

# A STORY OF LAND OF DEATH

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## ABSTRACT

*Mythic stories are psychic utterances that come from the depths of the unconscious. How psyche accepts and appreciates death is looked into the present study. Ulugan creates life with the help of his other brother Erlik who later on wishes to assert his own authority. His intentions are understood and thwarted by Ulugan who tells him to be confined to the marshlands and become the king of death. The dead also get their designated place as soon as the place for the living is created. The story is analyzed using the tool of archetypal amplification given by Carl Jung. The school of Analytical psychology was ushered in by him. He propounded the concepts of archetypes and the collective unconscious. He used the mythic datum to unearth the psychic past and functioning of mankind. It is observed after analysis that the land of living and the dead are created together. The land of death is seen as the a place of continuation of existence.*

**Keywords:** Death, Erlik, Ulugan, Carl Jung.

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## Introduction:

The story begins at the advent of creation. It is a version from Siberia (Nair, 2017). Lord Ulugan comes across comes a being other than himself for the first time and develops a bond with him. He names him Erlik. Erlik informs him of the potent mud below the water surface and gives him the idea of creating the earth out of the same. The Lord asks Erlik to get the mud out of the water. Thinking of asserting his own authority Erlik tries to hide the mud in his mouth for himself as well. As soon as the mud begins to expand including the one in his mouth Erlik is left with no other choice than to spit the mud out. This irks Ulugan who at once is able to understand the intentions of Ulugan and punishes him by making him the king of the dead. The mud thus spit becomes the marshlands. The story begins at creation and ends after the creation of the land of the living as well as the land of the dead. They both come into existence at the same time.

## Datum:

### “How Marshlands Came to Be ...

In the time before time was ever measured, the world had just been created by the creator, Lord Ulgan. And in the beginning of all beginnings, once as he was walking through the clouds, he saw a strange sight. There was something floating in the primordial ocean. It had a face, but the rest of the body was shapeless. While the face remained intact, the rest of the creature’s form changed as the waves rose and fell.

Now Ulgan had always assumed that he was the only being who existed in the universe and was astonished to see another being sharing it. Unable to contain his curiosity and annoyance, Ulgan swooped down and asked, ‘Who are you?’

The being changed shape few times and then said, ‘Who am I? That’ a good question because you see, I don’t have a name.’

Ulgan smiled. That was better. He would give the creature a name and that would make it beholden to him forever. 'I am Ulgan and no being ought to exist without a name. So, henceforth you shall be known as Erlik,' he pronounced grandly.

The creature gladly accepted this name and thereafter, a certain kind of friendship bloomed between the two of them. One day Ulgan asked Erlik, 'You have been to the bottom of the ocean. What is there?'

Erlik changed shape and became a mouth. Then he said, 'Mud. Constant and stable and never changing. If you brought it to the top of the ocean, you could create countless creatures who could all live on it.'

Ulgan began to think. He was the creator lord, but he hadn't created much. It often made him worry. What kind of a creator was he if he couldn't have a few creations to his name?

'Erlik, are you my friend?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'Erlik, are you thankful that I gave you a name?'

'Yes,' said Erlik.

'Well, will you do as I ask?' Ulgan asked.

Erlik changed shapes to suggest yes.

'In which case, go to the bottom of the ocean and bring me the biggest chunk of earth you can find. I have an idea. I would like to create a world up here, above the ocean, and then I will create a few creatures to populate it.'

So Erlik changed shape and became a creature with a face and long hands and set forth for the bottom of the ocean to bring Ulgan a piece of earth. When he had prised a huge piece to take to Ulgan, Erlik suddenly had a thought. Why don't I do the same? I will keep some of this earth for myself and create a world of my own, he decided. But his hands were full. So Erlik opened his mouth and bit off a piece of earth small enough to hide in his mouth. Then Erlik floated to the surface and offered the piece of earth to Ulgan. Ulgan accepted it happily. He threw it onto the surface of the ocean and said, 'Now watch me!'

The piece of earth Ulgan threw on water began to expand growing bigger by the moment.

Erlik began to panic. What magic had Ulgan caused? The piece in his mouth was beginning to expand as well and soon he was starting to choke. Ulgan too noticed that Erlik's face was changing colour. In a flash he understood what Erlik's plan had been.

'You are so stupid, Erlik,' he said. 'Did you really think you could get away with this? There can only be one creator and one world. Me and mine. Henceforth I shall not be your friend nor let you be among those I create. Since you so badly wanted to be king, you shall be king of the dead, of those creatures who have lost their souls. And now spit out the piece in your mouth or you will die in the next few moments.'

Erlik felt anger and hate rise in him. But he had no option but to listen to Ulgan's words. So he spat out the piece of earth which joined the rest of the rapidly forming earth. However, since the piece of mud had remained in Erlik's mouth for a while, it became an unpleasant piece of land, wet and slimy, and became the boggy marshlands that appear all over the earth" (Nair, 2017).

## ARCHETYPAL AMPLIFICATION

### (Hypothetical Interpretation)

The motif of cosmogenic dive and dual creators is present in different variations across the globe. 'In the version from Romania the God asked Satan to take his name and get the seed from earth only in his third attempt after taking God's and his name was Satan able to gather the earth. While God was asleep Satan dragged god and the earth expanded beneath him. Similar variants are found in Bulgaria. In a Transylvanian gypsy version initially god accepts the devil as his friend but the devil betrays him by keeping some sand for himself by taking his own name which eventually turns him black and he has to later spit that out. He is later shunned by god. In the Finnish version of the story God stood on a golden pillar in the middle of the sea when saw his image he asked it to get up, it was the devil, who informed god that by diving thrice the earth could be made' (Eliade, 1972). Hence, the god and devil are closely associated.

In the present story, is a version from Siberia, here the creator lord himself is unaware of any other being which existed beside him. The lord comes down from the clouds to look. The lord here comes across someone who is shapeless or formless, contrasting the clarity that Ulgan has about himself about who he is and what he is capable of. The creature does not even have a name. To give a name to someone is to attribute something to the entity; it also gives power and a sense of identity to it. It is an act of differentiating and demarking a particular entity. The Lord gives the name to Erlik who is seen floating on the surface. The formless creature becomes the other brother or the shadow of the lord.

The creator is displaying a sense of insecurity as well as ignorance. He is constantly trying to remind Erlik of how much he owes him and asks him if he knew what was beneath the sea. He is informed about the presence of stable mud below the waters of the sea suggests an idea of creation to Ulgan. Edinger (1994) relates the alchemical process of *coagultio* with creation. "...*coagultio* is the process that turns something into earth. "Earth" is thus one of the synonyms for the *coagultio*. It is heavy and permanent, of fixed position and shape... Thus, for a psychic content to become earth means that it has been concretized in a particular localized form; that is, *it has become attached to an ego*" (Edinger, 1994). He makes him take out the mud. "Certain creation myths use explicit images of *coagultio*. In the cosmogony of the North American Indians, the world was often created by an "earth diver" who brought up bits of mud from the depths of the sea" (Edinger, 1994).

He himself is ignorant of what lies under the sea; it is Erlik who gives him the idea to create something out of it. The ocean is from where the first life sprang from. It is the repository of all human experiences poured in. The creative forces of water are at their height in mud, *limus* (Eliade, 1958). The mud is where the waters and the solid matter interacts first. It can be molded in any form and thus contains the germ of all creation in itself. The waters of life is the unconscious, harboring a shape shifting being on its waters since everything is diffused in the unconscious. The act of creation happens by the lord when he starts interacting or knowing the unconscious. "...*coagultio* is promoted by action... Psychologically this means that activity and psychic movement promote ego development" (Edinger, 1994). The shape shifting of the being continues till the time he is unable to act for himself. As the lord gets to know Erlik he is also able to know himself. He becomes aware of himself and feels the urge to create. The entire mud for creation coming from one source and being molded by one creator is also indicative of the *participation mystique* that the entire creation is enjoined in.

The creator himself owes the Erlik the idea of creation. Erlik fishes out a chunk of mud from the ocean. The creator starts to expand the earth unawares of the particle hidden in Erlik's mouth. "In the beginning, Erlik was God's friend and brother, but became later his enemy. Mostly, the Altai Tatars call the being who helps God in creating the world "Man" or "First Man," but always, this Man develops into the devil, Erlik. The reasons for his fall are his most obvious qualities, pride and boastfulness. On account of these God drives him down into the depths, where he now lives as the ruler of the spirits in the kingdom of death... This reflects the old Iranian conception of the first man, who, by falling into sin, was the first to die, and thus became leader of the spirits of the dead. In Caucasian tales also, the devil chooses the dead for his property, and in a Bulgarian creation story he says to God: "The living be thy property, the dead mine" (Holmberg, 1927).

Erlik himself had the urge to create something for himself. He wanted a share of world for himself and carried the mud in his mouth. The urge to have a separate existence besides the one provided by the creator. Erlik is displaying an attitude of inflation by regarding himself to be at par with the creator. He owes his name to the creator and also

his powers. The shadow of the creator himself, he is trying to exceed the authority. The soil from his mouth becomes marshlands. The unconscious is trying to detest the creation and hold on to a piece for itself. The marshes are known to flourish a lot of fauna around them. They are also deceptive as Erlik was and suck in the individual who unknowingly steps in them thinking it to be water.

Erlik is crowned king of the dead or the soulless ones. Those who have lost the capacity to be human any longer as does Erlik join him.

The creator curses Erlik binding him to be the king of the dead and he had to helplessly agree. The dead or the soulless go back to a kingdom beyond to live. When Allah orders angle Gabriel and Michael to some mud from the earth to create they are unable to do so then, “the angel <sup>C</sup>Azra'il...fetches a handful of different varieties of dust out of which man is created. <sup>C</sup>Azra'il is praised by Allah for this feat of his, and as a reward he is appointed as Angel of Death in charge of snatching the souls of all mortals” (Schwarzbaum,1957).

It is not mere existence or end that is emphasized but rather a continuation of life at a different plane of existence is being hinted at. The life after death continues in a different realm. “...in certain African creation myths...in the one where the two creators are the Red One and the Black One: The Black One is the God of the dead who stays outside creation and the Red One is the Creator God. The dead return to the Black One...There the dead continue to live with the Black God, or in the preconscious totality” (Von-Franz, 1972).

**Conclusion:** The creator Lord Ulgan and Erlik together make the earth. It is Erlik who dwells in waters and is able to draw the mud out necessary for creation. He is the shadow of god or the image of god himself who dwells nearer to the unconscious, who is able to initiate a movement towards consciousness. Both Erlik and Ulgan are equally essential for the creation process to take place. Without dualities, the existence of consciousness cannot be comprehended. Without consciousness there will be no unconscious. The creator lord is able to expand and blow up the earth to its present shape and infuse it with his essence but the earth inside of Erlik's mouth is a soggy piece of land. The marshes are areas where nothing much grows but the possibility of life always dwells. It is a different plane of existence which is a storehouse of potentialities or the preconscious psyche where the dead returns. The act of creation would have been incomplete without creating a place for the dead. The process of creating involves a sense of discrimination and discretion. When something is created, then it dies to its previous form of existence and continues to reach the next form of existence.

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