response, their father, Adam, invoked a curse upon them, decreeing that their tongues be cleaved, thus sowing the seeds of linguistic diversity among their progeny”* [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, pp. 27–28]. Within this narrative, the narrative conspicuously emphasizes the paramount significance of upholding principles of humanism and equity in human interactions, both at the individual and collective levels.

Similarly, these phenomena are evident in ethnogonic myths. For instance, consider the following narrative: *“An elderly woman, known as Grandma Mazan, was engaged in baking unleavened bread on a griddle, with her grandson in close proximity. Suddenly, a cataclysmic deluge engulfed the world. Tragically, Grandma Mazan found herself submerged beneath the watery abyss. In stark contrast, her grandson miraculously ascended to the zenith of a towering mountain. His safety and well-being were subsequently ensured as the Prophet Noah extended his benevolent rescue from aboard the sacred ark. Ever since that momentous event, the mountain has borne the appellation ‘Diri Dagh’ – The Living Mountain. Furthermore, the very site where Grandma Mazan once prepared her bread achieved a sanctified status”* [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, p. 42]. The moral essence of this myth lies in the profound lessons of self-sacrifice, mutual esteem, and human solidarity.

Indeed, the spiritual and ethical fabric permeates diverse mythological categories, encompassing cosmogonic narratives, ethnogonic chronicles, myths portraying cosmic cataclysms, etiological legends, cultic narratives, anthropogonic myths, cosmological accounts (including astral, solar, and lunar myths), twin myths, totemic lore, calendrical myths, heroic sagas, eschatological visions, and myths harmoniously interwoven with legends and folktales [Eliade, 1986, p. 49].

These categories, though ostensibly distinct, are characterized by intricate interconnections, rendering them integral components of the broader mythological tapestry.

Distinctive Features of the Composition and Narrative Structure in Cosmogonic and Ethnogonic Myths across the Territory of Azerbaijan

Among the components of myth composition, repetitions, variations, parallelisms (both cooperative and contrasting), and motifs warrant special attention. In cosmogonic myths explaining the origin of the world, frequent repetitions of the adverb *“then”* at the beginning of sentences create an effect of chronological sequence and continuity of events: *“God transformed the water into mud. Then, after drying the mud, He turned it into earth. Then, He made plants grow on it. Then, from the earth, He fashioned clay, and from it, He created humans. Then, He breathed life into them”* [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, p. 26]. In the myth about light and darkness, repetition and simultaneous syntactic parallelism emphasize the importance of the mythologeme of the balance between day and night, light and darkness, creating the harmony of the cosmos: *“The guardian of light and darkness, Barhayyl, holds the Sun in his right hand and **the Moon in his left**. His right hand creates the day, while **his left hand creates the night**. **The hand that creates the day** stretches towards the East, and **the hand that creates the night** reaches towards the West”* [Seyidov, 1983, p. 67]. Sometimes, repetitions serve as the foundation of the narrative structure, fulfilling the function of spatial-temporal determination typical of the folk tale genre: *“In front of him, from the sky to the earth, hangs a canopy, the end of which reaches the sea bottom. In the*

middle of the canopy, there is a double-leaf door, there`s a lock on the door made of a bundle of light, and on the lock, a seal is placed from a beam” [Qafarlı, 2011, p. 135].

Scholars have duly observed that the demarcation line between myths and other genres within oral folklore often exhibits a certain degree of fluidity. This fluidity hinges on the specific mythologemes encapsulated within the narrative and their role in shaping the overall storyline. It is crucial to underscore, in accordance with R. Kafarlı`s perspective, that the utilization of various artistic devices in mythological narratives is intrinsically tied to their underlying mythological semantics and the paradigms inherent to them. Within Azerbaijani mythology, certain mythologemes, such as those pertaining to the goat, gray wolf, sun, or white bird, carry their own distinct imagery and contribute to the construction of narrative structures within the mythological text. Consequently, this interplay between mythologemes and narrative structures often results in their proximity to other forms of folklore, including folktales and epics [Qafarlı, 2015, p. 78]. For instance, one can cite the following example: “*Demons perpetually harbor malevolent intentions towards humanity. In a scenario where these entities ascend to the celestial realms, they possess the capability to obstruct the radiant luminance of the Sun or the ethereal glow of the Moon, thereby enshrouding the terrestrial realm in impenetrable darkness. Consequently, during such critical junctures, it is incumbent upon individuals to discharge their firearms skyward and to resonate deafeningly by striking copper vessels, generating a cacophonous tumult intended to disconcert these malevolent entities, ultimately compelling them to retreat*” [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, p. 33].

In conjunction with syntactic parallelism, cosmogonic and ethnogonic myths prominently feature imagistic parallelism. This stylistic device, common in early poetic compositions, is defined as the juxtaposition of natural phenomena and human reality. In myths, imagistic parallelism assumes the form of anthropocentric and cosmocentric analogies, wherein internal human states are correlated with cosmogonic symbols (e.g., “*People began to quarrel amongst themselves; envy and malice took root. Witnessing this, the Heavens separated from the Earth and ascended on high*” [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, p. 26]) or supernatural spiritual entities (alternatively, deities) and the symbols of nature (e.g., “*Guardians with heads of bulls and bodies of rams stand at the gates. Stretching from one door to the other are two seas – one with sweet water, the other with bitter water*” [Qafarlı, 2011, p. 135]). In these instances, implicit comparisons occur within the confines of a single myth. Additionally, explicit comparisons emerge between the figures of mythological characters from distinct myths, united by shared semantics. For instance, a parallelism is drawn between the figures of Barhayil and Sahayil: “*The Custodian of light and darkness, Barhayil, holds the Sun in his right hand and the Moon in his left*” [Seyidov, 1983, p. 67] – “*The Custodian of seawater and winds, Sahayil, with one hand pressed into the earth and the other into the sky*” [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, p. 37].

Even in cosmogonic and ethnogonic myths, the most prevalent motifs begin to take shape, such as the abduction of the Sun and the Moon, the global flood, immortality, and others. In these motifs, which represent a pivotal component of the mythological system, the fundamental semantic oppositions that form the structure of the narrative emerge. These oppositions correspond to the simplest spatial and sensory orientations of humans (*left/right, top/bottom, light/darkness, dwarfs/giants, sweet/bitter, black/white*), relations in the cosmic realm (*heaven/earth, water/land, earth/sea, day/night*), the social sphere (*man/woman, grandmother/grandson, world/people*), or the sacred continuum (*angels/demons, real world/otherworldly, life/death*), and so forth. As noted by E. Meletinsky, “such a combination of identifications and oppositions is a necessary tool for mythological structuring in terms of classifications, system construction, and narratives” [Мелетинский, 2012, p. 233]. In this sense, the variability of prologues and the sequence of events in myths about the creation of the world is noteworthy. In these prologues, the beginning of the world can be associated with the existence of God, the ocean, or the absence of any matter (e.g., “*In the beginning, there was nothing*”; “*Long ago, in the world, there was only one God. Besides Him, there was no one*”; “*In the beginning, there was an ocean*”). Similarly, the substance of the world, which God created at the outset, varies. In one myth, God transforms water into clay, clay into earth, and grows plants on it; in another, animals, insects, plants, trees, and then humans appear immediately; in a third, God creates gemstones in the ocean, followed by djinns who retrieve these gems, and then the sky, stars, and the moon. However, all variations

of cosmogonic myths adhere to a unified concept of monotheism, in contrast to, for instance, ancient myths, wherein everything is created by God, the ultimate beginning of all beginnings.

Azerbaijani mythology encompasses narratives addressing the origins of the first human, the creation of other humans from them, the resurgence of life after a catastrophic flood on Earth, and the veneration of five sacred objects (fire, metal, stone, earth, and water), with trees also being objects of reverence. There are various accounts regarding the birth of humanity. For instance, there are indications that the first human believed to be created from the Tree of Life, which is said to reside in the womb of the Great Mother Kyubey Hatun [Vəliyev, 1987, pp. 27–28]. All these themes are embedded within the narrative structures of myths, presented in the form of brief tales where natural phenomena, animals, celestial bodies, thereby constructing an animistic model of the world.

The narrative structure itself exhibits a considerable degree of diversity while remaining fundamentally oriented toward the overarching objective of seeking answers to the most complex questions related to life on Earth: its origins, causes, participants, and so forth, as well as explaining natural phenomena and the world of nature. Typically, the narratives commence with the characterization or mere mention of the participants, followed by the determination of their function or role, the depiction of their actions, and the exposition of the ensuing consequences. The world that enveloped ancient people was vast, thereby offering ample opportunities to diversify narratives through characters and their actions.

For example, there are accounts about our cosmic forebears or perhaps entities that migrated beyond the bounds of human proto-civilization. Nevertheless, it is challenging to discern their identities, origins, psychological, social, biological organization, intellectual capabilities, moral, and ethical principles, as illustrated in the myth “The Life of Humans. The Living Water”: *“In ancient times, humans were very large. There was such a human called Abazar. He could step with one foot from one bank of a river the size of our Araz to the next bank”* [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, p. 45]. Furthermore, the question remains open regarding the influence of these contacts on the nature of the Earth and the development of human civilization. However, it is evident that traces of such information are deeply ingrained in the historical memory of various peoples, including the Azerbaijani, and have left their mark on various objects of reverence, primarily the sky, sun, stars, moon, sacred animals (totems), and so forth.

In the dastan “Oghuz” (“Radiance and Light”), we find accounts of the interaction between light and humans: *“A ray of light fell from the sky. This light was brighter than the sun, brighter than the moon... In the center of the light sat a maiden... She had a crown on her head, sparkling like the North Star... Oghuz was happy and married her”; “One morning, a light resembling daylight fell to the earth of Oghuz. Inside it, a Wolf with gray fur and gray paws appeared... This guide, sent by Oghuz Tanrı (God), went ahead of the army...”* [Vəliyev, 1987, pp. 37–38].

Numerous such examples exist. Their analysis subsequently helped identify the fundamental priorities in the formation of human thought, including its spiritual foundation, one of the components of which is a philosophical worldview. At the core of every mythological narrative lie historically shaped perceptions of the world as well as beliefs. Ancient notions about themselves and the world encapsulated a generalized image of the Universe, where humans interacted with surrounding objects, events, and processes as equals, shaping a life ideal based on anthropocentric principles. Later, as naive beliefs in the animism of the world and its phenomena gave way to rational ideas, myths lost their enchantment, gradually transitioning into the realm of artistic creativity and aesthetic imagination.

We posit that the influence of myths on the worldview of individuals is intricately linked to the establishment of specific priorities, which continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the consciousness of contemporary humans and their human qualities. This necessitates a rejuvenation, as articulated by Aurelio Peccei, who stated, “Humanity has subdued the planet and now must learn to manage it, mastering the intricate art of leadership on Earth. If humanity can summon the strength to fully comprehend the complexity and instability of its current condition and assume a certain responsibility, if it can attain the level of cultural maturity required to undertake this arduous mission, then the future belongs to it... Only the New Humanism is capable of effecting the transformation of humankind, elevating its qualities and capabilities to a level commensurate with the newfound responsibilities of humans in this world” [Peccei, 1977, pp. 210–211].

The priorities we have highlighted encompass:

- The preservation of a comfortable life on Earth within all its biological niches and in harmony with the natural world.
- The attainment of humanism in human relations.
- The boundless development of human intellectual capacities in the comprehension of existence.

Among the prevalent themes in mythological narratives are accounts of miraculous transformations of individuals into birds or feathers. Typically, this occurs in response to a fervent desire to escape injustice and cruelty; the heavens effectuate this transformation in response to entreaty (“The Tale of Melik-Mamed”) [Axundov, 1968, pp. 260–261]. Through this, the aspiration for the unknown was expressed, a desire to explore the world. However, it is possible that flights in the sky were not merely a dream but a certain reality for humans.

Legends abound regarding the Oghuz tribes being composed of giant humans who foresaw their eventual replacement by dwarf-like people (in comparison, of course – K.A.) [Axundov, 1968, p. 218]. The contemplation of the life process that led ancient people to such conclusions speaks to the development of self-awareness and the perception of the world through a system of logical connections, enabling them to arrive at certain conclusions.

Issues of death, immortality, and longevity are also reflected in myths and legends. In particular, in the legend of “Ozan”, there is mention of a taboo violation concerning the word “death”, which, in the region where people were immortal, was equated to murder, i.e., a form of death. Thinking or speaking about death was discouraged, thus conferring immortality. There are accounts of people who understood the language of nature itself, such as that of animals. It is possible that these were individuals from a civilization where telepathy was mastered, allowing for the exchange of thoughts over distances and, naturally, the ability to read the thoughts of more primitive living beings [Qafarli, 2011a, p. 364]. Even today, superstitious beliefs related to the concept of death, the necessity of avoiding direct naming, etc., persist in the consciousness of modern humans. Thus, all of this resides in the subconscious of each of us at the level of archetypes.

A significant number of myths are associated with the name of the prophet Noah, his famous ark, and Mount Agridagh (Ararat), where, according to legend, he saved himself and the entire world from the Great Flood.

There are also legends about the transformation of people into stone, either through a curse sent by one person to another or through a voluntary departure from life in this manner (when the heavens, showing mercy, effectuate this transformation). There are legends of a miraculous sleep that lasted for 350 years, even though those who slept believed they had slept only 2 days. In this context, one can invoke the theory of relativity, which substantiates the idea of time dilation as one approaches the speed of light.

There is also an intriguing legend about the fortress of Lök, which supposedly was built by winged people who descended from the heavens (and today, the remnants of this fortress are located near the village of Seidlyar in the Kelbajar district of the Republic of Azerbaijan). Lök, being a mythic hero, had the ability to change his appearance and commanded a formidable army [Paşavev, 1985, p. 44].

In support of the aforementioned, we would like to present the content of the epic myth of world creation. As scholars write, “Munis-name” can be considered a compendium of information on Azerbaijani mythology from the 12th century. Here, we encounter a worldview model drawn from belief systems (animism, anthropomorphism, totemism, dualism, shamanism, and monotheism), filtered through the prism of Islam. According to this model, Allah, the highest of the highest, initially created Hell with seven gates. He then created two beings, naming one of them, which took the form of a lion – Khalid, and the other, taking the form of a she-wolf – Salit. They were colossal in size. The tail of Lion Khalid was like that of a scorpion, and the tail of She-Wolf Salit was like that of a snake. Once, Allah ordered both of them to shake themselves, and from them fell an innumerable multitude of scorpions and snakes. Twice a year (from the heat and cold), Hell seethes, boils, and surges. The burning Hell churns like the sea, and its waves cast ashore thousands of snakes [Acalov, 1988, p. 59].

Here, the conceptualization of the idea of world creation culminates in the form of a religious and artistic tableau, wherein Hell is depicted as an active force that influences human life, affirming the necessity of righteous living, and wherein individuals may be subject to punishment for transgressing laws and regulations (in this context, the snake embodies evil and is perceived as a form of retribution).

The scorching summer heat and winter cold are attributed to the boiling of Hell (although this rationale is subsequently explained differently). By the command of Allah, Khalid and Salit are wedded. Salit becomes pregnant, and when the time comes, she gives birth to seven male and seven female beings. Once they reach maturity, Allah arranges their unions, male with female. Subsequently, Allah creates the first human, Adam, with the six beings placed under his authority. However, the seventh being, named Iblis, refuses to submit, leading Allah to cast a curse upon Iblis. The offspring of the six brothers – Haris, Yaksak, Muzir, Yaumaz, Ravi, and Saris – are benevolent spirits, exquisite fairies, whereas Iblis begets divs, jinn, and malevolent spirits [Acalov, 1988, p. 58].

The ancient people who crafted these legends possessed an understanding of the coexistence of good and evil within this world. Given that their cognitive framework was intertwined with hylozoism, anthropomorphism, and certain religious beliefs, the specific origin of humanity was expounded through the genesis of the underworld, its inhabitants, and their subsequent life events. The very existence of the underworld, comprehended as the source from which human life on Earth emanates, attests to a sophisticated cognitive system through which the perception of life processes and the overarching purpose of existence are contemplated.

“The Keeper of Light and Darkness, Barhayyl, holds the Sun in his right hand and the Moon in his left. His right hand gives birth to day, while his left brings forth night. The hand that creates day stretches towards the East, while the hand responsible for night extends towards the West. Should Barhayyl grow weary and withdraw the hand extended towards the East, darkness will envelop the entire Universe, and morning will never dawn. On Barhayyl’s outstretched hands, there lies a board with white and black stripes. This board serves to maintain the equilibrium of day and night in accordance with each season of the year. Therefore, Barhayyl’s gaze is perpetually fixed upon the board. He balances the shortening and lengthening of days and nights in harmony with the shrinking and expanding stripes” [Seyidov, 1983, p. 67].

The pronounced anthropocentrism evident in this myth underscores the significance attributed by ancient people to the conceptualization of the passage of time through their own social perception. The figure who governs the movement of the Sun across the celestial sphere, the daily fluctuations between day and night, plays a pivotal role in regulating the normal rhythm of life, encompassing various periods and domains of human activity. At the core of the worldview held by those who crafted this myth lies a comprehension of space and time within a synergistic framework. This framework embodies the potential for transitioning from chaos to order and vice versa, with human intervention serving as a means of regulating this process. Consequently, the myth exalts the grandeur of the human individual, marking a significant stride toward anthropocentrism long before it was championed by Renaissance thinkers.

“The Guardian of the Sea Waters and Winds, Sahayyl (possibly, the ancient wind god Sabayel may have arisen from this belief), extends one hand towards the earth while the other reaches towards the heavens. With the hand directed towards the heavens, he thwarts severe winds and hurricanes, while with the hand pressed towards the earth, he prevents the coastal waters from inundating the land. If Sahayyl were to retract his left hand, the maritime waters would inundate all steppes and plains, and people would be submerged in water, drowning. Conversely, if he were to retract his right hand, storms and hurricanes would obliterate everything from the face of the Earth, leaving no trace of living beings” [Acaloğlu, Baydili, 2005, p. 37].

In this example, the human agency also contributes to the regulation of natural processes upon which crop yields, prosperity, and the future of subsequent generations depend. Winds, waters, and seas are elemental forces, yet their interactions and roles in societal life can be controlled through the extraordinary abilities of the deity who safeguards these elements. This deity is ascribed to human qualities, a concept seamlessly integrated into the mythological worldview of the people. They regarded themselves as an integral part of nature, its offspring who rejoiced and endured alongside the elements, emulating and drawing inspiration from

them. This perspective was also manifested in their creative approach to interpreting unfolding events.

As previously noted, following the adoption of Islam, folk tales and myths to some extent acquired a religious dimension. That is to say, religious Islamic ideas and figures were incorporated into the narrative framework. Foremost among these were the omnipotent and merciful Allah, the angels who served as protectors of various facets of human life, and so forth.

For instance, in one myth, it is recounted that the beings created by Allah on Earth are divided into four groups: the first consists of humans with human heads, the second comprises wild animals with lion heads, the third encompasses domestic and draft animals with cow heads, and the fourth encompasses all other creatures, including animals, birds, and other vulnerable beings. All of them are safeguarded from natural disasters, heat, cold, curses, and torment through the patronage of four colossal angels with avian heads [Acalov, 1988, p. 75].

As previously highlighted, in the “Munis-name”, the inception of the world is represented by the colossal mountain Gaf, which is interconnected with all lands. Due to its central location, the world appears as small as a pea when viewed from its summit [Acalov, 1988, p. 76]. “The mountain Gaf, which governs the world, is situated between the two horns of an immense bull. The size of this bull is equal to a journey of a thousand years”. The Earth of the existing world consists of seven layers, while the seas comprise seven colossal water basins. Following the description of Mount Gaf, forty worlds are delineated. Each of these worlds is forty times larger than the world and is divided into 400 parts. Each of these parts is 400 times larger than the lands inhabited by humans. In these worlds, there is no darkness (in accordance with Zoroastrian beliefs, the world in the golden age is depicted as without nights); black nights never occur, as bright light perpetually reigns. All lands are created from pure gold, and the majority of objects and items are formed from light. The denizens of these worlds are angels. They recognize neither humans nor beings like Iblis (the fallen angel). They have no knowledge of either paradise or hell. What exists or does not exist beyond the forty worlds is known only to God [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, p. 49]. The ontology of existence is embodied in sacred conceptions of the world, encompassing various signs and symbols, including the numbers 7 and 40, radiant illumination, golden radiance, and the angels who govern this world. Naturally, within these conceptions, there is a place for animals, natural phenomena, such as the colossal bull and the sacred mountain Gaf, as the natural environment itself comprised a distinct landscape, flora, and fauna.

The ontological conceptions of the world also encompass various means of transferring beings from one realm to another, each with its distinct characteristics:

- The winged horse – once dismounted, one cannot mount it again; otherwise, the rider will be unable to remount. For instance, had Kyoroglu not looked at the growing Gyurat through the hole in the stable roof on the 39th day, Gyurat would have also become a winged horse.

- Magical colossal birds capable of covering any distance in ten, nine, or even just one day. One such bird is the Simurgh, which transported Melikmamed from the dark world to the bright world in forty days.

- Khizr, in the form of a bird, instantly transporting Garib to his homeland [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, p. 98].

Animals and birds are anthropomorphized in these narratives, endowed with extraordinary abilities to perform miracles. It can be argued that the artistic imagination of ancient people was an integral part of their worldview. The world was so diverse, mysterious, and simultaneously perilous that protection and safeguarding oneself from its dangers could only be achieved by fully merging with it through the most basic, accessible means available to them. These means encompassed animals, plants, celestial bodies, their personifications, and human capabilities. The identification of humans with nature – the cosmos in its entirety, from celestial bodies to animals and plants on Earth – which represents a fundamental characteristic of primordial syncretism, reflected the harmony in their relationship with the world.

Furthermore, the description of the means separating one layer of the world from another (of which there are seven in total) is notably original: “*The height of the angel standing at the passage is so great that his feet are on the ground, while his head is in the heavens. From the sky to the ground before him hangs a curtain, the end of which reaches the seabed. In the middle of the curtain, there is a two-leafed door, and on the door hangs a lock made of light, sealed*

with a ray (to a modern individual, it may appear as if our ancient ancestors were describing computerized, ultrasonic- or laser-operated contemporary doors: K.A.). *Two guardian angels stand at the door, with the heads of bulls and the bodies of rams. Stretching from one door to the other are two seas – one with sweet water, the other with bitter water. Although both seas flow into the same place, their waters do not mix, much like how oil does not dissolve in water*” [Qafarlı, 2011b, p. 135]. As evident from the text, this fantastical (at least from our perspective) description coexists with the commonplace elements of doors, curtains, seas with different-tasting waters, and a comparison between the mixing of waters and the reaction of water and oil. Overall, these elements are employed to describe life on Earth as an integral component of creation.

Between the two seas lies an island resembling paradise. It is adorned with a multitude of fruit-bearing trees, various birds, fragrant herbs, and lush green meadows. The heads of all the birds are made of gold, their eyes of ruby, and their wings of chrysolite. Adjacent to the island, bathed by bitter water, stands a colossal mountain of pure gold. On the other side, washed by sweet water, stands a gleaming silver mountain, resembling fish scales. Perched atop the summits of both mountains are angels; one guarding the sweet water, and the other the bitter water. These two mountains serve as the source of all minerals and valuable resources in the world. The inception of all freshwater springs, wellsprings, and underground streams originates from the sea with sweet water, while the beginnings of saline lakes and wellsprings stem from the sea with bitter water. These two seas draw their origins from beneath the heavenly throne of God. Prior to the angels, the Creator fashioned these seas, the island, the golden and silver mountains.

The depiction of the origins of life on Earth is presented as a continuation of the concept of a tranquil, abundant, and progressive existence. This is evident through the presence of the golden and silver mountains, birds with precious body parts, valuable minerals, and waters. All of this was created by God before the angels. Consequently, over time, the overarching concept of existence in the minds of ancient people became associated with the idea of its origin from a single source, through divine creation. The vividness of this beginning attests to the developed imagination of ancient people who adeptly employed their perceptions of the surrounding world to synthesize them and construct a worldview for each individual, one secure enough to feel comfortable within.

According to R. Kafarly, such a description of the world model is not encountered in the mythic systems of other cultures [Qafarlı, 2011b, p. 137]. The facts presented here in the language of myths hold a particular interest, even from the perspective of potential reflections of paleocontacts.

The images and characters of this myth are extensively represented in the Azerbaijani folk tales. For instance, Melik Muhammad ventures into the afterlife to punish a demon who had stolen the apples of immortality from his father’s garden. In the well, which serves as his passage to the afterlife, two rams confront each other head-on: one black and the other white (a motif representing day and night, good and evil, the two worlds, the real and the afterlife). The hero attempts to mount the white ram to return home, but it throws him onto the back of the black ram, which carries him into darkness, into the black world. He manages to return thanks to a feather from the sacred bird Zumrud [Shukur, 2022].

It’s worth noting that cosmogonic myths often echo narratives found in other cultures and regions of the world, including elements from ancient Greece, Iran, and Mongolia. There are numerous common elements in the mythology of many cultures, with differences arising in moral and ethical beliefs and factors influencing the mindset of a specific people (behavioral patterns, intragroup relations, etc.), as observed by M. Kazem-Bek [Казем-Бек, 1848, pp. 11–12]. It’s not coincidental that the term «wandering plots» is used among literary theorists. Migration, population movements, and the development of trade and cultural relations facilitated the borrowing and subsequent reinterpretation of mythic plots.

Regarding the myths of the Azerbaijani people, even those that closely resemble borrowed themes (for example, the global flood), researchers emphasize that initially, their structure, narrative form, and characterization of heroes were influenced by “four factors – ritualism, cult worship, totemism, and shamanism” [Qafarlı, 2011b, p. 130], and later by Islamic faith doctrines, as mentioned above.

The personification of natural forces, especially the Sun and the Moon, and the depiction of the struggle between light and darkness are characteristic features of cosmogonic myths.

Among cosmogonic myths, notable ones include stories about the creation of life on Earth, which was originally covered by water. Gradually, God created the living world, culminating with the creation of humans. These myths also detail the seven heavens, with the first inhabited by humans and the higher heavens populated by angels, ultimately reaching the seventh heaven, the abode of God. There is a myth about the creation of the sky from precious stones, extracted from the ocean by demons following God's command, which then became stars and planets. The sky is said to be held up by pillars [Məmmədov, 1998, p. 51]. The diversity of narrative material used in these myths attests to the high level of development in the spiritual culture of the people, skillfully incorporating unique elements related to their way of life and adding their distinctive perspective on existence.

There is a parable about languages in which the forty sons of Adam and Eve constantly quarreled among themselves, leading their angered father to wish that they could no longer understand each other. Variations of this myth exist. There is also a myth about the Sun and the Moon (depicted as siblings, brothers, mother and son, lovers, etc.) who could not get along with each other. Their mother cursed them, ensuring they would never meet, and the spots on the Moon were said to be caused by the dough thrown at it by the Sun. All of these stories indicate the existence of numerous interpretations of natural phenomena and a unique assessment of their role in human life. The narrative diversity further confirms the idea that Turkic peoples have a rich history of formation and development.

A characteristic artistic feature of these myths is the fantastical nature of the narratives. This can be explained by the cosmocentric foundation of ancient beliefs about themselves and the world. In other words, their self-conception was inseparable from their perceptions of the surrounding world, which they believed was imbued with life and shared a unified existence with humans. Many human qualities were transferred to celestial bodies, the animal and plant kingdoms, the landscape, climate peculiarities, and so on.

In the realm of celestial mythology, celestial bodies engage in conversation, quarrels, and fights with jinn's and divas. They fall in love with each other and with humans, and humans fall in love with them. The celestial bodies leave the Earth, where they once lived, and ascend to the Sky, which was also once connected to the Earth, dividing their spheres of influence there. Mountains, valleys, and canyons, with their distinctive features, receive artistic representation in myths that reveal neighborly relationships that deteriorate into physical clashes. For instance, one mountain splits due to confrontations with its neighbor, and another mountain, in a pregnant metaphorical context, gives birth to a smaller mountain. Consequently, these geological entities are christened "Small Mountain" and "Large Mountain" [Acaloğlu, Bəydili, 2005, p. 36].

There exists a myth explaining the origin of the totem "boz qurd" (grey wolf), which employs the narrative framework of the Noah's Ark flood myth. One of Noah's surviving sons, named Turk, grazed his sheep herds in a valley that was partially submerged in water even after the flood. Over time, the livestock's fodder started diminishing, posing a threat of famine. One day, a wolf attacked the herd and then disappeared into a mountain crevice. Turk, who followed the wolf, discovered beautiful valleys abundant with food for his herds. As a result, the grey wolf, or "boz qurd", became a symbol representing Turkic peoples and their totem [Qafarlı, 2011b, p. 45]. Conflicts among the characters influence the nature of these characters and the development of the narrative. Ultimately, the storyteller and the audience perceive the surrounding world in the same key that underlies the narrative. They embrace this world, perceiving it as alive, and, in doing so, construct a complex set of values and norms in their consciousness for their everyday existence.

Conclusions

Azerbaijani cosmogonic and ethnogonic myths provide insights into the primordial origins of the world, life on Earth, and the fundamental principles governing the relationship between human communities and nature. These notions are perceived by contemporaries as having a fantastical nature, yet they are also practical and instructive, guiding individuals on how to comprehend and engage with the surrounding world and how to assess and harness it. The eternal truths in the view of ancient people are depicted through the celestial panorama with the sun, moon, and stars, portraying their influence on social life and the interplay between natural phe-

nomena and events. Explanations for the behavior of natural elements have a pragmatic character since it is the understanding of cause-and-effect relationships projected onto human life, governance systems, and spiritual-moral values.

The philosophical and aesthetic specificity of Azerbaijani cosmogonic and ethnogonic myths is determined by their anthropocentric and theocentric orientation. In this sense, God or humans stand as the core of the mythological world view and mythological storytelling. The anthropomorphism of the natural world, characteristic of primal syncretism, organizes mythological narrative, wherein the hero of the myth can be a human, God, or an animated natural world. However, semantically, the central focus of the storytelling lies not on the hero but on the action or deed. Like myths of other cultures, Azerbaijani myths encompass an ethical dimension, containing evaluative elements; however, these myths attribute positive or negative evaluation to actions rather than characters [Мелетинский, 2012, p. 237].

The specificity of the composition of Azerbaijani myths is determined by repetitions, syntactic and figurative parallelism, implicit and explicit comparisons, popular motifs of the abduction of the Sun and Moon, a worldwide flood, concepts of death and immortality, light and darkness, giants bearing the weight of the world on their shoulders, and others. The narrative structure is built upon binary oppositions that correspond to the spatial and sensory orientation of human beings, reflecting relationships within a cosmic, social, or sacred continuum. The narratives of myths about the creation of the world are characterized by variations in their introductions and event sequences. Notably, in contrast to European myths, the invariable element in mythological events is the concept of monotheism.

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THE WORLDVIEW FOUNDATIONS OF AZERBAIJANI COSMOGONIC AND ETHNOGONIC MYTHS

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The relevance of this research is determined by the significance of questions concerning the development of human worldview through the assimilation of cosmogonic and ethnogonic myths, which represent conceptions of the surrounding world. This study *aims* to investigate the worldview foundations of Azerbaijani cosmogonic and ethnogonic myths, as well as to conduct a philosophical and aesthetic analysis of mythological poetic aspects. Achieving the stated goal involves the utilization of cultural-historical, philosophical-aesthetic, and mythopoetic research *methods*.

Azerbaijani cosmogonic and ethnogonic myths offer insights into the primordial origins of the world, life on Earth, and the fundamental principles governing the relationship between human communities and nature. They shape the worldviews of individuals, and although they may appear fantastical to contemporary observers, they are pragmatic in guiding how one should comprehend and perceive the surrounding world, assess it, and adapt to it. The timeless truths in the minds of ancient people manifest as a portrayal of the starry sky, with the sun, moon, and stars, elucidating their influence on social life and the relationships between natural phenomena and events. Explanations for the behavior of natural entities have a pragmatic nature, as the understanding of cause-and-effect relationships is projected onto human life, the system of governance, and spiritual-moral values.

The philosophical and aesthetic specificity of Azerbaijani cosmogonic and ethnogonic myths is characterized by an anthropocentric and theocentric orientation, in the sense that God or humanity emerges as the core of the mythological worldview and mythological narrative. The inherent anthropomorphism of the natural world, reflecting a primal syncretism, organizes mythological storytelling in which the hero of the myth can be a human, a deity, or an animated natural element. However, semantically, the primary focus of the narrative is not the hero but rather the action or deed. Like myths in other cultures, Azerbaijani myths incorporate ethical elements, featuring evaluative components. However, the subject of evaluation is not the hero but rather the action, process, or deed – precisely these elements serve as the semantic dominants in the description of cosmogenesis and ethnogenesis.

The composition of Azerbaijani myths is characterized by specific elements including repetitions, syntactic and figurative parallelism, implicit and explicit comparisons, popular motifs such as the abduction of the Sun and Moon, worldwide floods, themes of death and immortality, light and darkness, and the portrayal of giants carrying the weight of the world, among others. The narrative structure is constructed upon binary oppositions that correspond to the spatial and sensory orientation of human beings, reflecting

relationships within a cosmic, social, or sacred continuum. The plots of myths related to the creation of the world are distinguished by variations in their beginnings and event sequences. However, in contrast to European myths, a consistent element in mythological events is the concept of monotheism, which serves as a constant thematic thread throughout these narratives.

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