

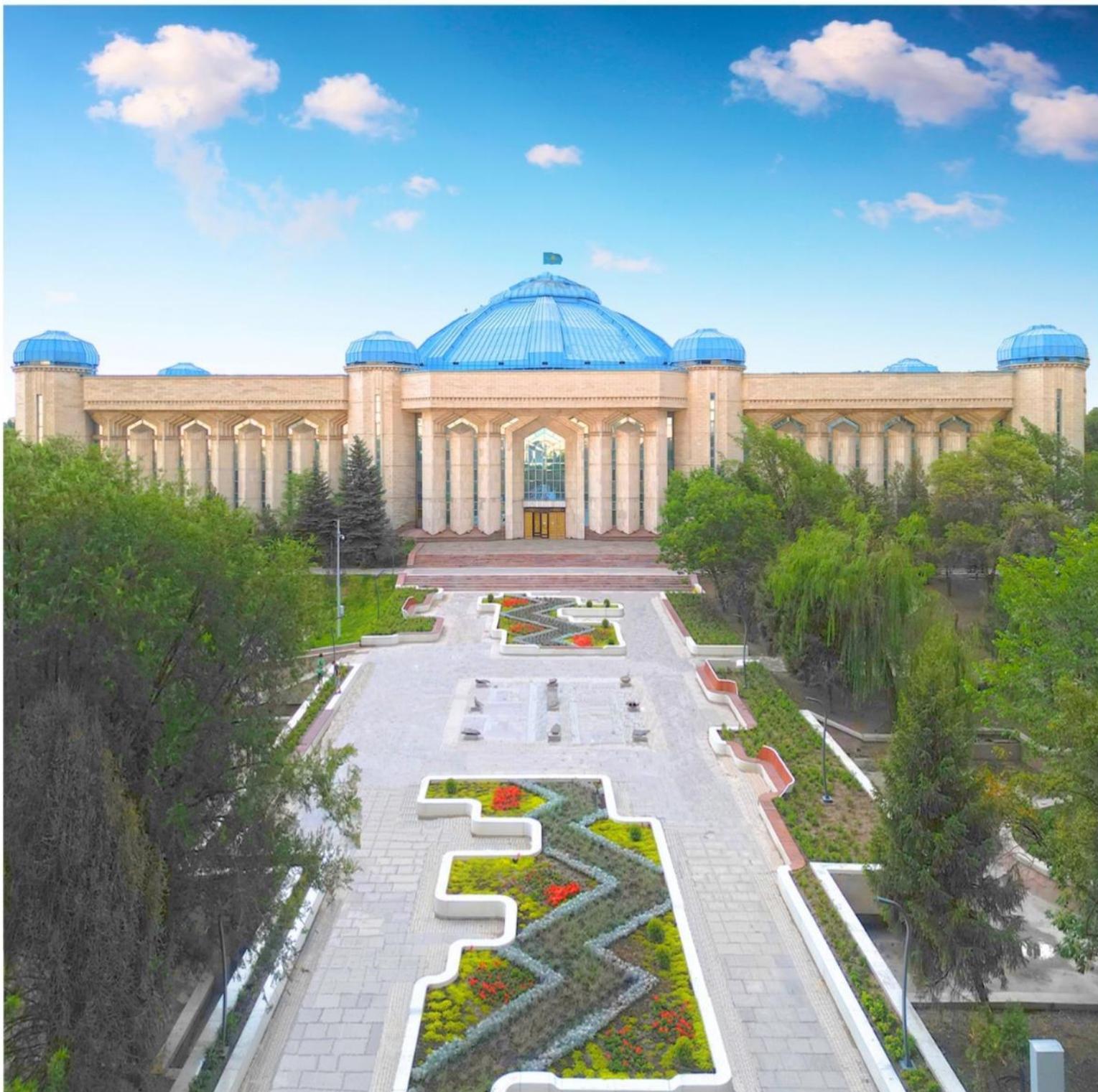
ISSN: 2960-0049  
ISSN-L: 2958-5376

# MUSEUM.KZ



ҒЫЛЫМИ-ПРАКТИКАЛЫҚ ЖУРНАЛ • НАУЧНО-ПРАКТИЧЕСКИЙ ЖУРНАЛ • SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL JOURNAL

1(13)2026



UDC 39 (398.1)

**THE ANIMAL IMAGE IN THE MYTHOLOGY OF TURKIC PEOPLES***A. Yoldashev*

Tashkent International University of Financial Management and Technology (Uzbekistan)

**Abstract.** This article explores the image of animals in the mythology of Turkic peoples, their symbolic meanings, and their place in the historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage of the people. The article provides a detailed analysis of the animal images in the myths, which constitute the intangible cultural heritage of Turkic peoples, their significance in the overall Turkic worldview and social life. In the mythological conceptions of Turkic peoples, animals hold an important place not only as creatures of nature but also as significant symbolic images representing human moral, ethical, and spiritual values. They function not only as commodities and food products in the economy but also play accompanying roles in people's lives. The article analyzes how the image of animals reflects the worldview, social issues, and history of the people. The national and moral norms of the people, their spiritual significance, as well as the animistic and symbolic meanings of animal images are studied. This research helps to understand the mythology of Turkic peoples, their cultural perspectives, and historical treasures. The article provides insights into the mythological thinking of Turkic peoples, helping to identify significant images and symbolic meanings. Furthermore, the influence of the animal image in modern culture is analyzed in-depth.

**Research materials and methods.** The article primarily investigates the mythology of Turkic peoples, the forgotten or less studied animal images, and their importance in the cultural heritage of the people. Mythological sources, folk legends, epics, tales, proverbs, and other social-cultural materials form the core research sources.

The study employs historical literature, archaeological findings, and scientific works for analysis. Special attention is given to the symbolic and connotative meanings of animal images in the myths. Methods of comparison, contrast, and text analysis have been used to explore the different manifestations of Turkic peoples' mythological worldview.

**Keywords:** mythology, animal images, bull, wolf, snake, horse, religious mythology, Turkic worldview, symbolic meaning.

**For citation:** Abduvali Yoldashev. The animal image in the mythology of turkic peoples // MUSEUM.KZ. 2026. №1 (13), pp. 11-15. DOI 10.59103/muzkz.2026.13.02

**ТҮРКІ ХАЛЫҚТАРЫ МИФОЛОГИЯСЫНДАҒЫ ЖАНУАР БЕЙНЕСІ***A. Йолдашев*

Ташкент халықаралық қаржы басқару және технологиялар университеті (Өзбекстан)

**Аңдатпа.** Мақалада түркі халықтарының мифологиясындағы жануарлар бейнесі, олардың символикалық мәндері және халықтың тарихи, мәдени және рухани мұрасындағы орны кеңінен қарастырылған. Автор түркі халықтарының материалдық емес мәдени мұрасы саналатын аңыздардағы жануарлар бейнесін, олардың жалпы түркі дүниетанымы мен әлеуметтік өмірдегі маңызы мәселесін егжей-тегжейлі талдайды. Жануарлар түркі халықтарының мифологиялық түсініктерінде тек табиғаттағы тіршілік иелері ретінде ғана емес, сондай-ақ адамдардың моральдық, этикалық және рухани құндылықтарын бейнелейтін маңызды символдық бейнелер ретінде де маңызды орын алады. Олар адамдардың шаруашылық өмірінде азық-түлік өнімі болып қана қоймай, қоса атқаратын қызметін де жүзеге асырған. Түркі халықтарының тұрмысында жануарлардың орны ерекше болған. Олар халықтың ауыз әдебиеті мұрасында түрлі бейнелерде берілген. Жануарлар бейнесі арқылы халықтың дүниетанымы, әлеуметтік мәселелері және олардың тарихы бейнеленген. Мақалада жануарлар бейнесі арқылы халықтың ұлттық және моральдық нормалары, рухани маңызы, анималистік және символикалық мағыналары зерттеледі. Бұл зерттеу түркі халықтарының мифологиясын, мәдени көзқарастарын және тарихи қазыналарын түсінуге мүмкіндік береді. Мақала түркі халықтарының мифологиялық ойлауын, олардың маңызды

бейнелерін және символикалық мәндерін анықтауға көмектеседі. Сондай-ақ, қазіргі заман мәдениетіндегі жануарлар бейнесінің әсері де жан-жақты талданған.

**Зерттеу материалдары мен әдістері.** Мақалада негізінен түркі халықтарының мифологиясы, ұмытылған немесе аз зерттелген жануарлар бейнелері және олардың халық мәдениетіндегі маңызы зерттелген. Мифологиялық дереккөздер, халық аңыздары, эпостар, әңгімелер, мақал-мәтелдер және басқа әлеуметтік-мәдени материалдар зерттеудің негізгі дереккөздерін құрайды.

Зерттеуде тарихи әдебиеттер, археологиялық табылымдар және ғылыми еңбектердің талдау әдісі қолданылған. Мифтердегі жануарлар бейнесінің символикалық және мағыналық маңызына ерекше назар аударылған. Сонымен қатар, салыстыру, өзара салыстыру және мәтіндер талдауы сияқты әдістер қолданылып, түркі халықтарының мифологиялық дүниетанымының әртүрлі көріністері зерттелген.

**Тірек сөздер:** мифология, жануар бейнелері, бұқа, қасқыр, жылан, жылқы, діни мифология, түркі дүниетанымы, символикалық мән.

**Сілтеме жасау үшін:** Абдували Йолдашев. Түркі халқытары мифологиясындағы жануар бейнесі // MUSEUM.KZ. 2026. №1 (13), 11-15 бб. DOI 10.59103/muzkz.2026.13.02

## ОБРАЗ ЖИВОТНЫХ В МИФОЛОГИИ ТЮРКСКИХ НАРОДОВ

*А. Йулдашев*

Ташкентский международный университет финансового менеджмента и технологий  
(Узбекистан)

**Аннотация.** В статье анализируются образы животных в мифологии тюркских народов как важный элемент мировоззренческой системы. Автор подробно анализирует образ животных в мифах, являющихся нематериальным культурным наследием тюркских народов, их значение в общем тюркском мировоззрении и социальной жизни. Животные в мифологическом представлении тюркских народов занимают важное место не только как представители природы, но и как символические образы, отображающие моральные, этические и духовные ценности людей. Они не только служат товаром и продуктом питания в хозяйственной жизни, но и выполняют вспомогательные функции. В образе животных через их разнообразные формы проявляется мировоззрение народа, социальные проблемы и история. В статье исследуются национальные и моральные нормы народа, его духовное значение, анималистическое и символическое содержание через образы животных. Данное исследование позволяет глубже понять мифологию тюркских народов, их культурные взгляды и историческое наследие. Статья помогает раскрыть мифологическое мышление тюркских народов, выявить важнейшие образы и символические значения. Также рассматривается влияние образа животных на современную культуру.

**Материалы и методы исследования.** В статье исследуются мифология тюркских народов, забытые или малоизученные образы животных и их значение в культурной жизни народов. Основные источники исследования составляют мифологические тексты, народные легенды, эпосы, рассказы, пословицы и другие социально-культурные материалы.

Для анализа использованы исторические литературные источники, археологические находки и научные исследования. Особое внимание уделяется символическому и содержательному значению образов животных в мифах. Также применены методы сравнения, сопоставления и анализа текстов, что позволило выявить различные аспекты мифологического мировоззрения тюркских народов.

**Ключевые слова:** мифология, образы животных, бык, волк, змей, лошадь, религиозная мифология, тюркское мировоззрение, символическое значение.

**Для цитирования:** Абдували Йулдашев. Образ животных в мифологии тюркских народов // MUSEUM.KZ. 2026. №1 (13), с. 11-15. DOI 10.59103/muzkz.2026.13.02

**Introduction.** The ancient wisdom and thinking of the people, exemplified through myths, legends, epics, fairy tales, and proverbs, have been passed down orally from generation to generation for thousands of years. The concepts of the structure of the world, the universe, nature, and the mysterious forces, as well as their relationship, have always served as an important source for studying the philosophical views, artistic thinking, and worldview of the people. Ancient myths and legends form an integral part of literature and, in fact, the broader realm of art. Therefore, myths have always been a primary source for studying the initial worldview of people, their relationship with the world and with one another. In the intangible cultural heritage of Turkic peoples, myths hold a special place as they are significant for the study of ancient symbols and images, understanding the national consciousness and ideology, as well as historical research. Myths represent a unique blend of real and fantastic events shaped within the consciousness of the people. Analyzing these myths helps to better understand the history, concepts of the past, and social processes. In myths, nothing is insignificant; even the heroes hold both symbolic meaning and unique significance. One such image in myths is the portrayal of animals.

The relationship between humans and animals dates back to the primitive era of human society. Based on this, human perceptions of the animal world have developed over time. Initially, hunting was for sustenance, but later the development of pastoralism became a key element. Humans viewed the animal world not only as a source of food, but also as a force of supernatural power, a reflection of religious beliefs, and an important helper in economic activities. The depiction of animals on petroglyphs and the creation of figurines also carried significant meanings.

**Discussion of the results.** In the mythology of Turkic peoples, animals are not only presented as real creatures, but also come to life as symbols with moral and spiritual significance. Based on religious beliefs and mythological perspectives, animals in human life were revered as earthly representations of gods, intermediaries, and protectors, often symbolized by amulets and charms. The domestication of animals played a crucial role in the development of religious and mythological concepts and became an integral part of ritualistic life.

The myths of the Turkic peoples, as part of their intangible cultural heritage, have attracted the attention of many researchers. Notably, scholars such as N.Ya. Bichurin, L.N. Gumilyov, S.V. Kiselev, S.G. Klyashtorny, I.V. Stebleva, L.P. Potapov, A.M. Sagalaev, R.N. Bezertinov, N.A. Alekseyev, I.S. Gurevich, M. Eliade, A. Bisenbayev, S.A. Kaskabasov, A. Baymyradov, Ya. Kalafat, G. Ugel, A. Inan, N. Mallayev, B. Sarimsokov, N.A. Rakhmonov, A. Musakulov, F. Akromov, M. Juraev, B. Tukhliyev, Sh. Turdimov, and Zh. Eshonkulov have analyzed the myths and the images of animals within them.

The relationship between humans and animals in social life is so deeply embedded that mythological views related to animals can be classified as follows:

- *Cosmogonic myths* – myths related to the origin of the world, celestial bodies, and the earth's creation;
- *Pantheon* – myths related to the creation of gods;
- *Ethnogeny and Genealogy* – myths related to the origin of peoples and early humans;
- *Human-animal relations* – myths and stories depicting the interaction between humans and animals;
- *The interrelationship of the animal world* – myths explaining the mutual relations of animals;
- *Paranormal* – myths and legends concerning supernatural phenomena and beliefs [Azizov, 2024: 76].

While the cosmogonic myths regarding the creation of the world have not been fully preserved, the animal figures within these myths retain their character. For example, ancient legends in Zoroastrianism speak of the supreme god Ahura Mazda creating the Vorokusha sea, and after this, the first animal (an ox) and the first human (Gaia Martani) were created. According to this myth, through their sacrifice, plants, animals, and humans emerged. Furthermore, the ruler, Gopatshah, is depicted as a half-human, half-ox figure [Rak, 1998: 17, 105-106]. Historically, animals have played a significant role in the social and political life of the Turkic peoples. For example, according to the beliefs of the Turkic peoples, the world was created by the deities Umay and Tangri. The name “Umay” means “white bird” and during the time when the world was made

of water, it is said that the earth was formed by Umay taking soil from the bottom of the sea [Bisenbayev, 2007: 8-9].

In the Turkic Khaganate, there was a unique belief system related to totemic animals. They believed their origins were tied to a prince and the mother wolf. In the Turkic Khaganate, the terms “Turk khan” and “wolf” were considered synonymous. The heads of wolves were depicted on the flags of the Turkic Khaganate [Gumilyov, 2007: 28].

In the 19th century, Kazakh poet Suyunboy Aron o‘g‘li wrote: “The head of the wolf is my battle cry. At my birth, the head of the wolf appeared. When the wolf flag flutters, my spirit is filled with vitality.” The wolf was considered a symbol of freedom, danger, and strength. In particular, in the legend of “The Curse of the Wolf,” the wolf is depicted as a force that delivers retribution for the injustice inflicted upon humans. This image represents a symbol of justice in the collective consciousness of Turkic peoples. Wolves in Turkic legends are often referred to by their colors, such as blue wolf, white wolf, red wolf, and have names like Bori, Borta, Borju, Ossano, Sino, Jino, Jinu, Yashqar, Kashkir, Kurt, Ashin [Ashirov, 2007: 15; M. Yuldoshev, S. Yuldosheva, 2010: 18].

The legend of the prince Kunmak (Kunmuo), who was raised by a wolf, is not only popular among Turkic peoples but also among the Chinese. Serikbol Kandibay, in his interpretation of Kazakh mythology, views the wolf as the ancestor of the people: “A Turk child was born from a wolf. The wolf is considered a sacred and great spirit in Turkic understanding” [Kazakh Mythology, 2004: 47]. The image of the wolf is venerated not just as an animal, but also as a symbol of national spirit and humanity.

From ancient times, animal images have also been used as state symbols. In seals and emblems, the image of a totem animal or an animal representing a social class was depicted. For example, seals found in the Turan region feature images of animals such as dragons, falcons, horses, snakes, huma birds, and deer [Botirov, 2013: 2].

The depictions of animals in emblems arose from conceptual beliefs and were initially introduced to distinguish cattle and horses. Later, these symbols became political signs of specific tribes and eventually transformed into emblems of states. For instance, Mahmud Kashgari mentions that the Oguz tribes had more than twenty different emblems [Kashgari, 1960: 89-91]. As a result of the political unification of Turkic tribes, the emblem of a leading tribe became a symbol of statehood, and these symbols spread widely across large territories.

Moreover, the mythological images of animals are also reflected in the epic tales of Turkic peoples. Specifically, in epics, the horse is depicted as the loyal companion of the hero, a symbol of spiritual strength and a means of movement. For example, in the epic *Alpomish*, special attention is given to the horse. Many events in the epic are connected to the horse. For instance, “The black mare of Boychibor was like the spirit of Alpomish,” is one of the notable references [Alpomish, 1988: 38]. Serikbol Kandibay also discusses the horse in his works, writing: “The horse is the continuation of the inner spirit of the epic hero. It is the connector between the earth and the sky” [Epic – the voice of the era, 1997: 90].

In legends and myths related to supernatural phenomena, the image of jinns (spirits) taking the form of horses and roaming at night is widely spread. In such stories, the black horse is often depicted. In these myths, the only way to distinguish them is if the horse lacks stirrups, in which case, it is considered to be a jinn.

Moreover, in the myths and legends of Turkic peoples, animals often carry unique symbolic meanings. For example, the image of the dragon symbolizes evil, oppression, and danger, while the Golden Rooster represents blessings and the appreciation of nature’s gifts. Through these symbols, the worldview, attitude toward life, and moral values of the people are expressed [Rahmonov, 1982: 34]. Furthermore, the snake is often depicted in a negative light. It is interpreted as a symbol of deceit and malevolent power. However, in the legend of the “Snake Woman,” the snake takes the form of a woman and protects humans from evil. This dual symbolism reflects the complex relationship the people have with the snake. As Serikbol Kandibay writes: “The snake, in ancient Turkic belief, is a spirit that guards the treasures of the earth. It both protects and tests” [Kandibay, 2001: 135]. This indicates that the image of the snake is interpreted by Turkic peoples as both a protector and a tester.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, the image of animals in myths reflects the relationship between humans, life, nature, spirit, and society. Although the animals in Turkic mythology are interpreted in various ways, their common feature is that they live on as cultural codes in the consciousness of the people. These elements of the material and immaterial culture of the ancestors of Turkic peoples have been preserved and refined over time. These myths still retain their significance in the intangible cultural heritage of Turkic peoples today.

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**Автор туралы мәлімет:** Юлдашев Абдували Абдумуталибұлы – тарих ғылымдары бойынша философия докторы (PhD), Ташкент халықаралық қаржы менеджменті және технология университетінің (TIFT) аға оқытушысы (Өзбекстан, Ташкент, Әмір Темір шах көшесі, 15, 100011). ORCID: 0009-0008-6609-0383. E-mail: dengiz-85@mail.ru; abduvali1485@gmail.com.

**Сведения об авторе:** Юлдашев Абдували Абдумуталибович – доктор философии (PhD) в области исторических наук, старший преподаватель Ташкентского международного университета финансового менеджмента и технологий (ТИФТ), (Узбекистан, Ташкент, ул. Амира Темура Шаха, 15, 100011). ORCID: 0009-0008-6609-0383. E-mail: dengiz-85@mail.ru; abduvali1485@gmail.com.

**Information about the author:** Abduvali A. Yuldashev, Doctor of philosophy (PhD) of historical sciences, Senior Lecturer at Tashkent International University of Financial Management and Technologies (TIFT), Uzbekistan (Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Amir Temur Shah street 15, 100011). ORCID: 0009-0008-6609-0383. E-mail: dengiz-85@mail.ru; abduvali1485@gmail.com.

*Редакцияға түсті / Поступила в редакцию / Entered the editorial office: 23.02.2026.*

*Рецензенттер мақұлдаған / Одобрено рецензентами / Approved by reviewers: 02.03.2026.*

*Жариялауға қабылданды / Принята к публикации / Accepted for publication: 10.03.2026.*