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THE LINGUOPOETIC CHARACTERISTICS OF TOPONYMS IN KARABAKH FOLKLORE

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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 linguoetics; legend; narrative; national-cultural memory; sacral space; semantic center; poetic devices*

Introduction

Folklore is an important domain of verbal art that preserves a people's historical memory, worldview, and national-cultural values. Within this system, place names- toponyms-function not only as indicators of geographical space but also as linguopoetic units bearing a deep semantic and aesthetic load. Especially in Karabakh folklore, legends and narratives related to place names closely connect the concept of space with national identity, collective memory, and historical experience.

A linguopoetic approach makes it possible to investigate the functional and aesthetic characteristics that linguistic units acquire in an artistic text. From this perspective, the study of the text-forming, plot-forming, semantic-center, emotional-aesthetic,

mythological-sacral, and national-cultural functions of place names in Karabakh folklore is especially topical. This article comparatively analyzes the genres of legend and narrative and identifies the linguopoetic characteristics that toponyms acquire within these genres.

In a linguopoetic approach, the functions performed by linguistic units in an artistic text are determined by their semantic and aesthetic potential. In a folkloric text these functions are particularly complex, because in oral tradition the word serves as a carrier of both information and emotional-aesthetic load. In legends and narratives about place names in Karabakh folklore, toponyms perform diverse linguopoetic functions, playing an important role in shaping the text's semantic, plot, and ideational structure.

When explaining the functional load of the word in artistic text, VM Jirmunski notes that within an aesthetic text linguistic units “acquire text-forming and idea-forming functions” (Jirmunski, 1977, p. 29). This proposition can be fully applied to folkloric texts, especially to legends and narratives in which toponyms participate intensively. Karabakh folklore materials show that place names are not a passive background element in the text but function as active linguopoetic units.

One of the main linguistic functions of place names is the text-forming function. In Karabakh legends and narratives, a toponym often serves as the starting point of the text. The event is first and foremost linked to a specific place, and it is precisely the name of this place that gives rise to the plot. For example, in legends related to “Come kayasi” (“Bride Rock”), the fact that events unfold around this rock turns the place name into the main support of the plot. In such cases the toponym is not merely a spatial indicator; it operates as a linguopoetic mechanism that prompts the emergence of the narrative (Karabakh, 2012, book II, p. 73).

Another important linguopoetic function of toponyms is the plot-forming function. In legends and narratives, the development of events is often constructed on the semantic potential of the place name. In Karabakh folklore, the names of mountains, rocks, ravines, and springs determine the direction of the plot and condition the content of events. For instance, in narratives associated with “Bloody” Dere (“Bloody Ravine/Valley”), the toponym’s semantic load—associations of blood, tragedy, and war—shapes the dramatic character of the plot and generates emotional tension in the text (Karabakh, 2012, Book III, P. 58–59). In this respect, the place name is not only the starting point of the plot but also a poetic unit that determines its trajectory of development.

The semantic-center function of place names is also clearly observed in Karabakh folklore. Yu. M. Lotman emphasizes that in an artistic text the semantic center is the principal structural element carrying the ideational load (Lotman, 1992, p. 74). In Karabakh legends and narratives, this center is often concentrated precisely on the toponym. The idea of the event, the message conveyed, and the core content of collective memory are condensed

in the place name. For example, in narratives connected with village names, the toponym functions as a semantic center that generalizes the village’s historical fate, the events that befell it, and the people’s attitude toward it (Karabakh, 2014, Book VIII, P. 91–94).

Another important linguopoetic function of place names in Karabakh folklore is the function of emotional-aesthetic impact. Toponyms create an emotional background in the folkloric text and evoke particular feelings in the listener. Emotional shades such as sorrow, loss, sacredness, and heroism are often activated in the text through place names. This feature is especially evident in narratives connected with historical tragedies. For example, in narratives about the destruction of settlements, village names become carriers of emotional weight and intensify the dramatic impact of the event (Karabakh, 2012, Book IV, P. 112–115).

Toponyms’ mythological-sacral function also occupies an important place in Karabakh folklore. In legends, place names are frequently linked to the notion of sacred space. Names such as “Sayyid lake”, “Girls Lake” “Pir dağı” acquire the status of sacral space in the text, and this status broadens the toponym’s linguopoetic function. Such spaces are presented in folkloric texts as protective, punitive, or healing (Karabakh, 2014, Book IX, P. 60–63). KN Veli notes that sacral semantics in a folkloric text activates the poetic function of the word at a maximal level (Veli, 2019, p. 6).

The genre-differentiating function of place names should also be noted. In Karabakh folklore, whereas toponyms in legends tend to perform a mythological and symbolic function, in narratives their linguopoetic function is more historical and informative in character. However, this informativeness does not imply a weakening of the poetic function. On the contrary, as a result of the poetic presentation of historical fact, place names likewise play an important aesthetic role in narratives (Azerbaijan legends poetics and plot indicator, 2023, P. 203–205).

One of the linguopoetic functions of place names is the function of preserving collective memory. In Karabakh folklore, toponyms act as poetic codes that contain historical and cultural memory transmitted from generation to

generation. The place name becomes the main means through which an event is recalled and retained in memory within the text. This function is particularly evident when the same toponym is repeatedly used across different texts (Karabakh, 2012–2014).

Thus, in Karabakh legends and narratives related to place names, toponyms function as multifunctional linguopoetic units. In the text, they perform text-forming, plot-forming, semantic-center, emotional-aesthetic, mythological-sacral, and collective-memory functions. The unity of these functions determines the poetic status of place names in Karabakh folklore and plays a decisive role in apprehending their generic, thematic, and ideational characteristics.

In linguopoetic analysis, the strength of a literary text's aesthetic impact is determined mainly by the poetic devices through which linguistic units are presented. In folkloric texts, especially legends, these devices are stabilized and traditional in character. In Karabakh legends related to place names, toponyms appear not only as units that bear semantic load but also as key textual components whose aesthetic effect is intensified through various poetic devices.

When explaining the function of poetic devices in artistic text, Jirmunski notes that the aesthetic value of a word is linked to its figurative use, its emotional loading, and the special emphasis it acquires within context (Jirmunski, 1977, p. 52). In Karabakh legends, the poetic expression of place names is formed precisely on these mechanisms. Within a legend text, the toponym is supplied with epithets, framed metaphorically, personified, and semantically reinforced through repetition.

One of the poetic devices used to express place names in legends is the use of epithets. In Karabakh legends, toponyms are frequently accompanied by emotional and evaluative epithets. In combinations such as "Uca mountain" ("lofty mountain"), "black black rock", "sacred" "sacred spring", and "bloody" "dere" ("bloody ravine/valley"), epithets expand the semantic field of the place name and increase its aesthetic impact. For example, in legends connected with the toponym "Bloody valley", the epithet "bloody" is not merely a color adjective; it functions as

a poetic device that concentrates meanings of tragedy, death, and historical memory (Karabakh, 2012, Book III, P. 58–59).

Metaphorization also plays an important role in the poetic expression of place names. In Karabakh legends, names of mountains, rocks, ravines, and springs are often metaphorically linked to human fate and life events. In the legend of "Bride kayasi", the notion of the rock directly symbolizes human fate, tragedy, and the concept of honor. The rock's "freezing" and "turning to stone" carries a metaphoric meaning, expressing the human being's hopeless situation and the immutability of fate (Azerbaijan legends poetics and plot indicator, 2023, P. 61–62). At this point, the place name rises to the level of a poetic metaphor.

One of the widely used devices in the poetic expression of place names in legends is personification. In Karabakh folklore, the concept of space is often presented as a living being. Mountains protect, rocks bear witness, springs "cry," and the earth "drinks blood." Such personifications amplify the poetic function of place names and connect them with mythological thinking. For example, in legends about mountains, the idea that the mountain protects or punishes a person indicates that space is presented as a living image (Karabakh, 2013, Book V, P. 102–104).

Repetition and parallel constructions also play an important role in the poetic expression of toponyms. In legend texts, repeating a place name several times increases its semantic and emotional load. Rehearsals in the form "Come rock, come kayasi" create a tragic emphasis in the text and concentrate the listener's attention on the place. Jirmunski specifically notes that such repetitions in an artistic text increase emotional intensity (Jirmunski, 1977, p. 55). In Karabakh legends, this technique is one of the principal means that consolidates the toponym's poetic status.

Symbolization is also widespread in the poetic expression of place names in legends. In Karabakh folklore, many toponyms do not denote a concrete place but express a generalized idea. The mountain functions as a symbol of loftiness and resistance; the spring, of life and purity; and the ravine, of tragedy and loss. As a result of such symbolization, the place name becomes a carrier of

ideas in the legend text. For example, in legends about lakes and springs considered sacred, the water space is presented as a sign of both religious and moral purity (Karabakh, 2014, Book IX, P. 60–63).

Another device for the poetic expression of place names in legends is their integration with mythological motifs. In legends, place names are often linked to mythological motifs such as petrification, disappearance, and transformation. These motifs strengthen the toponym's poetic expression and, by distancing it from a purely real notion of space, carry it into a mythological time-space plane. Names such as "Bride" and "Girls lake" have been formed precisely through this mechanism (Azerbaijan legends poetics and plot indicator, 2023, P. 175–178).

In a linguopoetic analysis of folkloric texts, KN Veli indicates that poetic devices realize the aesthetic function of the word in a folkloric text at a maximal level and increase the text's emotional impact (Veli, 2019, p. 6). The poetic expression of place names in Karabakh legends fully confirms this view. Here, toponyms are not only units that transmit information; they also function as one of the main sources of emotional, ideational, and aesthetic effect within the text.

Thus, in Karabakh legends related to place names, poetic devices—use of epithets, metaphorization, personification, repetition, symbolization, and integration with mythological motifs—are the principal mechanisms shaping the linguopoetic value of toponyms. Through the unity of these devices, place names acquire a high poetic status in legend texts and play a decisive role in revealing the genre's aesthetic essence.

Conclusion

Original of the article first in the part of toponyms linguopoetic functions – especially text creator, plot creator, semantic center, emotional-aesthetic and mythological-sacred functions – details in the way analysis Karabakh in folklore legend and legends in the context of place their names just geographical indicator not, but also poetic codes where certain Epithet, metaphor, personification, repetition and symbolization like poetic tools of toponyms aesthetic impact the power increases. In this section also of toponyms mythological thoughtfully commitment and holy place the concept formation Research shows that Karabakh in legends toponyms national memory, history of experience and moral of values in the protection important role is playing.

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