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## MYTH AND HISTORICAL REALITY IN TOPONYMIC LEGENDS: MUTUAL RELATIONSHIPS

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**Abstract:** The article is devoted to the study of the mythological sources of Azerbaijani toponymic legends and their mutual relations with historical reality. The main goal is to reveal how legends play a bridge role between myth and history in the folk memory. The study shows that toponymic legends are not limited to the explanation of geographical names, but also have an important function in terms of preserving collective identity, perpetuating historical events in poetic memory, and strengthening cultural self-awareness. The article extensively analyzes mythological motifs related to mountains, rivers, lakes, and other natural objects, the continuity of ancient cosmogonic ideas, and the formation of the concept of sacred space. In addition, the presentation of historical events such as wars, migrations, and state-building in legend texts with artistic-mythological nuances, the transformation of historical figures into legendary images, and a comparative analysis with written sources are conducted. The results show that toponymic legends, as a genre that combines the synthesis of myth, history, and artistic imagination in the Azerbaijani folklore system, play an indispensable role in preserving national-cultural identity and perpetuating collective memory.

**Keywords:** legend, folklore, mythology, toponymics, history

### Introduction

In the Azerbaijani people's memory, spatial names are not just a geographical indication function, but also become an expression of collective identity arising from the synthesis of historical events and mythological imagination. The top of the mountains, the flow of rivers, the silence of lakes and the names of villages have been preserved as a living memory code of centuries-old culture, cosmogonic imaginations and historical experience. One of the most striking examples of these forms of memory is toponymic legends. They are texts in which historical reality and myth meet in the minds of the people, and fact and artistic fiction are united. The relevance of toponymic Legends is manifested in the important role they play in preserving national-cultural identity and transmitting it to future generations. Legends are not limited to the explanation of geographical names, but also strengthen the spiritual attachment of the people to their land, relive historical trials in poetic language and serve to form a collective consciousness. However, the main methodological difficulty arises in the



study of this genre: how should the boundaries of historical reality be determined by mythological imagination? By what patterns does the mythification of facts or the consonance of myths with history occur? The purpose of the article is aimed precisely at the study of this problem. Here, the scientific explanation and classification of toponymic legends are presented, the poetic function of mythological motives is analyzed, the transformation of historical events and personalities into the image of Legends is investigated, and a comparison of these texts with written historical sources is carried out. Thus, toponymic legends are presented not only as a purely artistic genre of folklore, but also as a complex semantic system that creates a bridge between history and myth. The research methodology is based on mythological-historical comparison, poetic-semantic analysis and source studies approaches. Through these approaches, both the poetic layers of legends are revealed and the aspects of them that resonate or differ from historical facts are revealed. Scientific novelty lies in the assessment of the functional role of toponymic legends in the preservation of national-cultural identity, as a form of memory born from the synthesis of myth and history.

### **Literature review**

The study of toponymic Legends, their interaction with myths and historical memory was the focus of both Azerbaijani and World Science. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the functions of myth in popular memory and its role in collective consciousness have been widely studied (Propp, 2000; Ivanov, Toporov, 1974; Tokarev, 1982). These studies have shown that myth is not only a poetic form of folklore, but also a cultural code, a form of symbolic memory. The first systematic approaches in Azerbaijani folklore date back to the 1970s (Zamanov, 1976). At a later stage, scientists focused on the genre features and semantic possibilities of toponymic legends. Ahmadow (1998) highlighted the function of these texts to preserve historical memory, while Mammadli (2008) investigated the mythological foundations of toponyms. Abbasov (2002) analyzed the legend genre in an important branch of folk literature, and Abdullayev (2010) and Gasimov (2012) opened the issues of mythological descent of geographical space. In modern research, the multi-layered nature of toponymic Legends is one of the main accents. Hajiyev (2015) and Huseynli (2018) showed that



these legends not only explain the origin of toponyms, but also preserve in the memory of the people a poetic outline of historical events such as Wars, migrations, State Building. And in the works of foreign authors (Eliade, 1963; Toporov, 1995; Yakubovich, 2017) toponymy is analyzed in the context of mythology and cultural anthropology, the universal interactions between myth and history are revealed. However, a number of gaps remain in current research. First of all, the mechanism of transformation of historical figures into the image of Legends has not been fully studied. At the same time, a comparative analysis of legend texts and written sources was not carried out deep enough. On the other hand, the role that the poetic-semantic functions of toponymic legends play in preserving national-cultural identity also requires separate attention. Thus, a review of the literature shows that, despite the fact that important scientific results have been obtained on toponymic Legends, their function as a bridge between myth and historical reality, as well as their role in the formation of national identity, has not yet been fully investigated. The novelty of this article lies precisely in the complex analysis of toponymic legends, the synthesis of myth, history and artistic imagination. The roadmap of the article is as follows: the first section presents theoretical-methodological approaches and classification of toponymic legends; the second section examines mythological motives and traces of ancient cosmogonic ideas; the third section analyzes the comparison of historical events and personalities in Legends; The Conclusion section presents the general results obtained.

**Research results.** *The place of toponymic legends in the folklore system*

Toponymic legends constitute a special folklore layer that expresses the organic unity of time and space in the mythical thinking of the people. This type of legends not only carries an explanatory function related to the name of the place, but also artistically preserves the spiritual and historical value that that place has acquired in the people's memory. In scientific literature, toponymic legends are mainly defined as texts aimed at explaining the origin of the names of geographical objects. Their essence is that folk thinking presents the origin of a natural or historical object not only through rational explanation, but also through mythological, poetic and artistic fantasy.



Abbasov notes that the genre feature of toponymic legends is that they preserve the semantics of space, turning it into a part of mythical time in the collective memory [1, p. 45].

The classification of toponymic legends is also of great importance for research. In the literary tradition, these legends are usually divided into three main groups: those associated with natural objects (mountains, lakes, rivers, caves, etc.), those associated with historical figures and events, and those associated with places of religious and mythological character. Huseynli writes that this classification allows us to understand both the semantic and poetic structure and reveals the multilayered nature of the genre [6, p. 72]. Thus, toponymic legends are not only an explanation of geographical names, but also a genre that preserves the historical and cultural codes of the folk worldview.

The genre features of legends in Azerbaijani folklore, especially the toponymic layer, are characterized by the synthesis of both mythological and artistic structures. Zamanov shows that legends, unlike fairy tales, retain more connection with real places and events in their content, but their presentation is dominated by artistic fiction and mythological motifs [14, p. 128]. This feature allows them to have the status of “reality” in the public consciousness and to be perceived as a product of poetic mythical fantasy. Unlike other genres, spatial descriptions in legends carry the main functional load. Here, space is not just a physical geographical object, but also a carrier of spiritual experience, historical memories and religious-mythological ideas.

The sacralization of geographical space in collective memory is one of the main functional features of toponymic legends. Human societies have perceived certain natural objects not just as places, but as sacred centers, points of cosmic balance. Eliade calls this the “mythological code of sacred space” and shows that such places are preserved in historical memory through legends [4, p. 97]. In Azerbaijani folklore, the presentation of mountains as a symbol of divine power, rivers as a symbol of life and abundance, and lakes as a door to a mysterious and sacred world is a vivid example of this phenomenon. Mammadli emphasizes that these places are not only natural objects in the public imagination, but also bearers of moral and spiritual values [8, p. 54]. In this regard, toponymic legends play an important role in the formation of collective



identity, the preservation of national memory, and the strengthening of cultural self-awareness.

Thus, toponymic legends constitute a special stage in the folklore system: in addition to explaining the name of a place, they combine mythological and historical layers, transmitting the people's memory from generation to generation in the form of a sacralized poetic text.

*Mythological layer: a model built by the artistic imagination on a historical space*

One of the most important layers of Azerbaijani toponymic legends is their mythological foundations. In folk thought, geographical space is not only a physical object, but also a plane of expression of mythical time, cosmogonic ideas and artistic imagination. In the text structure of legends, the description of natural objects such as mountains, rivers, lakes, caves is presented not as a purely natural phenomenon, but as a carrier of ancient mythological codes. Huseynli shows that the poetic depiction of these objects in folklore texts is an expression of the spiritual connection between nature and the people's worldview, of the cosmic harmony of man with his living environment [6, p. 104].

The mountain cult is a manifestation of the oldest mythological ideas in Azerbaijani folklore. Mountains are depicted as symbols of both divine power and human resistance. In legends, the formation of a mountain is sometimes associated with the result of sin, and sometimes with the activity of a holy person. This approach is widespread not only in Azerbaijani, but also in the pan-Turkic mythological tradition. Tokarev notes that the mountain is a place where a person approaches God and feels sacred power [11, p. 215]. For example, in the legends about Lake Goycha, the collapse of the mountain and its transformation into water are associated with human sin, thus presenting both a cosmic natural phenomenon and a moral message together.

River and lake motifs also occupy an important place in the mythological layer of toponymic legends. The fact that the water element is a symbol of abundance, life and purification is a continuation of ancient mythological ideas. Gasimov shows that in legends about the names of rivers, the idea that they originated from a divine origin is at the forefront, which proves that legends preserve the sanctity of water in the



collective consciousness [10, p. 143]. For example, in legends about the Kura and Araz rivers, their non-meeting is explained mythopoetically by the motif of “love and prohibition”. This plot serves both to exert emotional influence and to convey moral values.

The survival of ancient cosmogonic ideas in toponymic legends requires special attention. In legends, motifs such as the creation of the world, the struggle between space and chaos, and the creation of balance between the elements of nature are reflected openly or secretly. Propp associates this phenomenon with the main function of myth and notes that myth is an artistic answer to man's initial questions about the universe [9, p. 89]. In Azerbaijani folklore, the creation of lakes as a result of a “divine tear”, the description of mountains as “lifted by God” or caves as “doors to the secret world” indicate the poetic continuity of cosmogonic ideas.

The concept of sacred space and “sanctified nature” also occupies a special place in the mythological layer of toponymic legends. According to Eliade, the declaration of a certain place as “sacred” for a person is not only a geographical phenomenon, but also a part of a cosmic model [4, p. 112]. In Azerbaijani legends, this is clearly seen in the presentation of mountain peaks as “hearths”, lakes as “points of contact with the mysterious world”, and trees as “embodiments of divine existence”. Mammadli writes that by sanctifying these places, the people endow them with not only historical, but also religious and spiritual value [8, p. 139]. From this point of view, toponymic legends are not only a product of mythological memory, but also one of the main means of cultural self-awareness of society.

As a result, mythological motifs related to mountains, rivers, lakes and other natural objects, the continuity of cosmogonic ideas and the concept of sacred space enrich the artistic structure of toponymic legends. In these legends, the artistic imagination builds a model on historical space in which both myth, history and spiritual codes are preserved in unity.

*Historical reality: the connection of legends to historical events and personalities*

The essence of legends is not only mythological ideas, but also a poetic reflection of real historical facts. Folk memory has often preserved historical events not as dry





facts, but through the filter of artistic imagination, mythological codes and symbolic manifestations. In this regard, toponymic legends serve as an important source for both historiography and folklore. Ahmadov shows that in legends, events related to wars, migrations and state building are experienced in symbolic spaces chosen by folk memory and transmitted to future generations [3, p. 65].

Legends about wars are usually connected with the names of certain fortresses, mountain passes or strategic places. In these legends, traces of specific historical events - invasions, defensive battles and heroic epics are visible. For example, the legends circulating around the Ganja fortress carry not only the strategic position of the city, but also the mythologized traces of the wars that took place here in the collective memory. In such legends, historical facts are synthesized with artistic images, preserving both the spirit of heroism and a deep imprint of that event in the memory of the people [1, p. 112].

Toponymic legends related to migrations are also widespread in Azerbaijani folklore. The people expressed the tragedies experienced during migrations, the pain of exile, and the process of settling in new places through the language of legends. According to Gasimov, in such texts the geographical space is presented as both a witness to a historical event and a carrier of collective emotional memory [10, p. 189]. For example, in the Karabakh region, legends related to the “Migration Stone” or “Girls’ Spring” are not limited to the names of natural objects, but also symbolize the pain experienced by the population during the migration process.

Legends about statehood are an important indicator of the historical consciousness of the people. In them, the formation of certain cities or villages, the activities of rulers, and administrative traditions are presented in combination with mythological moments. Mammadli writes that in legends about statehood, the image of rulers is perceived as a “symbol of justice and power” rather than a historical figure [8, p. 97]. This approach proves that the people live historical facts in the context of spiritual values. For example, legends about the origin of the name of the city of Nakhchivan not only provide a geographical explanation, but also connect the personality of the prophet Noah with national identity, turning it into a historical-mythical symbol.



Thus, the manifestation of real historical facts in toponymic legends is connected with three main directions - wars, migrations and state-building. These events are reconstructed in the light of artistic imagination in the folk mind, but their historical core is preserved, becoming an integral part of the collective memory. This feature both determines the genre specificity for folklore studies and serves as an alternative source for historiography.

*The transformation of historical figures into legendary figures*

One of the most striking features of toponymic legends is the transformation of real historical figures into artistic-mythological images in the people's memory. The people keep alive the rulers, commanders and saints who have left their mark in history not only through their actual activities, but also through the mythological ideas formed around them. This serves both to preserve historical memory and to strengthen spiritual and cultural identity. Abbasov notes that in the oral memory of the people, historical figures are not only “heroes of the past”, but also have the function of “mythified symbols” [1, p. 173].

The image of the commanders comes to the fore, especially in toponymic legends related to wars. In the legends related to the names of heroes such as Babek or Javanshir, real historical events take on a mythological shade through artistic imagination. For example, in the legends about Babek, the caves where he hid or the fortresses he defended are transformed into geographical objects and are sacred in the people's memory. These objects are perceived not only as historical places, but also as the embodiment of the heroic spirit [3, p. 119]. Thus, the image of the commander becomes both a symbol of popular resistance and a poetic protector of historical facts.

In legends about holy persons, the religious-spiritual aspect prevails. Countless holy places, sanctuaries and springs in the geography of Azerbaijan are named after holy people. In these legends, real personalities are described as people chosen by God and endowed with miraculous powers. Eliade calls this phenomenon “identification of sacred personalities with the cosmic center” and notes that such images become the main means of sanctifying space [4, p. 136]. For example, in legends about the Bibiheybet shrine, the name of a historical figure is combined with the belief system





of the people and acquires both a religious and a social identity function.

Legends about rulers reflect the mythologized image of the idea of statehood and justice in the popular mind. Mammadli shows that in Azerbaijani legends the image of the ruler is often presented as a symbol of justice, fertility and protective power [8, p. 102]. For example, in legends about Shirvanshah or Atabeys, which are also reflected in the works of Nizami Ganjavi, real political figures are depicted in the popular consciousness as carriers of divine wisdom and culture. Toponymic legends (legends about castles, bridges, fortresses) that arise around these images serve both to preserve historical facts and to idealize the tradition of national statehood.

Thus, the process of transforming historical figures into legendary images occupies an important place in the genre specificity of toponymic legends. Through these images, the people preserve historical events and individuals not only as factual information, but as examples of collective memory enriched with mythical-poetic semantics. On their basis, both historical reality is preserved and moral codes are transmitted to future generations.

#### *Legend text and written sources: a comparative approach*

One of the important issues in the study of toponymic legends is their comparative analysis with written historical sources. The text of the legend is often an artistic and mythological version of historical events preserved in the folk memory, while written sources present a factual, documentary and chronological description of these events. It is accepted in folklore that although the legend does not replace the historical source, when read in parallel with it, it has great value in terms of revealing the reflection of events in the public consciousness [7, p. 88].

Many of the Azerbaijani toponymic legends contain elements that coincide with written sources. For example, the legends about the connection of the name of the city of Nakhchivan with the prophet Noah resonate with the cosmogonic motifs present in the epic “Kitabi-Dede Gorgud” and with the information provided in medieval Arab-Persian sources. Here, while the historical source presents the geographical location and ethnographic descriptions of the city, the legend gives a deeper meaning by linking the religious and mythological ideas of the people with that place [8, p. 143].



Comparison of the texts of legends with written chronicles also reveals interesting results. Propp shows that the legend mythologizes the historical event and expresses it with artistic symbols, while the written source preserves its real description [9, p. 54]. For example, although the legends about Karabakh present the destruction of some fortresses, the resettlement of the people, or the resistance of the heroes in artistic language, the facts of these events are confirmed in chronological order in medieval chronicles. This is one of the examples proving the mutual connection between folklore and history.

The traces of mythological motifs in written sources are also noteworthy. Tokarev emphasizes that in many peoples, mythologized thinking about historical events and personalities has also affected the style of written chronicles [11, p. 299]. This feature is also observed in Azerbaijani sources: in some chronicles, historical personalities are described not only as real rulers, but also as “symbols of justice and wisdom,” which creates the same semantic parallel with folk legends.

Thus, a comparative approach between the text of the legend and written sources shows that both sources complement each other. The legend reveals the artistic-mythological interpretation of historical events by the people, while the written source provides the factual basis for these events. As a result of the parallel analysis of the two, both historical reality and the semantic shades of collective memory are revealed. This approach opens up a fruitful methodological direction for both folklore and historiography.

#### *Interrelationships: a synthesis of myth, history, and artistic imagination*

The process of mythologizing historical events is one of the most characteristic features of Azerbaijani toponymic legends. Folk memory preserves historical facts not only in chronological order, but also through the filter of mythological codes and artistic imagination. As a result, a real event is preserved both in the form of factual reality and a poetic-mythical model. Eliade explains this process as “the transfer of a historical fact into a mythical time frame” and shows that every society seeks to sanctify its historical memory by mythologizing it [4, p. 144].

This feature is clearly visible in Azerbaijani toponymic legends. For example, in



legends about invasion and defensive wars, the fact of the destruction of historical fortresses is not described as it really was, but on the contrary, cosmic and spiritual meanings are attached to these events. In legends about the Ganja fortress, the reason for its fall is interpreted not only as military power, but also as the sin of the people or a divine test [3, p. 142]. Thus, the event ceases to be a historical fact and becomes shrouded in mythological semantics.

The same tendency is observed in legends about migrations and deportations. Gasimov notes that the events of population relocation and settlement in new places are sometimes presented in legend texts as “God’s will”, and sometimes as “punishment for the sins of the people” [10, p. 196]. Thus, a real historical event is explained both by social reasons and by a cosmic-mythological interpretation and leaves a stronger emotional impact on the collective memory.

The mythologizing of historical facts related to the activities of rulers serves to sanctify the tradition of statehood in the public consciousness. Mammadli writes that in the legends associated with the names of some rulers, their historical activities are presented in the form of “divine power bringing justice and blessings” [8, p. 109]. This approach preserves historical reality not as a mere event, but as a bearer of moral codes.

Thus, the process of mythologizing historical events shows that folk memory preserves facts not only in chronological order, but also in the language of mythical time. This both increases the moral value of the event and makes it an integral part of collective identity. This is precisely the main power of toponymic legends: in the synthesis of history, myth and artistic imagination, historical reality is both preserved and enriched with poetic and sacred meaning.

*The new semantic meaning given to historical facts by mythological imagination*

The fusion of historical events with mythological imagination in the folk memory is not limited to preserving their content, but also adds new semantic layers to these events. In legends, historical facts are sometimes presented without losing their original content, but enriched with different spiritual, religious or cosmic symbolic meanings. This serves both to secure a stronger place for the event in the collective memory and to help the people make sense of their own historical experience. Propp notes that



mythological imagination reconstructs the historical fact through an artistic code, making it more effective both emotionally and morally [9, p. 61].

For example, in the folk memory, a historical battle that took place in a fortress is presented not only as a military clash, but also as a “struggle between good and evil”. This mythologized interpretation of a historical fact gives the event a universal semantics and connects it with universal values, taking it out of the framework of a mere local event. Eliade evaluates this situation as a “transition from history to myth” and shows that such a semantic change raises the event to the level of sacred history [4, p. 158].

The new interpretation of migration events in Azerbaijani legends through mythological imagination is also noteworthy. Although the real fact of migration is often associated only with socio-economic reasons, in legends this process is interpreted as a “test of God” or a “fate written in the fate of the people”. Gasimov writes that such mythopoetic explanations add metaphysical meaning to the event, presenting it not only as a historical fact, but also as a spiritual lesson and moral advice [10, p. 202].

Historical facts about rulers also acquire new semantic meaning through mythological imagination. The fact that a ruler founded a city or built a bridge is interpreted in the people's memory not only as an administrative measure, but also as a "triumph of justice" and "the opening of the door of prosperity for the people." Mammadli notes that such mythologized semantics strengthens the tradition of statehood and connects the ruler's activities with the religious and spiritual worldview of the people [8, p. 118].

Thus, mythological imagination expands the semantic framework of historical facts. A historical event, along with factual meaning, is enriched with cosmic, religious and spiritual layers, leaving a deeper mark on the collective memory. In this regard, toponymic legends are not just a verbal description of events, but also one of the most powerful folklore tools for their interpretation.

#### *The role of legends in preserving national and cultural identity*

Legends are not only a product of artistic word art, but also an important means



of preserving the historical memory, cultural values, and identity of the people. They create a spiritual bridge between the past and the present of the people, creating conditions for the perpetuation of historical facts in mythological and poetic form. Tokarev notes that one of the most important functions of mythological thinking is to preserve collective identity and transmit spiritual heritage between generations [11, p. 311]. In this regard, Azerbaijani toponymic legends are one of the main folklore layers that ensure the continuity of national-cultural identity.

The role of toponymic legends in the process of preserving national identity is particularly noticeable in two directions: first, the meaning of the geography inhabited by the people in legends, and second, the sanctification of these places by mythologizing them. Hajiyevev shows that the explanation of toponyms through legends not only explains the origin of geographical names, but also leads to the transformation of these names into carriers of national identity [5, p. 87]. For example, the mythologizing of mountains, rivers and lakes by the people leads to their acquisition of the status of sacred places in national-spiritual identity.

Another important aspect of the role of legends in preserving national and cultural identity is the transmission of historical events and personalities to future generations in a mythic form. Mammadli writes that popular memory often preserves the images of state founders, heroic commanders and holy people not only on the basis of factual information, but also in a poetic and symbolic form [8, p. 122]. This, in addition to strengthening the historical consciousness of the people, allows for the preservation of national values through ideal images. Thus, through legends, historical reality is transmitted from generation to generation not only as informative knowledge, but also as a carrier of spiritual and moral codes.

Legends are also an important tool in presenting national identity within global culture. Yakubovich shows that folklore examples, especially toponymic legends, are internationally accepted as a unique code of national culture [13, p. 204]. In this regard, the study of Azerbaijani toponymic legends as examples that can be included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List shows their role in preserving not only national, but also human cultural identity.



Consequently, the role of legends in preserving national and cultural identity is invaluable both domestically and internationally. They preserve the historical experience of the people in poetic language, transform geographical space into a sacred symbol of national identity, present historical figures with ideal images, and transmit cultural heritage to future generations. Thus, toponymic legends act as an artistic expression of the national self-awareness and cultural identity of the Azerbaijani people.

**Discussion and analysis of results.** The study shows that Azerbaijani toponymic legends are a special layer of folklore, which expresses the synthesis of mythological thinking and historical memory of the people. Compared to the opinions of various researchers[1; 3; 6; 8; 10] it becomes clear that the explanation of Geographical Names is based not only on a rational approach, but also on the sacralization of space, the poetic transformation of historical facts and their transformation into symbolic values in collective memory. The juxtaposition of Legends with written sources proves that the mythification of historical events has a dual function: on the one hand, it serves to preserve facts in memory, and on the other, to enrich them with a new semantic meaning. This feature actualizes toponymic legends both as a sample, which is genre-specific from the point of view of folklore, and as an alternative source of historiography. The results of the discussion show that legends play an important role in strengthening national and cultural identity. Images of historical figures, commanders and holy people are presented in a mythified form, preserving the spiritual values of the people. At the same time, the sacralization of natural objects such as mountains, rivers, lakes strengthens the people's sense of identity regarding land and space. Thus, the analysis carried out proves that toponymic legends are not just a folklore genre, but also an important tool for preserving historical memory, transmitting spiritual values and artistic expression of national identity.

## Conclusion

Toponymic legends are not only examples of artistic words in the Azerbaijani folklore system, but also act as a living code that preserves the historical memory, mythological way of thinking and cultural identity of the people. They exhibit an





organic synthesis of myth, history and artistic imagination. The legend told about each mountain, river, lake and place is not only a description of that geography by the people, but also an expression of their worldview, moral values and national identity. For this reason, toponymic legends serve as an inexhaustible source for both folklore and historiography.

The artistic expression of real historical facts in mythological language, the transformation of historical figures into ideal images, and the sanctification of geographical places in legends show that folk memory was not always satisfied with preserving the fact, but also loaded it with a new semantic meaning. This semantics sometimes manifests itself in the form of cosmic harmony, sometimes religious faith, and sometimes national-moral ideals. Thus, toponymic legends not only explain the name of a place, but also sanctify a historical event, preserving its artistic and spiritual image in the people's memory.

From this point of view, the study of toponymic legends means not only the study of folklore genres, but also finding the key to the process of self-understanding of the people. They not only preserve the identity of the people, their historical path and cultural values, but also pass them on to future generations. Legends are an artistic and poetic passport of national memory, and a living and dynamic expression of national identity. And it is precisely because of these features that they remain and will remain one of the strongest pillars of Azerbaijani culture.

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