

# The Peculiarity of The Specificity and Systematization of Legends in Folklore Studies

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**Abstract:** The article examines the genre nature of legends, the uniqueness of their poetics, and the scientific description of the varieties of the genre in folklore studies. The diversity of the paradigm of folklore legends, their constant interaction with other genres predetermine the introduction of new definitions and the clarification of existing ones. At present, the plots of various legends in the global context are the most popular narrative and content structures for expressing and transmitting personal religious feelings in modern oral folklore. Such stories expand the boundaries of reality and allow a miracle to enter everyday life, transforming it, changing the person himself.

**Keywords:** Legends, worldview, semantics, folklore studies, images, motives, peoples.

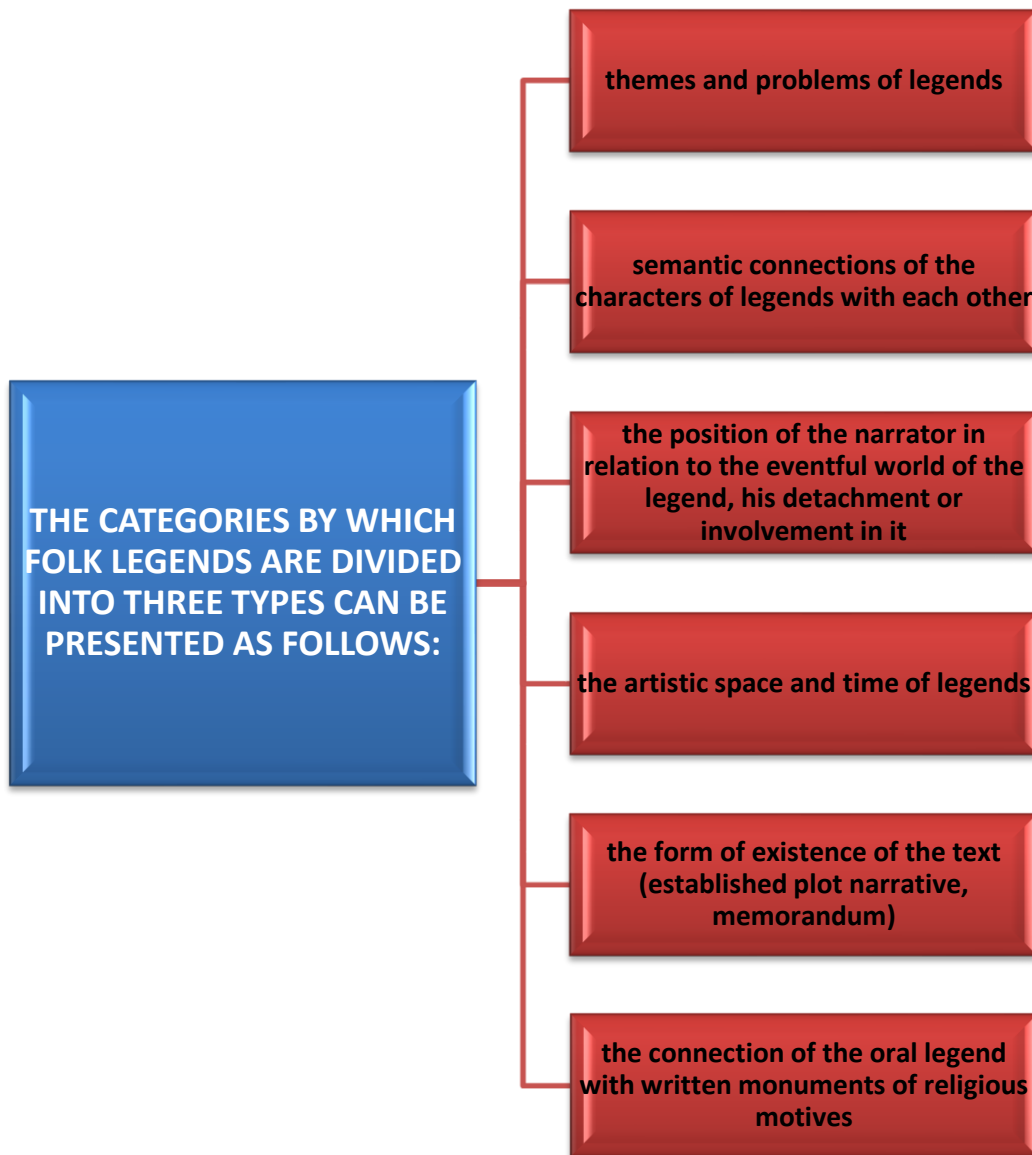
**Introduction:** Legend (from Middle Latin *legenda* "a collection of liturgical passages for daily service") is one of the varieties of non-fairytale prose folklore. A poetic legend about some historical event. In a figurative sense, it refers to glorious, admirable events of the past. As a rule, it contains additional religious or social pathos.

The complex, in many ways' unique artistic world of folklore legend attracts the attention of modern researchers of folk spiritual culture. Meanwhile, the problems of the genre essence and aesthetic nature of the legend are far from solved, as are the closely related issues of intra-genre classification of the existing corpus of texts, published and archival. The structural diversity of oral legend and its insufficient study complicate the problem of genre definition. In the works of folklorists, the term "legend" is most often applied to religious narratives: apocryphal stories on biblical themes, folk biographies of saints and stories about posthumous miracles, the power of prayer, sin and righteousness, desecration of shrines and retribution. At the same time, legends also include a

wider range of prose folklore texts marked by the aesthetics of the fantastic and miraculous.

Legend is an approximate synonym for myth; an epic story about what happened in ancient times; the main characters of the story are usually heroes in the full sense of the word, often gods and other supernatural forces directly participate in the events. Events in a legend are often exaggerated, a lot of fiction is added. Therefore, scientists do not consider legends to be completely reliable historical evidence, without denying, however, that most legends are based on real events.

Legends are divided into religious and social. Legends were usually oral stories, often set to music; Legends were passed down by word of mouth, usually by wandering storytellers. Later, many legends were written down. Since when legends were composed about someone, it meant public recognition of their deeds, the word acquired an additional meaning: it is used to refer to events and figures (for example, "Legend of Rock") that have received recognition and honor.



As for the stylistic features of legends, we proceed from the thesis about the low expression of the aesthetic attitude in folk non-fairy-tale prose (expressed in speech stereotypes, formula city, the presence of so-called "common places", entertainment, traditional for song, fairy-tale, and game folklore), the absence of an inseparable "connection between form and content in the sense that artistic forms are unstable and optional here" and, accordingly, about the prevalence of information, colloquial rather than artistic speech, an attitude towards reliability. However, their identification, even conditional, leads to the blurring of genre boundaries. Such an approach is capable of leveling out significant semantic and structural differences, value orientations of non-fairy-tale prose genres of different origins. In the episodes of the legend about a person's meeting with heavenly forces, the key motive of a miracle and the events of the storyline are conditioned by God's will with the aim of helping people in a difficult situation. In mythological

prose, a person's contact with a demonic creature is predetermined by the violation of the prohibitions of everyday or ritual behavior of the protagonist, which often leads to a tragic ending. For example, if the prohibition to yearn for the deceased is violated, the "evil spirit" in the guise of the deceased appears at night in his house to destroy the orphaned family. A short story often assimilates the features of a legend, while retaining the characteristics of a mythological story. A legend, to an even greater extent than short stories and tales, is open to intergenre influences - at all stages of the genre's development. It initially contains features of folklore and book genres (fairy tales, apocrypha, hagiography, etc.), which does not contradict its originality.

There are many definitions of the legend genre, often significantly different from each other. Meanwhile, positive trends are observed. Modern folklorists (following pre-revolutionary scientists) focus on the religious component of the folklore legend, its

significant property. Based on her own research in the field of legend, Yu. M. Shevarenkova formulates the result of the study and her vision of this genre as "a set of popular religious ideas expressed by a plot narrative". V. P. Anikin polemically asserts: there are no legends "free from the Christian faith". The plot-forming concepts of the legend genre are highlighted by L. V. Fadeeva: "A legend as a genre of non-fairy-tale prose unites a wide range of texts narrating about events that occur in the world of people (the created world) by the intervention of the will of God (the Creator). The basis of the legend is the idea of a miracle - a phenomenon incomprehensible to the human mind".

Thus, if we proceed from the analysis of texts and the history of the genre study, a folklore legend is a story of religious and moral content, dating back to the traditions of the Bible, hagiography, apocrypha, and other book and folklore sources. The legend has a moral and didactic focus on educating a person, which is due to the artistic task of the genre: to give an idea of good and evil in its Christian understanding. The legend is characterized by a spiritual dominant of the plot narrative, a kind of chronotype and a special system of characters: these are celestials (God, the Mother of God, apostles, angels, saints) and people, as well as other earthly beings. The key concept of a miracle is structured by mythological ideas about the dual world, that is, about the reality revealed to man and the invisible essence of being and the interaction between them. The paradigm of varieties of folklore legends is characterized by diversity and variability, therefore a critical analysis of established opinions is required, it is necessary to introduce new definitions. Eschatological legends are distinguished by the emotionality of style, categorical assessments and forecasts. Today's storyteller-preacher is not embarrassed by the fact that a mere mortal is not given to comprehend the secret meanings of the symbolic conceptual sphere of the Revelation of the Saints. Folklore narratives about the end of the world constitute an oral analogy to scientific literature on this problem. Folk interpretations of the Apocalypse in their own way complement these works and oppose them with the mythologist of the expressed thoughts and feelings.

Hagiographic legends are singled out as a separate type in most works on folk prose. Folklorists consider them to be the most important component of the analyzed genre. Legends about saints are stories about the secular or monastic life of saints, about posthumous miracles and other deeds of God's saints. Folklore hagiography most often precedes the creation of church lives and is an indispensable source for the book tradition. The corpus of folklore legends about saints is

a special structural integrity with its own system of characters, the originality of the chronotype, and a specific plot basis for the narrative. Hagiographic legends are linked to all genres of folklore prose, interact with Old Russian literature, apocrypha and church literature. They model a picture of the world in which geographical and spiritual space, historical time and eternity constitute a single whole. Rooted in the traditions of Byzantine book writing, canonical and folklore lives create a voluminous image of holiness or "bringing the ideal and divine into human life". Much attention is paid in modern studies not only to the lives of saints, but also to the history of popular veneration of natural sacred objects associated with the memory of the heavenly patrons of peoples. An analysis of almost unstudied legends about locally revered and pan-Christian saints revered in various countries has revealed an unusual combination of miraculous and historical layers in the structure of the texts. The legends reflect ideas about the extreme importance of patronage, intercession of higher powers for immigrants from different parts of the world, who by the will of fate found themselves in a foreign land. Thus, in the local traditions of hagiographic legends, features of local originality are clearly manifested. Meanwhile, the folklore legend acquires ideological and artistic concretization and life truthfulness.

Legends about rubdowns are oral stories about visiting the "other world", stories about rapture into another world and wanderings of the human soul during lethargic sleep. Some folklorists consider these folklore narratives to be legends. They undoubtedly reveal the basic components of the genre: a religious basis, obvious connections with the book tradition of visions of the other world and a clearly expressed instructiveness. These legends actualize Christian ideas about the structure of the universe, the afterlife, sin and righteousness and the salvation of the human soul. In the semantics and structure of this type of legend, a visually perceived series of images and events is of great importance. The picture of what was seen in the otherworldly space of a dream is transformed into a verbal form, into a plot narrative, which is a unique feature of the poetics of legends about rubdowns.

The XX century gave birth to a huge number of stories about the fate of a person in an anti-Christian world, the author notes the archaic origin of stories about retribution, their relevance, large number and widespread existence. Indeed, this disaster affected almost every family in the XX century, so legends of this type are of national importance. E. E. Levkieskaya puts forward an important argument in favor of identifying a new genre: "The public thirst for justice, the need for justice - this is the main nerve of stories about

retribution." Not having received a satisfactory solution in the legal state system, this problem "is explicated by public consciousness in oral tradition and receives its solution at the sacred level." The common structural element of these stories is, according to folklorists, the motive of retribution from God, and not from people, "punishment from higher powers, the other world". Along with legends of retribution, folklorists offer a thematic systematization of modern world legends. Themes about faith and unbelief are highlighted; works about icon veneration and post-revolutionary iconoclasm; about the prayerful connection of man with God; about the granting of a miracle through prayer; about righteousness and holiness; about sin, punishment, repentance and forgiveness; about predictions and signs; about Moscow churches; about incidents from the lives of saints. These thematic groups are known from other regional traditions and, most likely, can be supplemented.

Unlike legends about extinction and retribution, cosmogonic legends have a solid history of study. They form a contrastingly symmetrical pair to eschatological plots: they tell not about the final fate of the world, but about its creation. However, both are directly linked to the book tradition of religious dogmas and apocrypha, have religious content and an edifying focus. This study presents extensive literature on the issue and provides a scientific paradigm for more specific varieties of these legends. The author consistently examines the plots of the creation of land, the creation of angels and demons, the overthrow of Satan from heaven, the creation of the first man in the context of religious books and the apocryphal tradition. The selection of etiological legends is substantiated in the works of folklorists and other researchers. However, it must be acknowledged that the plots of the creation of the world and man in cosmogonic legends and the origin of the characteristics of animals, birds, fish and other objects of the world created by God have significant differences. Etiological plots are informative and cognitive in nature, which is predetermined by the meaning of the term, the installation on explaining the causes and conditions of the emergence of something. Etiologist is organically inherent in myths, archaic fairy tales and short story, etiological stories. In folklore prose, religious plots and images are often assimilated with ancient mythological ideas. But if we turn to specific plots of etiological legends, it often turns out that they have only an etiological ending. For example: sparrows jump because their legs are tangled as a punishment for the fact that they brought nails when Christ was crucified. However, the main thing in the content of most similar legends is the folk interpretation of the Bible, the theme of sin and

retribution, the edifying function. Thus, it is revealed that the terminological designations, dominant features and plot composition of etiological legends still require in-depth and comprehensive study.

Thus, folk legends have conveyed to us the greatest spiritual values, they continued to live, filled with new themes and plots in the twentieth century, during the decades of persecution of religious life. The legends are distinguished by their richness of content and variety of plots. They are filled with cultural concepts, historical information and the realities of everyday life. The modern tradition of oral legend testifies to the viability and demand for the genre in the spiritual culture of the people.

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