



Mythological Number Seven In Turkmen Culture

Ahmet Gökçimen

Doctor of Philology,

Ataturk University, Erzurum, Republic of Turkey

+90 5357327664, ahmetgokcimen@yahoo.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9591-6472>

Abstract

Numbers are the symbolic codes of mythology. They carry the mysteries of archaic beliefs and traditional life from past to present. Seven appears in all works of folk literature. The number seven is one of these special numbers. There is information about seven in all societies, beliefs and cultures around the world. People make use of the number seven to explain the creation of the universe, the sky, heaven and hell, etc. Seven is the number of nursery rhymes. Many societies do not perform important rituals without repeating them seven times. Among Turkic peoples, seven is very important for Turkmens. In Turkmen mythology, seven is very special. It stands out more than numbers like three, five, nine and forty. Seven is present in all traditions from birth to death. In child rituals, marriage and death, the number seven is present as a formula. With this formula, the message is emphasized. People understand situations, behaviors and names better with seven repetitions. Seven is found as a stylistic number in fairy tales, epics and legends. In Turkmen society, there are even sevens explaining positive and negative situations and behaviors. These sevens bear the traces of mythology and cultural identity. Many Turkmen rituals are not complete without being performed seven

times. This article first provides general information about the number seven. Then examples of seven in Turkmen culture, folk literature and beliefs are given. In these sevens, family, lineage, badly behaved women, and traditions of entertaining good guests are included. Finally, examples of the number seven, which has mythological roots in Turkmen culture, are evaluated. It is stated that they are sociological, religious and cultural codes.

Keywords: Turkmen culture; Turkmen mythology; seven; Turkmen folk belief; Turkmen traditions.

Introduction

In mythology, stylistically and cyclically, numbers are indispensable elements of rituals, culture and folklore products. They are the mysterious codes of the sacred. Because of these qualities and the symbolic meanings attributed to them, they continue to exist through repetition. Annemarie Schimmel uses the title *The Pillars of Wisdom* when defining the number seven and draws attention to the fact that cultural products in societies shaped around the number seven are not formed by chance. (Schimmel, 1993: 127) With the mystery it carries, seven takes place in different forms in all world myths, cultures and beliefs. Each society attributes special meanings to the number seven. *“The Old Testament is replete with heptads. In the seventh generation after Adam there appears Lamech, who lives for 777 years and should be avenged seventy-sevenfold (Gen. 4:24). The 7 steps leading to Solomon’s Temple correspond to the 7 storeys of the Babylonian temples. Noah’s dove stays away for 7 days, and the flood prepares its arrival for 7 days; the Euphrates is divided into 7 brooks. Recompenses and punishments are repeated 7 times, and 7 blessings are part of the marriage ceremony. During the sacrificial expiation in ancient Israel, blood was sprinkled 7 times, and as most great feasts lasted for 7 days a 7-day sacrifice was celebrated when Solomon’s temple was inaugurated.”* (Schimmel, 1993: 132). Thompson analyzes the tales of the peoples of

the world and lists the motifs in his six-volume work under the code Z.71.5.1. and the title *Formulistic numbers: sevenfold*. Some of his examples of sevenfold motifs are as follows: “*Seven joys of the Virgin Mary. Irish myth; Seven as a number in religious and social records. Irish myth; Seven grades of wisdom. Irish myth; King with seven wives and seven mares. The seven wives pregnant for seven years, the seven mares seven years in foal. India.*” (Thompson, 1958: 2460). Turkish culture places great value on the number seven. The number seven is present in all old and new beliefs. There are many rituals and cultural elements related to the number seven. Instead of attributing many and varied meanings to different numbers in Turkish culture, many numbers and number sequences are focused on. (Karakurt, 2012: 654) In Turkmen culture, in other words, there are many mythical numbers in Turkish culture. Three, seven, nine and forty are examples of these numbers. However, seven stands out more than the others.

Methods

The first sources in mythology studies are epics and legends. In addition to these, fairy tales, proverbs, folk culture, folk music and folk traditions can be listed. The mythology of a nation and its mythological elements and symbols can be easily understood when all folk culture materials are analyzed. In Turkmen mythology, numbers are the codes and keys of the mythological system. In this article, for the number seven, the main mythological sources of Turkmen and Turkic culture, from which it was born, were analyzed by scanning method and the data were brought together. Thus, the symbolic functions represented by the number seven in the Turkmen mythological system are shown by way of sampling with epics, legends, tales, proverbs and traditions from birth to death. Based on the data obtained, the number seven was interpreted in terms of Turkmen culture.

Results

In Turkmen mythology, the number seven symbolically takes on many functions. When Turkmen folk culture texts are analyzed, various cultural codes related to seven are found. In epics, legends and

fairy tales, the number seven functions as the number, power and magic of beings. In proverbs and traditions from birth to death, it is seen to perform ritual functions in addition to the previous functions. In Turkmen folk culture, it is clear that a message is intended to be conveyed with examples of seven groupings. Many messages are hidden in groups such as seven fathers and mothers, seven rules of hospitality and seven treasures. These messages ensure the continuity, influence and positive contribution of culture in society. However, in the seven groups of depictions about women, negative messages are also given in a patriarchal manner. The power of Turkmen mythology is seen in the group of seven treasures. Because in this grouping, seven elements necessary for life are listed. Seven symbolizes the seven pillars of the universe in mythology, as well as the seven pillars of culture in Turkmen life. In this article, the roles of the symbolic elements of mythical thought in life through the seven can be clearly accessed and sociological data on Turkmen national identity can also be obtained.

Detection and Analysis

The number seven has been included in many Turkmen cultural nomenclature, from the days of the week to the seven layers of earth and sky, the seven colors of the rainbow, the name of the star constellation, the seven days and seven nights, and the seven-headed ogre. The number seven can be found in countless folklore products such as fairy tales, epics, legends. This number has been adopted by Turkmens not only because of its traditional origin but also because of its place in Islam. The seven sleepers, the seven layers of hell, the Prophet's ascent to the seventh heaven during the Miraj are symbols of the diversity related to the number seven in the culture (Çoruhlu, 2002: 201-202). The seven verses in the Islamic faith, seven circumambulations, the recitation of prayers and suras by repeating them seven times, etc. have been integrated with the products of folk culture over time. Thus, it continued to live among Turkmens for centuries.

Seven has mythic significance among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. *"The number seven is considered sacred in the Turkic world. The Altai Turks call the eclipse of the moon a "seven-headed giant". In the Kyrgyz and Kazakh Turks, the stars of the "big bear" in the sky are called "seven watchmen" and people who lost their way in the past found their way by looking at the "seven watchmen" (Tör-ebekkyzy, 2020: 84). Turkmens call the constellation of the Big Dipper "yedigen" and sing a nursery rhyme based on the name of this star group. "Yedigenim yedi yıldız. Yedi gezer, yedi konar. Sayarsan sevabı var."* (Öreyev, 1993: 48) As can be seen in the example, the number seven has become the name of the stars and its repetition is considered a religious good deed. The mythical and religious integration of the number seven is clearly seen in the nursery rhyme. The religious elements of circumambulation and good deeds come together with the mythical number seven. They meet in a nursery rhyme shaped around a star cluster. In this article, we do not focus on the number seven in works such as fairy tales, legends, epics and folk tales, but on a tradition that is not well known in our country, which we can call the seventh rhyme in Turkmen.

In Turkmen culture and folklore, examples of philosophical or gentle sevilims have been created on various issues related to daily life. From hosting, to the number of wedding days and family tree, from the family to the greatest wealth, sevilimes have been uttered on many subjects. For example, horse, sheep, cattle and camel also have seven names. As can be seen in the sevilenem texts compiled by the great Turkmen folklorist Ümür Esen and obtained with the help of Ogulmaya Semizade, a great philosophy of life and experience is hidden. The number seven is found in many traditions from birth to death. In Turkmen culture, seven pieces of the tongue of seven sacrificed sheep are cut and fed to children who cannot speak. Thus, it is believed that the child will start speaking (Ilyasowa, 2005: 68). After the bride gets married, a woman sits next to her for seven days (Ilyasowa, 2005: 15). In Bit Turkmen folklore, the sustenance passes in front of the deceased seven times. If he does not receive it, he will not come

back (Ilyasowa, 2005: 29). Turkmens consider the seventh, seventeenth and twenty-seventh days of the month to be auspicious. Turkmens consider it bad luck for the bride if she cuts the yellow, black and white fabric seven times with scissors during the wedding (Ilyasowa, 2005: 53). In Turkmen culture, the child is bathed seven days after birth. Seven kinds of products are put into the water in which it is washed. Thus, it is believed that the child's life will be prosperous. During Nowruz, Turkmens distribute a special *semeni* meal to seven houses (Ilyasowa, 2005: 123). *Semeni* is prepared with the ritual of the number seven. For *semeni*, wheat is crushed for seven days, kept under the sun for seven days, wheat that grows five centimeters is plucked, washed seven times, and cooked with sugar and flour after resting for seven days (Gapurow, 2016: 46). In the ancient Turkmen belief of Shamanism, wood is collected from seven houses to light a special fire. After a person dies, neighbors bring food to his family for seven days (Ilyasowa, 2005: 187).

The number seven appears in many well-known works of Turkmen folk literature. For example, in the *Oguznama*, Noah's ark comes from Kufa to Mecca. It circles Mecca seven times. Then it reaches land on Mount Cudi (Godarow, 2001: 104). In the *Köroğlu Epic*, the hero's flying horse sleeps for seven days when he lies down (Karriyev, 1983: 44). According to the legend, a childless family makes a wish to Prophet Moses and asks him for a child. However, Prophet Moses could not fulfill this wish. Thereupon, the childless family asks Burkut, the spirit of rain. Burkut, the symbol of fertility, gifts seven children to this family (Gapurow, 2016: 49). In the Turkmen fairy tale *Akpamık*, a man has seven sons (Geldiyewa, 2006: 33). In Turkmen tales, some ogres have seven heads. For example, in the fairy tale *Mämmetcan*, he must kill the seven-headed giant (Kakaliyewa, 2008: 284). In a Turkmen legend, Garip sees Şahsenem in his dream and falls in love with her at the age of seven (Abdiyew, 1993: 70).

In Turkmen culture, human life is divided into seven parts, like many seven kinds in the universe and the world. The seven stages of life, influenced by the ancient Turkic calendar of twelve animals,

increase in twelve years each (Dinç-Çakır, 2008: 94). From birth to death, human life changes seven times as twelve years each. This classification is made with the mythical number seven. The first part of the human life span is between the ages of 0-13, then 13-25, 25-37, 37-49, 49-61, 61-73, 73-85. Only the age range 0-13 is thirteen. The remaining life stages are always twelve years each. Turkmens celebrate the seven periods of human life with special ceremonies.

Turkmen musical maqams are also influenced by the mythological number seven. The famous Turkmen musical instrument dutar has seven maqams. "*Goňurbaş maqam, Gökdepe maqam, Ayralık maqam, Berkeli çokay maqam, Shadilli maqam, Erkeklik maqam, Baş maqam (Sariya)*" (Gurbanowa-Yakubowa, 2012: 85). There are even dutar makams called Gırklar in the Ahal music Style. These maqams are also seven in number. "*Garrı gırık, Yandım gırık, Döwletyar gırık, Selbinyaz gırık, Dilim gırık, Keçeli gırık, Mendag gırık*" (Gurbanowa-Yakubowa, 2012: 87).

The Cult of Ancestors has an important place in Turkish mythology. Ancestors are believed to be sacred and protective after death. Turkmens, who are part of this heritage, also value their ancestors highly. A Turkmen proverb says, "*When you wake up in the morning, first see your ancestor, then your horse*". Turkmen culture, which compares two sacred values, carries respect for ancestors to the top. Elders called Aksakal are revered. There is even an advisory committee of Aksakals in the existing country assemblies. Ak Toy is organized as a sign of respect for people who reach the age of sixty-three (Gökçimen, 2010: 151). In Turkmen culture, it is very important to count and know the seven ancestors. Children are made to memorize seven generations. According to tradition, Turkmens count the names of seven ancestors: This is considered a symbol of good luck. the names of my seven ancestors are:

Adam Ata (Prophet Adam)

Nuh Ata (Prophet Noah)

Öz ataň (Own ancestor)

Azan ataň (Azan ancestor)

Sünnet ataň (Circumcision ancestor)

Ilım ataň (Science ancestor)

Gayın ataň (Father-in-law)

These named ancestors start with Adam, the first human being, the common ancestor of all mankind, and then continue with Noah, who is considered the second Adam. Then your own ancestor comes into play. In addition, important people in a person's life are listed. Other representatives of the ancestors are the first person to recite the call to prayer, the person who circumcised him, the person who taught him the knowledge he will use throughout his life, and the father of the person he will marry. Turkmen culture does not only chain ancestors through men, but also includes women. Another ranking that emphasizes the importance of one's lineage is made through the mothers with the name Yedi ene.

Hov ene (Mother Eve)

Bibi ene (Aunt)

Süňk ene (Bone Mother)

Göbek ene (Mother cutting the umbilical cord)

Gelnece, yeňňe (Sister-in-law)

Gayın ene (Mother-in-law)

As can be seen above, Eve, the common mother of all, is placed first. After that, one's own mother, the mother who cut her navel and the mother of one's spouse when married are mentioned as mothers who have an important place in one's life. Another category in the sevenfold ranking based on kinship is clan brothers. The following names are included in the order called the Yedi kovum:

Ata (Ancestor)

Kaka (Father)

Ogul (Son)

Peder-ata (Grandfather)

Peykar (Body ancestor)

Ejdat (Dynasty)

Söbük (Figurative: Following, chasing, coming after)

In addition to this order, there is another sevenfold order called the seven generations of *nebere* (seven ancestors). Although it is similar to the above seven generations, it has many differences. For example, *geňlik* and *taňlik* are the names used for those who have seen their grandchildren after the age of one hundred and twenty, i.e. after the age of one hundred and twenty. These names are given because seeing grandchildren after living so long is a surprising phenomenon.

Ogul (Son)

Agtık (Grandson)

Çovluk (Child of a grandchild)

Yuvluk (Child of Çovluk)

Govluk (Child of Yuvluk)

Geňlik (After one hundred and twenty years of age)

Taňlik (After one hundred and forty years of age)

Turkmens also practice *sevilem* between siblings. Brotherhood is determined according to kinship relations. The order, called the seven ancestors of *Garındaşlığın*, is as follows:

Dogan (Brother)

Dogan oğlan (Brother's child)

Dolanan (Kinship between cousins)

Garındaş (A sibling to whom at least one of the parents is related.)

Babadaş (Father's friend)

Obadaş (Same villager)

İlbiri (Same community)

The named siblings start from close and then move away. In addition to his own brother, his friend, his father's relative, his fellow countryman from the same village and the same people make up the seventh. The closeness here also gives clues as to who will be valued.

In Turkmen culture, treasured possessions are listed with a sevensyllable. In the group called *Yedi hazına* (seven treasures), seven values important for human life are listed. This culture is also present in Kazakhs and other Central Asian Turkic peoples.

Ekseň ekin (Crops sow)

Baksan goyun (Feed the sheep)
Okasa oglan (Boy get an education)
Dokasa ayal (Women weave)
Mäkiyen (Feed chicken)
Mädiyen (Have a breeding horse)
Gäviyen (Have cattle)

The elements named and their importance emphasized are symbolized in the triangle of human, agriculture and animal husbandry. The three basic elements of life are listed in terms of human life. Seeds to be sown, good cattle, good breed horses, sheep and chickens are valuable for the continuity of life. Educated men and faithful women who weave are presented as productive human types. The aforementioned assets are indispensable in the daily life of Turkmen society and those living in sister geographies. With the seven treasures, Turkmen sociologically demonstrate the importance of the agricultural and animal husbandry model of society.

There are many practices related to birth in Turkmen traditions and customs. These can be divided into three categories: before, during and after birth. One of the postnatal traditions is a child's toy performed in the form of sevileme. After the child is forty years old, a ceremony is held for seven intentions and wishes. In this practice:

Duz (Salt)
Yumurtga gabığı (Egg shell)
Bişmedik et (Raw meat)
Tovuk boyun eti (Chicken neck meat)
Pul (metal) kümüş (Silver coin)
Yedi goňşıdan çöp (Garbage from seven neighbors)
Yüzerlik (Peganum harmala)

In the above sevileme, salt is put in the child's mouth so that he will taste salt in his mouth, eggshell so that he will not get sick, raw meat so that he will be fertile and a hunter, chicken neck so that his neck bone will be erect, money so that he will be rich, garbage from seven neighbors so that he will help the neighbors, and peganum

harmala so that the evil eye will not touch him. These good wishes are made to the child by eating.

Under the heading of the *Yedi yetimlik* (Seven orphans), Turkmens define seven groups of people who are orphans and orphans. These seven groups are considered as life lessons:

Eyesiz yurt (Derelict country)

Igalsız ülke (Country without rain)

Ussasız oba (Village without master)

Gepi geçmez är (The man whose word is useless)

Enesiz çağa (Motherless child)

İdelmedik gız (Unwanted girl)

Nesilsiz maşgala (Childless family)

A motherless person is called an orphan. This situation, which is mentioned in the fifth place in the metaphor, has been used for other events. A homeland without a master will not stand, there will be no abundance and yield in a country without rainfall. There is no work in the village without a master. A man without authority is null and void. The girl who does not come to be wanted and the family without a son are other orphans. The aforementioned seventies are cases that have an equivalent in the society and their importance is emphasized. This seventieth, which can be accepted as a social and individual life lesson, is a life map.

Compliance with the rules of etiquette in social life is a parameter that increases the value of a person. In Turkmen culture, the importance of guests and hospitality is emphasized with the proverb "Mıhman is atadan uludur", that is, the guest is greater than the ancestor. This is also explained with a seventh metaphor. Under the heading "*Mıhman kabul etmäniň yedi şerti*", seven rules about hosting guests are mentioned:

Güleryüzlülük (Smiling)

Salamlılık (Greeting)

Öye-caya girizmek (Inviting home)

İydirip-içirmek (Eating and drinking)

Goraglamak (Protecting)

Habarnı almak (Asking how you're doing)

Ugratmak (Seeing off a guest)

For Turkmens, eating and drinking are very important during a visit. When Turkmens make a sacrifice, they take the concept of seven into consideration and send seven tables to seven doors. In Ogulmaya Saparova (Semizade)'s novel *Hayma Ana*, this situation is described as follows: "I will allocate seven tables to seven doors on the way of Baba Kizil Evliya" (Saparova, 2020: 14).

Turkmen society has a special classification of seven unpleasant situations. Seven unpleasant situations are explained under the heading *Yedi yigrençlik*:

Aş kesen (Figuratively relationship breaker)

Baş kesen (The one who sheds blood with his speech)

Yaş kesen (Small tree cutter)

Haya buran (Shameless)

Guzgıran (Slaughtering lambs,)

Arabozan (the person who starts fights)

Gök bugdayı oran (Reaping the green wheat)

These behaviors are not accepted in Turkmen society. People do not like these behaviors. In addition to the aforementioned bad behaviors, new concepts are added in another seventh. Adultery, drunkenness, bloodshed are the negative behaviors that stand out in the other seven. This seventh is as follows:

Anthorluk (False swearing)

Süythorluk (Vile, degenerate person)

Mugthorluk (Freeloader)

Arakhorluk (Drunkard)

Zınahorluk (Fornicator)

Parahorluk (Bribe-taker)

Hunhorluk-ganhorluk (Bloodshed)

In Turkmen society, women are also divided into various categories. Turkmens classify women based on their behavior. In the poem "*Ayal-maşgalanıñ yedi hili*", seven types of married women are

introduced. These women are mostly categorized according to their bad behavior.

Canımak (Emulating woman)

Telkiboz (The woman who wants it all)

Ortammiyana (Average woman)

Gubelagzan (The evil woman)

Darsdaban (The woman who goes stomping her feet, the woman who reaches everywhere)

Düňñeledürs (A woman who is made to work by pushing and shoving)

Şildirim şip (Gossip woman)

In Turkmen society, other classifications are also made for women. This definition is called *Ayalň yedi belası*. Among these women, seven types of women who make people tired of their lives, such as those who kidnap their husbands, make their neighbors migrate, and make them drink poison, are described just as Dede Korkut does in the introduction of his stories. Ogulmaya Semizade says that the *Ajdar gaçıran* (Dragon kidnapper) type has a special legend among Turkmens. According to a rumor, women who did not hear a human voice for seven years would become fierce like a snake (dragon). The term *Ajdar gaçıran* (Dragon abductor) is used to describe this type. According to Turkmens, if after seven years this woman does not come into contact with a human being again and does not hear his voice, she becomes a *yuvdarha* (dragon) woman.

Äri gaçıran (Woman driving away husband)

Ajdar gaçıran (Dragon) woman)

Goňşy göçüren (Woman driving away neighbor)

Zäher içiren (The woman who drank poison)

İli gaçıran (The woman who drove the community away)

İrsgı uçuran (The woman who destroys food)

Huşı öçüren (The woman who's driving you crazy)

Conclusion and Suggestions

In Turkmen culture, seven is a mythical number and key. This stylistic number motif is used to explain certain situations in society.

From genealogical classification to guests, from female stereotypes to actual orphanhood, sevens have been categorized in various issues. These seven definitions, which are memorable for the ease and harmony of their utterance, serve as a social guide. They are not only mythological but also sociological databases. Turkmens' worldview, way of thinking, outlook on life, perception and interpretation of events can be easily intuited by looking at these sevens. Not only Turkmens but also neighboring Turkic peoples have similar sevelemes. A good research and comparison can shed light on the subject in question. Sociological analyses can be made on Turkmen society. Turkmens define both positive and negative situations through seven. These definitions are cultural codes and the perspective of the society. Each of them bears the traces of the historical experience of Turkmen society. It even contains traces of archaic beliefs. A multifaceted study should be conducted on these sevelemes. Thus, the connections, beliefs and mysteries within them can be analyzed.

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