

# Ethnonyms in Karabakh Folklore and their Linguistic Characteristics

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**Abstract.** Onomastic units in the language are related to folklore and all spiritual values. Language is not part of a culture, but it accumulates cultural ideas throughout its history, the world and human concepts through linguistic means, in other words, in words, phrases, specific lexical layers, and sometimes even in grammar. Language serves as the material of cultural expression while being the meta-language of culture, which fixes the meanings, motives and interpretations of oral texts in verbal forms. Viewing language as a source of cultural codes, forms of expression of cultural tradition, study and reference for regeneration of ancient culture, along with folklore texts, ceremonies, and folk, would be more accurate.

The ancient history and geography of the people live in the language. The names of ancient tribes, clans and peoples that existed in the homeland of the language speakers have been preserved in folklore examples and have survived to this day. Tribe, folk names - ethnonyms are onomastic units frequently in Karabakh folklore.

Information about Azerbaijan's ancient and medieval ethnonyms can be found mainly in the works of ancient authors and Persian-language texts from the medieval period.

The study of ethnonyms is also helpful from the historical point of view of the Azerbaijani language. The phonetic differences between the written forms of ethnonyms in the sources and their pronounced documents in our toponymy are significant.

The article is based on examples collected and compiled from the book of 10 volumes, "Karabakh: folklore is also a History", published by the Institute of Folklore of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. The etymology of ethnonyms used in Karabakh folklore has been reviewed.

**Keywords:** ethnonym; onomastic; unit; Karabakh; people; tribe.

## INTRODUCTION

Language, perhaps, is the only involuntary witness of times. The experience of generations is most clearly reflected in oral works of folk creativity and folklore.

The interrelation problems between language, folklore, and culture are currently relevant and mainly a priority issue. This is because the oldest notions about the world are recorded in folklore and mythology and influence the formation and reflection of mentality.

The essence of "language" is diverse and multi-dimensional, and it signifies the most colourful artificial and natural means of communication. Moreover, any language is associated with consciousness, thinking, culture, and folklore. These concepts interact in various ways and manifest in different contexts. The folklore examples created by a nation throughout the centuries are conveyed to future generations through the medium of language.

Thus, language is a system of expressing ideas in words with a specific phonetic and grammatical structure and is also a means of communication.

The relationship between language and thinking is one of linguistics and philosophy's "eternal" problems. V. Humboldt drew attention for the first time to the fact that language is not only a means of communication but also a necessary condition for the realization of the thinking process: "Language is an organ of thought, intellectual activity and language are a unified whole" [2, p. 34].

E. Sapir puts forward a slightly different perspective on this topic, "Language constantly follows thought, although its form and structure remain hidden and can be only interpreted under certain conditions" [12, p. 123]. That is why the names of nations, tribes and clans are preserved in the language and passed on to future generations. Exceptionally, such language units are held in folklore examples.

The Folklore Institute of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences has collected samples of oral folk literature from citizens of the Karabakh region. Among the onomastic units used in Karabakh folklore, ethnonyms hold a distinct significance. Various ethnic, tribal, and folk names used in Karabakh folklore provide information about the historical existence of ethnic entities within the Karabakh region. Recently, investigations revolving around specific characters: ethnonyms, micro ethnonyms, macrotoponyms and catoiconyms has become increasingly relevant. This is primarily related to the format of the anthropological paradigm of communicative activity, which assumes the human factor within the context of modern linguistics.

The uniqueness of such a language phenomenon as an ethnonym is indicated by the fact that each ethnos has "a unified territory, real economic relations, a single language (which is possible to change) and a common culture" [16, p. 3]. We can observe positive or neutral associations in the context of ethnonyms within the Azerbaijani language. Some ethnonyms in folklore are used precisely with a positive connotation. Conversely, some are negative. Ethnonyms constitute a part of the lexicon of the Azerbaijani language. Unlike other groups of words in our language, ethnonyms have more ancient phonetic, grammatical, lexical, and semantic features. "Ethnonyms are closely related to the social and political life of the people and emerged throughout the different stages of history. Therefore, during their investigation, more historical written sources are used. The science of history speaks first about tribes,

clans, peoples and nations, and at the same time, it is history itself that gives life to the names of tribes, clans, peoples and nations" [18, p. 335]. In this sense, the past written monuments and works on the history of Azerbaijan are a reliable source for studying ethnonyms within the linguistics framework.

"However, it should be regrettably noted that the historical-philological research on our nation's past tribal and clan names has remained relatively incomplete to this day" [17, p. 75].

"Various sources and studies contain much information about ancient Azerbaijani ethnonyms. Examining these works, sources, and studies reveals that these ethnonyms significantly present more accurate and objective ideas about the Azerbaijani people's origin, past history, and ethnogenesis. The study, investigation, and etymology of ethnonyms is one of the main problems facing Turkology, including Azerbaijani linguistics" [11, p. 89].

Let's look at the ethnonyms encountered in Karabakh folklore and their etymology. These are mentioned in the "Asli and Kerem" saga, narrated in the language of Karabakh nomads:

Bir xalın heyvadı – gəlməz irəngə,  
Bir xalın elçidir gedər *Firəngə*,  
Bir xalın salıbdı aləmi rəngə,  
Bir xalın söhbəti-sazılan gəlir.

[One birthmark, a quince, doesn't reach to a colour,  
One birthmark, a messenger, goes to *France*,  
One birthmark colours the world,  
One birthmark comes with a conversation and saz melody] [9, p. 17].

As we have seen, the name of the French people, one of the indigenous peoples of Europe, is found in folklore examples. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Azerbaijani Turks called the French "Firang". The onomastic units "Firang" and "Firangistan" were also used in M. F. Akhundzadeh's work "Monsieur Jordan and the Dervish Mastali Shah". The linguistic unit "Firang" is colloquially used in the sense of "French".

"Shahbaz Bey: I also bring a gift to Sharafnisa, a skull cup that Firang girls cover their heads. M. F. Akhundzadeh; More beautiful than his language: He knows Firang language. B. Vahabzadeh" [3, p. 220].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ethnonyms based on the norms of the language system require unique research. Ethnonyms, operating in folklore materials, acquire additional connotations and new symbolic meanings. Metaphorical expressions with an ethnic component reflect the national characteristics of peoples, the way of thinking and the perspectives of different ethnic groups.

One of the most common ethnonyms in Karabakh folklore is the ethnonym "Arab". In Karabakh folklore, the ethnonym "Arab" is intensively used. Some ethnonyms reflect a particular people's culture, geography, and nature. For instance, the phraseological combination "Dəvəsi ölmüş ərəb" – "Arab whose camel is dead" containing the ethnonym "Arab" can be considered a purely linguistic idiom. This phraseological expression is used sarcastically about people indifferent to everything, careless, unhappy, poor, and isolated from life. According to Europeans, the camel is perceived as apathetic, stupid and cowardly. However, according to Bedouin Arabs, it is considered the most intelligent and sensitive creature. "The camel is the most universal animal for nomadic Arab life. It is the only means of transport in the Arabian deserts. Its meat, milk, wool, and fur are the most necessary things for the household" [1, p. 262]. Thus, the whole life of an Arab revolves around the camel, and the death of a camel is the greatest tragedy and utmost unfortunate for him. An Arab whose camel is dead is the most unlucky person. This phrase, which initially held a real meaning, has become a metaphor today and turned into an onomastic phraseology containing an ethnonym. Generally, examples of folklore using the ethnonym "Arab" are frequently used in Karabakh folklore.

*Ərəbəm, oxmuşəm, [I am an Arab, I was an arrow,  
Nə dərdi çoxmüşəm. I have endured much pain.*

Gen dünyanın altında Under the wide world's sky,

Kimsəsi yoxmuşəm. I have like no one.

*Ərəb mənəm, ərəb mən. I am an Arab, I am him.*

Halı, günü xarab mən. Whose situation and day is bad

Gen dünyanın altında Under the wide world's sky,

Neynəmişəm, yarəb, mən? What have I done, Oh God,

what have I done?]

*Ərəblər, ay ərəblər, Arabs, hey Arabs,*

Qıldan geyib corablar. Wearing woollen socks,

Ev yanına qoymuyun Don't let it come closer to the house,

Evin yanın xarablar. It will ruin the near-hood of the house.

(camış) (buffalo)

*Ərəb, ərəb ahıyam, Arab, I am an Arabic sigh*

*Ərəblərin şahıyam. I am the king of the Arabs.*

*Ərəb oldu bir kişi, A man became Arab,*

Bağlandı ilan dişi; Closed snake tooth;

Əzizinəm, yüz dərdim, My dear, I have a hundred problems,

Dərmansızdı yüz dərdim. A hundred ailments, no remedy.

*Ərəb gəldi, öc aldı, The Arab came, took revenge,*

Birkən artdı yüz dərdim. Increased a hundred-fold my problems [9, p. 404].

The ethnonym "Arab" originates from the people belonging to the group of Semitic languages living in Eastern Asia and North Africa. The members of this ethnic group are referred to as "ərəb" - Arab in our language. As known from history, during the Arab invasions that began in the 7th century due to the Caliphate's emergence, many Arabs were resettled in territories that became part of the Caliphate, including Azerbaijan. In the sources, there is information that only during the Khazar-Arab wars, Hisham ibn Marwan, in 731, settled forty thousand Arab families who came from the city of Sham (Syria) in Azerbaijan to protect the northern borders. At the next stage, the mass resettlement of Arabs to Azerbaijan was initiated. From this period onwards, anthroponyms and toponyms of Arab origin began to spread in our language. Thus, the Arab ethnonym entered our lexicon as a male name: "A week away. After he passed, he has said that there is a winter mountain of *Chalabi* somewhere". "He travels around Turkey for three years. He finds the *chalabi* is there" [8, p. 431].

*Chalabi* is from the Turkic word "*chelep*". It carries several meanings in Azerbaijani: 1. Allah, God; 2. Sir, master, gentleman; 3. Educated, enlightened, well-mannered; 4. It was appealing, charming, and elegant. There is information in the sources that it is the name of one of the Turk tribes. In the early years of the Ottoman Empire, it is known that princes, individuals of the Mawlawi lineage, and many scholars bore the title of *Chalabi*. In Russian linguistics, there are also no-

tions about its potential as an ethnonym. In Russian linguistics, even the name of the city of Cheljabinsk, located in the Ural region of Russia, is associated with the ethnonym of Chalabi. In Azerbaijan, Chalabi is considered to be an ancient male given name. It existed as a personal name in the 16th century. According to the Azerbaijani poet Gasim Anver, the word Chalabi means beloved (by all) in the Sufi sect, God. However, in "Khulaseyi-Abbasi", this word is shown in the meaning of writer, poet, connoisseur and similar. In V. Radlov's dictionary, Chalabi is related to the Ottoman and Chagatai languages. One of the bearers of the name, Haji Chalabi Khan (?-1755), a prominent political figure and talented general, went down in history as the founder of the independent Sheki Khanate. In the 18th century, during the attack on Shaki by Nader Shah, he fiercely resisted and prevented the Georgian rulers from invading Azerbaijani territories, and he is remembered for his courage.

There have been many famous personalities in Turkey who bear the name Chalabi. The renowned traveller Ovliya Chalabi of the 17th century, scientist Katib Chalabi, poets Suleyman Chalabi and Jafar Chalabiç, and others who lived and created in the fifteenth century. In the Azerbaijani anthroponymy, the name Chalabi, once found in archaic personal terms, is now only present in surnames. The prevalence of surnames derived from the male word Chalabi indicates that until the recent past, the name was widely spread. There is also a village named Chalabi in the Jabrayil district area.

The word "Rus" was first used as the state's name in the Russo-Byzantine Treaty of 911. Before that, there was a Russian ethnonym (as the name of the people). According to the "Primitive Chronicle" written at the beginning of the 12th century, this word is derived from the tribes of the Varyags called Rus, who were invited by the Slavs (Slovenes, Krivichi) and the Finno-Ugrics in 862 as mediators to settle inter-tribal conflicts. As mentioned in the chronicle sources, the Russian state of the Eastern Slavs emerged from the names of the tribes known as "rus": "What I have to do with it? It was iron that *Urus* smelted. What does it have to do with me?"

Until the Slavs invited the Varangians, the Slavic tribes living in the region where the "first Russian state" would be formed lived under their names. One of the ancient Russian chroniclers, Nestor (also known as Nestor the Chronicler),

who became a monk at the beginning of the 12th century, notes that "from those Varyags, the name Rus land was born" [5, p. 14].

*Georgian* ethnonym expresses the people who make up the main local population of Georgia and speak one of the Ibero-Caucasian languages and the people belonging to this nation: One day when Nadir Shah attacked *Georgia*, the Georgians ran away and hid in a ravine so that Nadir Shah could not catch them [8, p.91].

*Tarakama* ethnonym. Probably, the plural form of the word "Turkman" in the old Arabic language had two forms: "Turkman" and "Tarakamun". In Sami languages, the plural form is obtained not only using suffixes but also by changing the structure of the word. For example, the plural form of the word "Turk" is "atrak", and the words "Turkman" and "tarakamun". The latter variant is currently out of use in Arabic, and the word "Turkman" means both singular and plural forms in Arabic:

"Our people had good customs. They would help those who fell back. In *Tarakama*, there was such a thing. When a person faced hardships, the community gathered, saying, "We are a hundred houses. We will give a lamb to someone" [8, p. 76].

Thus, the word "tarakama" is derived from the word "Turkman" [14, p. 27]. However, in Ottoman archival documents, unlike the sedentary population, nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes are mentioned under the name "Turkman" or "Yoruk" [4].

**Lahij ethnonym.** In the 18th and 19th centuries, *Lahij* was one of Azerbaijan's coppersmithing and weapons production centres. Crafts (*dolcha*, *sell*, *sarnic*, *majmegi*, *serpuk*, *guyum*, *ashsuzen*, *kafkir*, bowl, glass, pot, lamp and others) made of copper by Lahij artisans and decorated with intricate and delicate designs are known in Central Asia, Dagestan, Georgia, Iran, Turkey and other places. According to the chamber census conducted in 1859-1864, 5,228 people (2,889 men and 2,339 women) of ethnic groups of tat people lived in Lahij village of Shamakhi district of Baku governate in 598 houses:

"*Lahij* people went to gather firewood. A person with firewood on the donkey's back approaches them. They think about how to break the donkey's back so he can't carry the firewood" [8, p. 344].

*Kabirli* ethnonym. "When the *Kabirli* people went to the mountain - a nomadic tribe - they went to the village of Galaychilar in Aghjabedi and passed there. One of the *Kabirlis* sees that something is shining on the head of that chariot. Something is shining on the hand of this woman" [6, p. 346]. G. Geibullayev separates the word "ar" in this ethnonym. The Turkish word *ar* (*er*) means "man, husband, hero". *Kabars* lived in Azerbaijan under the name of *Kabarli* or *Kabirli*. One of the main areas where they lived was Karabakh: "One day, he says, one of the wives of the *Kabirlis* took flour from the sack from the other side of the pole. The pole remains between her arms. She raises an uproar; so how can I take my hand out? Also, there is flour in her hand. Thus, the elder (leader of the tribe) is called" [6, p. 348].

"Currently, *Kabri* ethnotoponym remains near the Kasakh River, the former Tavus River, in the Artashat district of Armenia. In addition, the *Kabri* toponym confirms the migration of the *Kabars* to the Shamkir zone, geographically close to Tovuz" [13, p. 75].

*Khakhol* (*xaxol*) ethnonym. In the past, the term *khakhol* was used to refer to the Zaporozhian Cossacks living in the Ukraine region. They would shave their heads entirely and leave only a thin, long hair in the back. This was called "khokhol". Furthermore, this hairstyle was a symbol of being from noble lineage and later turned into a derogatory term through time:

"Mindim bozun boynuna, [I rode on the gray's (donkey) neck,

Sürdüm xaxol yoluna. I drove to Khakhol road.

Xaxol yolu min bazar, Khakhol Road is a thousand markets,

İçində meymun gəzər". A monkey walks in it] [7, p. 432].

**Teka ethnonym.** Russian linguist N. A. Baskakov wrote: "The etymology of Turkish ethnonyms is among the most complex issues in Turkology" [15, p. 199]. Indeed, explaining some ethnotoponyms causes significant difficulties. Including the ethnonym "teka". *Tekalis* (people from Teka) are a branch of the *Oguz* belonging to the *Salur* tribe:

"Hajisam was the first to come to that place. He was *Teka - Turkman*. He came from Turkmenistan to Khorasan. He got rich there and looked for good places to preserve his state and wealth. Those places were also well-suited for keeping cattle. They come and reach the Pirjan Bridge.

Hajisam's eyes were blindfolded when he came to Pirjan Bridge" [8, p. 341].

"Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" is replete with historical and ethnographic information regarding the customs, traditions, nomadic way of life, and related subjects that prevailed during its era. One of these nomadic groups mentioned in this context is the "Teka" people from the *Oghuz* tribe. Teka means "goat". This ethnonym is of totem origin. According to Khiva Khan Abul Ghazi, the Teka tribe traces its lineage from the *Salur* branch and is the name of one of the tribe leaders. It is accepted that the *Salur Oghuz* descend from the *Uchogs* branch (left branch) of Dag Khan, the son of *Oghuz Khan*. *Salur* conveys the meaning of "those who conquer lands" and implies a migratory lifestyle. The state of Gazi Burhaneddin, which ruled around Sivas, Erzincan, Kayseri and Tokat in the 14th century, belongs to the *Salur* tribe. The *Salurs* predominantly dwelled around the Caspian Sea and spread from there to Khorasan, Central Asia, and Anatolia. In the name of the tribes within the *Salur*, the names of places, fields to be cultivated, villages and settlements in the Caspian region, the ancestral land of the *Salur*, are still alive today. The historical abode of the *Tekke* tribe was situated along the western shores of the Caspian Sea. The lineage of *Tekalis* goes back to the *Salur* branch, to the era of *Ghazan Khan*. *Tekelis* is known as a brave Turkish warrior. The famous Turkman horse *Ahal-Teke* is connected with the name of the *Teke* people. Driven by historical contingencies, the *Teka-Turkmen* have established their abodes across various nations, from the east to the west, finding habitation from Antalya to regions as distant as China. The *Teke* tribe is also called *Tekles* (*Tekla* people). The *Teklas* were previously part of the *Oghuz* tribe union and lived in the territory of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Turkey. The land along the coast between Antalya and Fethiye, one of the most prominent resort areas in the world, is known as *Tekla* lands.

The onomastic units resonating with the name of the *Tekali* tribe are still preserved today. Examples of this are *Teke Shikh* (currently called *Gultepe*) in the Guba region of Azerbaijan, *Turkmen* in the Barda region, *Tekali* village in the *Khizi* region, *Tekali* village in the *Marneuli* district of the *Borchali* region of Georgia, and *Tekali* village in *Derachichek* district of Armenia.

The etymology of the ethnonym *Tekla* is the name of 5 villages in different regions of Azerbai-

jan and one town in Georgia. It was one of the Turkic-speaking tribes. Part of the Tekla tribe lives in the territory of South Azerbaijan, engages in cattle breeding, and spends the winter in Mughan and the summer in the pastures of the Savalan mountains.

The etymology of the *Tekla* ethnonym remains unrevealed. Some researchers associate it with the name of the Tekali tribe of the Seljuk Oguz. The "Teka" tribe still lives in the territory of Turkmenistan, which became the totem of that tribe (from the word "teka" – "male goat", "a goat that walks in front of the herd").

The Tekla tribe that lived in the territory of Azerbaijan is not local. In the year 1540, the Tekla tribe led by Gazi Khan came to Iran from Turkey. It incorporated into the court of Shah Tahmasp I. Shah moved some of the Tekali to the territory of the current Salyan region to live permanently. At the beginning of the 20th century, this tribe was a tribe consisting of 14 tribes: Talibkhanli, Boshjalar, Budagli, Bulutlu, Hajili, Evdeler, Khalafgulular, Aghamalilar, Muradkhanli, Murtulu, etc. In addition, some of these tribes consisted of smaller parts. This tribe spends summer in the mountains of Muradtepe, Kechaltepe, Syrtyeri, Sarchali, etc. of Lesser Caucasus, mountains of Kalbajar region Agchingyl, Gotur Istisu, Muhurtalayan and Chal Bair, Tepesideshik, and the winter in the Mughan plains.

## CONCLUSIONS

Exciting research has been conducted on the etymology of various individual Turkic ethnonyms. When reviewing the scientific literature, it becomes clear that there has been limited work in-

vestigating Azerbaijani ethnonyms at this level. So far, the origin of several ethnonyms has been touched upon. However, most ethnonyms encountered in various sources and literary works, including fiction literature, have not been subject to any scholarly discussion.

Information about Azerbaijan's ancient and medieval ethnonyms can be found mainly in the works of ancient authors and Persian-language texts from the medieval period.

The study of ethnonyms is also helpful from the historical point of view of the Azerbaijani language. The phonetic differences between the written forms of ethnonyms in the sources and their pronounced documents in our toponymy are significant.

Investigating the lexical-semantic features of ethnonyms used in Karabakh folklore provides exciting insights into language history and modern literary language.

"The study of Azerbaijani ethnonyms in the linguistic and historical direction shows that they originated in more ancient times than other onomastic units. The analysis of ethnotoponyms, ethnohydronyms and ethnoanthroponyms proves this aspect. This can be confirmed simultaneously when considering the phonetic composition of ethnonyms" [10, p. 73].

In etymology, one of the most challenging areas of linguistics, it is now one of the most essential tasks to give an objective opinion in the studies conducted. We thought it would be more appropriate here to provide brief information about only a few ethnonyms.

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