



## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGE OF THE PERI

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### ABSTRACT

*The image of the Peri is one of the most widespread mythological figures in the folklore of Eastern peoples. According to Turkic etymological dictionaries, the origin of the word is described as follows: "The word peri originates from the Persian word parīk, which evolved into the form peri. In Persian, parīk means a 'nearby, benevolent spirit'" [3]. Thus, it can be said that the term peri entered our language from Persian. Regarding the spread of the word from Persian to many world languages, N. Bozkurt writes: "The word peri passed from Persian into many languages. In Western languages, the word 'fairy' is derived from the Arabic pronunciation of peri as 'ferī' [1]. Indeed, Western cultures frequently use the term "fairy" to represent this concept..*

The image of the **Peri** is one of the most widespread mythological figures in the folklore of Eastern peoples. According to Turkic etymological dictionaries, the origin of the word is described as follows: "The word *peri* originates from the Persian word *parīk*, which evolved into the form *peri*. In Persian, *parīk* means a 'nearby, benevolent spirit'" [3]. Thus, it can be said that the term *peri* entered our language from Persian. Regarding the spread of the word from Persian to many world languages, N. Bozkurt writes: "The word *peri* passed from Persian into many languages. In Western languages, the word 'fairy' is derived from the Arabic pronunciation of *peri* as 'ferī' [1]. Indeed, Western cultures frequently use the term "**fairy**" to represent this concept.

"A fairy is a creature in European folklore possessing metaphysical properties that frequently intervenes in human life. Fairies and similar beings are found in Celtic, Germanic, French, and Slavic folklore. While the term 'fairy' is sometimes applied only to human-like creatures of small stature with magical abilities and a penchant for mischief, in other contexts, it is used to denote any magical creature, such as goblins and gnomes" [4].

In Karakalpak folk magic tales, there is no precise information regarding the height of peris; however, in some tales, they are depicted as lying inside a chest. In oral folk literature, particularly in epics (*dastans*) and folktales, the peri is a frequently encountered image, appearing as a sympathetic helper to the protagonist, a beloved partner, or a wise advisor. It is rare for this image to possess negative qualities in folklore.

In Karakalpak magic tales, the peri appears as a somewhat "civilized" figure and takes a human-like form. For this reason, we include the peri image among **anthropomorphic mythological figures**. Nevertheless, they are not entirely like humans. Furthermore, tales often mention that peris can be merciless. They possess great wealth and are creatures of leisure and pleasure. They hold magical powers and live not among humans, but in remote locations, underground, or underwater. In some tales, their place of residence is not mentioned at all. In terms of physical appearance, they resemble humans—either as exceptionally beautiful girls or as males with magical powers.

In some instances, peris possess the ability to transform their appearance into various objects or animals (**metamorphosis**). However, in the vast majority of tales, they are known as stunningly beautiful maidens. Kyrgyz folklore describes peris as beings living on Earth: "Peris are the daughters of the Heavenly Gods. They descend to earth in the form of swans or beautiful girls and have the ability to return to the sky. According to legends, peris often control the clouds in the sky. In the mythological understanding of Kyrgyz oral literature, the peri senses and knows the events and human actions occurring on earth from the sky. Peris usually fall in love with heroes—kind and just young men—and help them overcome difficulties. Therefore, in Kyrgyz folklore, the 'peri' is depicted as a positive character. Their roles and beautiful appearances are vividly reflected in Kyrgyz magic tales and epics" [5].

In Kazakh literature, the peri is defined as follows: "Peris are masters of magic, beautiful young women whose mouths are like the moon and eyes like the sun, with no physical flaws. They possess a wondrous beauty that causes one to fall in love at first sight. They live independently in a magical world without harming humans. If they encounter a human, they may marry them upon setting a specific condition. However, if that condition is broken, they turn into a bird and vanish without looking back" [2]. Similar motifs are found in our tales such as "*Jansap*" and "*Qıran*".

In Karakalpak folk magic tales, the peri image is mostly distinguished by the positive characteristics mentioned above. In Western folktales, various types of fairies are found; it is even believed that they live in houses with humans and pay attention to the cleanliness of the home. Additionally, the following views exist: "Fairies are generally divided into 'trooping fairies' and 'solitary fairies.' Trooping fairies are numerous, live in groups, and mainly spend their leisure time dancing, playing music, and holding grand feasts" [4].

In Karakalpak magic tales, peris usually live in groups. There is typically a King or a Princess of the peris. In tales such as "*Shopan bala*" (The Shepherd Boy), "*Malikhasen*", "*Altın baliq*" (The Golden Fish), "*Arziw ármanına jetken jigit*" (The Young Man Who Achieved His Dreams), and "*Sanawar*", peris live in groups in distant lands or underground. Conversely, in the tale "*Altın bashl áydarha*" (The Golden-Headed Dragon), a peri lives alone in a cave on an island, guarding her treasures. Group-living peris have their own kings, spend their time in pleasure, and possess a unique trait: once they fall asleep, they sleep for seven or even forty days.

In conclusion, the **peri** in Karakalpak folktales appears as an image of extraordinary beauty but potential mercilessness, acting as the beloved of heroes, and possessing magical powers and metamorphic qualities..

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