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TOPONYMS IN KARABAKH FOLKLORE: LINGUOPOETIC CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract

This article investigates the linguopoetic functions of place names in Karabakh folklore. Based on an analysis of the genres of legend and narrative, it is determined that toponyms perform text-forming, plot-forming, semantic-center, emotional-aesthetic, mythological-sacral, reality-confirming, and collective-memory functions. Whereas in legends place names tend to display a mythological and symbolic character, in narratives their historical and informative function predominates. In Karabakh folklore, toponyms become a poetic means of expressing national identity, historical memory, and cultural values.

Keywords: *Karabakh folklore; place names; toponym; linguopoetics; legend; narrative; national-cultural memory; sacral space; semantic center; poetic devices*

Introduction (continued from Part 1)

From a linguopoetic perspective, the genre of the narrative differs from the legend in a number of important respects. Whereas in legend mythological thinking and symbolic imagery occupy a central position, in narrative events are presented more within historical reality, real space, and a concrete temporal frame. This generic difference directly affects the linguopoetic characteristics that place names acquire within the text. In Karabakh folklore narratives related to place names, toponyms function less as mythological images than as poetic means for expressing historical memory, real events, and collective experience.

When interpreting the genre characteristics of artistic text, Jirmunski notes that genre is one of the primary factors determining the functional load and aesthetic possibilities of the word within the text (Jirmunski, 1977, p. 61). From this perspective, in Karabakh narratives the linguopoetic function of place names does not bear as broad a mythological-symbolic character as in legends, yet their aesthetic value and semantic loading are not entirely eliminated. On the contrary, because real-historical content is presented poetically, toponyms likewise operate as significant linguopoetic units in narrative.

One of the principal linguopoetic characteristics of place names in Karabakh narratives is the reality-confirming function. To

reinforce the truthfulness of the event, the narrative cites specific place names. Names of villages, mountains, ravines, and fortresses not only indicate where an event happened but also increase its historical credibility. In this context, the toponym becomes a poetic unit with a quasi-documentary character. For example, in narratives about Karabakh villages, the precise naming of places serves to ensure that the event is perceived in popular memory as an actual historical fact (Qarabağ, 2012, III kitab, pp. 64–67).

Another important feature that determines the linguopoetic characteristics of place names in narratives is semantic concreteness. Whereas in legends place names often bear symbolic and generalized meaning, in narratives toponyms are connected with a concrete notion of place. Yet this concreteness does not mean that poetic expression is weak. On the contrary, because the historical event is tightly bound to the place, the place name acquires emotional and ideational load. For example, in a narrative about the fate of a particular village, that village's name becomes a poetic marker summarizing the tragedy or heroism experienced by the people (Qarabağ, 2014, VIII kitab, pp. 91–94).

When explaining the function of space in artistic text, Lotman underscores that real space is “re-encoded semantically” within the poetic text and becomes a carrier of ideas (Lotman, 1992, p. 75). The linguopoetic characteristics of place names in Karabakh narratives are directly connected with this process of re-encoding. The toponym remains a real geographical object, yet within the text it is endowed with emotional and ideational meaning.

One of the important linguopoetic characteristics of place names in narratives is the collective-memory function. In Karabakh folklore, narratives often aim to preserve in memory past events, wars, migrations, and tragedies. In this process, place names become key points of support. An event may be forgotten, but the name of the place where it occurred remains in popular memory and is transmitted from generation to generation through narrative. This feature shows that the toponym possesses high value from a linguopoetic point of view (Qarabağ, 2012, IV kitab, pp. 112–115).

One of the linguopoetic characteristics of place names in Karabakh narratives concerns emotional evaluation. In narratives, toponyms are often loaded with positive or negative emotional shading. Places considered sacred are remembered with respect and reverence, whereas names of places associated with tragic events evoke feelings of sorrow and pain. This emotional evaluation intensifies the toponym's linguopoetic load and transforms it from a simple spatial indicator into a poetic unit (Qarabağ, 2014, IX kitab, pp. 60–63).

Compared with legends, the poetic expression of place names in narratives is realized by simpler linguistic means. Here, metaphor and personification are relatively weaker, but the narrative context preserves the place name's poetic value. The place name is used naturally in the flow of events, and it is precisely this naturalness that increases its aesthetic effect. This feature is directly connected with the realist character of the narrative genre (Azərbaycan əfsanələrinin poetikası və süjet göstəricisi, 2023, pp. 203–205).

Noting that linguopoetic characteristics in folkloric texts change depending on genre, K. N. Vəli argues that in realist genres poetic effect is achieved mainly through semantic and contextual means (Vəli, 2019, p. 7). The linguopoetic characteristics of place names in Karabakh narratives confirm this view. Here, toponyms acquire poetic meaning not through extensive artistic description but through their direct connection with the event.

The historical function of place names in narratives should also be specifically emphasized. In Karabakh folklore, many narratives are connected with particular historical periods and events. In these narratives, place names function as a bridge between history and folklore. A historical event becomes folklorized, yet through the place name it retains its real historical foundation. As a result of this process, the place name becomes a bearer both of the historical fact and of its poetic interpretation (Qarabağ, 2013, VI kitab, pp. 140–143).

Thus, in Karabakh folklore narratives related to place names, toponyms display distinctive features from a linguopoetic standpoint. In narrative, they function as key units that authenticate reality, create semantic

concreteness, preserve collective memory, carry out emotional evaluation, and present historical content in poetic form. These characteristics not only reveal the poetic essence of the narrative genre but also disclose the cultural and aesthetic significance of place names in Karabakh folklore.

In a linguopoetic approach, the national-cultural meaning of place names becomes apparent in the unity of the semantic, emotional, and ideational loads they acquire in an artistic text. In a folkloric text, toponyms are not only spatial indicators; they also function as poetic units expressing the people's historical experience, ethnic identity, and cultural memory. Legends and narratives related to place names in Karabakh folklore are particularly significant in this regard, because in these texts the concept of space is shaped as one of the primary support points of national memory.

Explaining the national-cultural function of the word in artistic text, Jirmunski emphasizes that within an aesthetic text linguistic units "become carriers of ideas that express the worldview and historical experience of the people" (Jirmunski, 1977, p. 67). The linguopoetic meaning of place names in Karabakh folklore is likewise connected with this ideational carrier function. Here, toponyms denote concrete geographical objects while simultaneously encoding poetically national conceptions associated with the land of Karabakh, its historical fate, and its spiritual values.

In the formation of the national-cultural linguopoetic meaning of place names in Karabakh folklore, the factor of collective memory plays a decisive role. In legends and narratives, place names function as the main means through which past events are preserved in memory and transmitted from generation to generation. The tragedies, wars, migrations, and heroic events that have befallen the people are often remembered precisely through place names. As a result of this process, the place name becomes a poetic marker of national memory within the folkloric text (Qarabağ, 2012, IV kitab, pp. 112–115).

In Karabakh legends and narratives, the national-cultural meaning of toponyms is also connected with their loading with his-

torical semantics. Many place names are associated with concrete historical events and contain within themselves the folklorized interpretation of those events. In this case, history is artistically generalized and reinforced within collective memory through the place name. In narratives about Karabakh villages and fortresses, toponyms function as a poetic expression of the people's historical existence and attachment to these lands (Qarabağ, 2014, VIII kitab, pp. 91–94).

Explaining the national-cultural meaning of space in an artistic text, Lotman notes that the image of space in a text is "one of the main codes of cultural identity" (Lotman, 1992, p. 78). The linguopoetic meaning of place names in Karabakh folklore is characterized precisely by this identity function. Toponyms present the Karabakh space not merely as a geographical territory but as an "own" space bearing national-cultural value. This feature renders the poetic meaning of place names ideologically significant as well.

The national-cultural linguopoetic meaning of place names in Karabakh folklore is also closely connected with their emotional loading. In legends and narratives, toponyms are frequently accompanied by feelings such as love, longing, sorrow, and pride. This emotional background turns the place name into a part of the people's inner spiritual world. Especially in narratives reflecting tragic events connected with Karabakh, place names function as poetic symbols bearing the longing for and memory of a lost space (Qarabağ, 2013, VI kitab, pp. 140–143).

The concept of sacral space also plays an important role in forming the national-cultural linguopoetic meaning of place names. In Karabakh folklore, in legends and narratives connected with names such as "pir," "ocaq," and "müqəddəs bulaq," space is loaded with religious and spiritual values. These spaces occupy a special place in the people's belief system, and toponyms become the poetic expression of that belief. Names such as "Seyid gölü" and "Pir dağı" carry national-cultural linguopoetic meaning in this sense (Qarabağ, 2014, IX kitab, pp. 60–63).

K.N.Vəli notes that national-cultural meaning expands the functional possibilities of the word in the folkloric text and turns it

into a means of expressing ethnic identity (Vəli, 2019, p. 7). Place names in Karabakh folklore clearly fulfill this function. Here, toponyms not only localize the event but also preserve and sustain the national-spiritual value of the Karabakh space.

In Karabakh legends and narratives, the national-cultural linguopoetic meaning of place names is also connected with their consolidation in the folkloric system through repetition and stabilization. Repeated use of the same place name across various texts leads that space to acquire a special status in the people's consciousness. As a result of such repetition, the toponym moves beyond the folkloric text and becomes part of the national memory (Qarabağ, 2012–2014).

Thus, the national-cultural linguopoetic meaning of place names in Karabakh folklore is formed on the basis of their preservation of historical memory, expression of national identity, creation of emotional-aesthetic impact, and connection with sacral values. In legends and narratives, toponyms present the Karabakh space as an inseparable part of the people's national-cultural existence and transmit the poetic value of that space from generation to generation. In this perspective,

place names in Karabakh folklore function not merely as linguistic units but as national-cultural linguopoetic codes.

Conclusion

The linguopoetic analysis conducted demonstrates that in Karabakh folklore place names function as multifunctional poetic units. In legends, toponyms bear a predominantly mythological-symbolic character and acquire a high aesthetic status through epithetization, metaphorization, personification, and symbolization. In narratives, however, place names are more closely tied to historical reality and are distinguished by their reality-confirming, semantic-concretizing, and collective-memory-preserving functions.

In Karabakh folklore, toponyms not only localize the event but also carry ideational load, create an emotional background, and express national-cultural identity. Associating place names with the notion of sacral space further increases their poetic and spiritual value. Thus, place names in Karabakh folklore function as national-cultural linguopoetic codes, transmitting the people's historical memory and cultural identity from generation to generation.

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