

Toponymic Legends of the Goycha and Zangezur Regions

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| Keywords | Abstract |
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| Western Azerbaijan Toponymic Legends Collective Memory Ethnogeography Goycha Zangezur Folklore Ashig | This article explores the ethno-cultural significance of toponymic legends within the Western Azerbaijani regions of Goycha and Zangezur. By examining oral traditions, folk etymologies, and the “memory of the land,” the study analyzes how geographic names serve as historical archives for the Azerbaijani population. The research highlights the duality of these legends: as both mystical narratives involving giants, heroes, and sacred springs, and as empirical evidence of long-term habitation. Special attention is given to the role of the Ashig (folk minstrel) tradition in preserving these names through centuries of migration and social change. Ultimately, the paper argues that the toponymy of Goycha and Zangezur constitutes a “spiritual map” that remains a central pillar of Azerbaijani collective identity. |

Introduction

The relationship between a people and their geography is never merely physical; rather, it is profoundly linguistic and mythological. In the context of Western Azerbaijan—particularly the historic regions of Goycha and Zangezur—the landscape is imbued with what may be described as “living names.” Every peak, valley, and spring carries a narrative explaining its origin, often blending historical reality with elements of the supernatural. These narratives, commonly referred to as toponymic legends, function as a primary mechanism for preserving the historical and cultural memory of a community (Khalilov, 2018).

Goycha, widely recognized as the spiritual center of the Ashig musical tradition, and Zangezur, characterized by its rugged terrain, fortresses, and ancient stone monuments, represent two distinct yet interconnected folkloric zones. For the Azerbaijani people, these regions are not merely geographical entities but symbolic landscapes shaped by the legends of *Dede Korkut*, the

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resonance of heroic epics, and the lyrical expressions of folk poets such as Ashig Alesker (Bayat, 2003).

However, toponymy in these regions extends beyond storytelling; it operates as a cultural defense mechanism. In the face of historical transformations, displacement, and the renaming of geographical features, oral tradition serves as a resilient and enduring record. When local inhabitants recount why a mountain is called “Aghdagh” or why a spring bears the name of a saint, they assert a form of historical continuity that transcends shifting political boundaries (Geybullayev, 1991).

This article aims to categorize the dominant motifs of Goycha and Zangezur folklore, with particular emphasis on hydronymic myths and their cultural significance. In the folklore of Western Azerbaijan, Goycha is not merely a geographic location but a spiritual landscape. The hydronymic myths—legends associated with water bodies—form a foundational element of this identity. The lake is frequently depicted as a celestial mirror, a source of divine inspiration, and a symbol of moral purity.

An analysis of the folklore of the Goycha and Zangezur regions reveals several distinctive features that differentiate them within the broader framework of Turkic and Caucasian traditions. These features function as cultural “markers” of Western Azerbaijani identity, combining the harshness of mountainous environments with the lyrical sensibility of lake-centered traditions.

The key characteristic features may be outlined as follows:

1. The Primacy of Ashig Art as a Historical Record

In these regions, the Ashig (folk minstrel) serves not merely as a performer but as a custodian of collective memory.

- **The Goycha School:** Known for its technical sophistication and philosophical depth, particularly under the influence of Ashig Alesker, whose works often include *gozelleme* (odes to nature) portraying Lake Goycha as a living, inspirational entity.
- **Improvisation:** A defining feature is *deyişmə*—a poetic duel between Ashigs—where performers demonstrate their knowledge of history, geography, and folklore through improvisational verse.

2. “Petrification” Motifs (Stone Folklore)

Zangezur, in particular, is characterized by a strong “lithic” (stone-centered) cultural consciousness.

- **Living Statues:** Folklore often presents ancient stone figures, such as rams and horses, as petrified guardians or warriors.
- **Anthropomorphism:** Mountains and rocks are frequently attributed human qualities, including emotions such as grief, anger, and protectiveness.



3. Toponymic Narrative Anchoring

One of the most distinctive features of the region's folklore is its precise geographical grounding. Unlike abstract or universal narratives, these stories are closely tied to specific locations.

- Folklore is anchored in identifiable places—"at the foot of Mount Ishikhli" or "by the spring of Cold Water."
- This localization transforms geographical features into cultural landmarks, reinforcing historical presence and identity.

4. Dualism of Heroism and Melancholy

The emotional tone of the folklore oscillates between two contrasting yet complementary dimensions:

- **Epic Resilience (Heroic Dimension):** Narratives featuring figures such as the Alps (mythical giants) and Koroğlu reflect the defensive and resilient spirit of communities living in mountainous terrain.
- **The "Garib" Sentiment (Lyrical Dimension):** A pervasive sense of longing (*hasret*) and nostalgia is expressed in *bayaty* (folk quatrains), often portraying the homeland with the emotional depth reserved for a lost loved one.

5. Hydro-Spiritualism

In the Goycha basin, water assumes both physical and spiritual significance.

- **Sacred Springs:** The region is characterized by numerous healing springs, often associated with sacred sites and believed to be protected by supernatural forces.
- **The Lake as a Moral Mirror:** Folklore frequently portrays Lake Goycha as reflecting the moral and spiritual condition of the people—becoming turbulent in times of conflict and serene during periods of harmony.

Summary of Regional Distinctions

The distinctions between Goycha and Zangezur folklore can be summarized through their dominant symbolic systems and cultural expressions.

- **Dominant Medium:** Goycha emphasizes music and verse (the saz), while Zangezur foregrounds myth and monument (stone).
- **Spiritual Center:** Goycha is centered around the lake, symbolizing horizontal infinity, whereas Zangezur is defined by mountain peaks, representing vertical authority.
- **Key Character:** The wise poet (Ozan/Ashig) dominates Goycha, while the giant or warrior (Alp) is central to Zangezur.



- **Nature Motif:** Goycha reflects purity and introspection, while Zangezur embodies strength and echo.

6. The “Dede Korkut” Connection

The folklore of these regions represents a living continuation of *The Book of Dede Korkut*. Many place names and tribal narratives directly correspond to Oghuz Turkic epic traditions, positioning the region as a “living museum” of ancient mythological consciousness (Bayat, 2003).

To deepen the analysis of Western Azerbaijani folklore, two central pillars emerge: the poetic legacy of Ashig Alesker in Goycha and the system of animal totems and heroic symbolism in Zangezur.

The “Alesker Effect”: Goycha as a Poetic Sanctuary

In Goycha, folklore is inseparable from the figure of Ashig Alesker (1821–1926). Although historically real, he has transcended into a semi-mythical cultural archetype.

- **Nature as Divine Dialogue:** Alesker’s poetry transforms geography into a symbolic language. Descriptions of fragrant mountain air or crystal-clear springs are not merely aesthetic; they function as acts of cultural “naming” that sacralize the land.
- **Master–Apprentice Continuity:** The *ustad–shagird* (master–apprentice) tradition ensures the transmission of oral heritage. This system preserves the distinct “Goycha style,” characterized by a reflective, often melancholic musical tempo.
- **The Myth of the “Saz-Chest”:** Folklore attributes mystical qualities to the saz, suggesting that its melodies can heal illness or calm storms, reflecting deep connections to shamanistic traditions.

Animal Totems and Heroic Symbolism in Zangezur

In contrast, Zangezur’s folklore is rooted in ancient Turkic totemic systems, particularly the ram, horse, and wolf.

- **The Cult of the Ram (Qoç):** Stone ram monuments found in cemeteries symbolize bravery and youth (*yiğitlik*). Folk beliefs suggest these figures transmit strength and courage.
- **The Horse as a Companion:** In heroic narratives, the horse—such as Koroğlu’s Gırat—is depicted as an intelligent and almost supernatural ally, emphasizing the historical importance of mobility and warfare.
- **The Gray Wolf (Bozkurt):** The wolf appears as a guide and protector, reflecting its central role in Turkic mythological origins and identity (Seyidov, 1994).

The Synthesis: “The Spirit of the Land”

These symbolic systems together form a unified worldview:



- **The Saz (Music):** The “voice” of the landscape
- **The Stone (Sculpture):** The “memory” of the landscape
- **The Spring (Water):** The “soul” of the landscape
- **The Fortress (Ruins):** The “will” of the landscape

Thus, Western Azerbaijani folklore represents a culture of continuity. Whether expressed through the melodic patterns of Ashig music or the silent endurance of stone monuments, the land itself functions as a living witness to history, ethics, and collective resilience.

The Primordial Origin: The Overflowing Spring

A recurring motif in Goycha hydronymy is the myth of the “Sacred Source” or “Forgotten Lid.”

- **The Legend:** A young maiden, having drawn water, forgets to close the spring with its stone lid. The water overflows, submerging the valley and forming Lake Goycha.
- **Symbolism:** This narrative portrays the lake as a living entity—both a blessing and a manifestation of nature’s uncontrollable power.

Purity and the “White Wave”

The theme of purity is central in Goycha folklore, especially in *bayaty* traditions.

- **The Moral Mirror:** The lake is believed to reflect the moral condition of society. In times of injustice, it becomes turbulent; in times of harmony, it regains clarity.
- **Ritual Practice:** During the pre-Novruz *Chaharshanbe* rituals, people performed water-crossing ceremonies, believing that water purified both body and spirit.

The Cradle of the Saz: Poetic Inspiration

Goycha’s hydronymy is deeply linked to poetic creativity.

- **The Master’s Vision:** Ashigs, especially Alesker, perceived the rhythm of the lake’s waves as a source of poetic meter.
- **Spiritual Geography:** The lake is viewed as a bridge between the physical and metaphysical worlds, where reflections symbolize a doubling of reality and sacred harmony.

Key Hydronymic Symbols in Goycha Folklore

- **Blue (Göy):** Represents sky, eternity, and Turkic cosmology
- **The Silver Trout:** Symbolizes hidden abundance and vitality
- **The Unfrozen Spring:** Represents continuity and the enduring warmth of ancestral life



The Melancholy of the “Lost Water”

In contemporary interpretations, hydronymic myths have acquired an additional emotional dimension—*gariblik* (exile and longing).

The “Blue Sea” is no longer only a physical entity but a symbol of a lost homeland. Its waters now carry collective memory, preserved through songs, narratives, and oral traditions, reflecting both cultural continuity and historical displacement.

The Oronymic (Mountain) Legends of Zangezur

In the rugged topography of Zangezur, mountains are not merely geological formations; rather, they are perceived as living, breathing ancestors. The oronymic legends (mountain-related myths) of this region portray peaks as sentient guardians—warriors who have stood watch over the Azerbaijani people for centuries (Seyidov, 1994).

Within Zangezur folklore, the boundary between a mountain and a hero is often indistinct. The jagged silhouettes of the Lesser Caucasus are frequently described as “Koroğlu’s back” or as “sleeping giants” of the Oghuz Turks.

- **The Guard of the Border:** Mountains such as Kaputjukh and Ishikhli are personified as “sentinel fathers.” Folklore suggests that these peaks “grow taller” during times of war to conceal local populations within their mist, and “shrink” during times of peace to allow sunlight to warm the valleys.
- **The Concept of “Dagh” (Mountain) as Honor:** In oral poetry and regional dialects, referring to a person as a “mountain” represents the highest form of praise. The mountain symbolizes stability, strength, and moral steadfastness, while the expression “to lean against the mountain” signifies reliance on ancestral heritage.

The oronymy of Zangezur is also deeply connected to both pre-Islamic and Islamic spiritual traditions. Many peaks are regarded as *pirs* (sacred sites).

- **Mount Ishikhli (The Radiant Mountain):** According to legend, a divine light descends upon this peak. Those who ascend with pure intentions are believed to receive *nura* (divine illumination).
- **The Legend of the “Stone Guardians”:** Clusters of standing stones found along Zangezur ridges are interpreted as transformed beings—either invaders punished by the mountain or shepherds who chose petrification over betrayal.

The “Zang” and the Echo: Communication through Altitudes

The very name *Zangezur* itself reflects oronymic significance. While its etymology remains debated, a widely accepted folk interpretation links it to a system of acoustic communication.



- **The Bronze Bells:** Folklore recounts that bronze bells (*zang*) were placed on mountain peaks. When danger approached, these bells would resonate across the range—from Goyyan to Kaputjukh—serving as an early warning system.
- **The “Zur” (Power):** The suffix *zur* is commonly interpreted as strength or force. Thus, Zangezur may symbolically be understood as the “strength of the echo,” emphasizing both natural defense and collective vigilance.

The Mountain as a Witness

In *bayaty* (folk quatrains), mountains are often addressed as conscious witnesses to historical events:

Mən aşiq, uca dağlar,
Başı barlı-quca dağlar.
Gələni bura qoymaz,
Keçəni qoca dağlar.

*(I am a lover of the high mountains,
Mountains crowned with abundance.
They do not let the enemy pass,
These ancient, sheltering mountains.)*

This form of personification serves an important psychological function. Even in conditions of displacement, mountains are imagined as enduring guardians, preserving collective memory and awaiting the return of their people.

Comparison of Key Zangezur Peaks in Folklore

- **Kaputjukh:** Represents wisdom and authority
- **Ishikhli:** Symbolizes light and spiritual purity
- **Goyyan:** Embodies vigilance and defense
- **Murovdagh:** Reflects resilience against natural and human challenges

The Interaction of Language and Land: The Linguistic Architecture of the South Caucasus

Toponymic systems in Goycha and Zangezur are not arbitrary; they emerge from a deep interaction between Azerbaijani Turkic linguistic structures and the physical environment. In these regions, language functions as a cognitive framework that organizes and interprets the landscape (Khalilov, 2018).

The Logic of Turkic Toponymy

Azerbaijani toponyms in the South Caucasus follow a descriptive and functional logic rooted in nomadic and pastoral traditions:



- **“Yal” (Mane):** Used for mountain ridges resembling the mane of a horse
- **“Dırsək” (Elbow):** Refers to sharp bends in terrain or river paths
- **“Göz” (Eye):** Denotes the source of a spring (*bulağın gözü*), symbolizing the “vision” of the earth
- **“Arxaç” (Fold):** Indicates flat pastoral zones used for livestock

Color Symbolism in the Landscape

Color terms in Western Azerbaijani toponymy carry deep symbolic meanings derived from Proto-Turkic cosmology:

- **“Ağ/Ak” (White):** Purity, sanctity, and sometimes the northern direction
- **“Göy/Gök” (Blue/Green):** Sky, divinity, and eternity
- **“Qara” (Black):** Strength, magnitude, or density rather than mere color

Folklore as Cultural Memory

By analyzing these linguistic and mythological structures, it becomes evident that folklore transforms geographic space into a meaningful homeland (*Vətən*). To an external observer, Zangezür’s mountains are geological formations; to the cultural insider, they are sentinels of history. Similarly, Lake Goycha is not simply a body of water but a symbolic “Blue Mirror” reflecting poetic and emotional identity.

Toponymic legends function as a form of cultural “DNA,” preserving collective memory even in the context of displacement. In this framework, the landscape is not passive but actively participates in historical narration.

The Goycha Region as a Symphony of Water and Stone

Goycha is not merely a geographical basin; it is historically regarded as the cradle of Ashig art—a space where nature and poetic expression are inseparably intertwined. In this region, the natural environment assumes an active, almost performative role, where water and stone become central narrative elements.

The Myth of the Primordial Flood: The Formation of Lake Goycha

The origin of Lake Goycha is interpreted in folklore not as a geological occurrence but as a symbolic event shaped by human action and divine intervention.

- **The Overflowing Spring:** According to legend, a sacred spring once lay at the center of a fertile valley. A young maiden, representing purity, forgot to replace the stone lid covering the spring, allowing the water to overflow uncontrollably.



- **The “Blue” Transformation:** The resulting flood created the lake, whose name derives from the Turkic word *Gök* (blue/sky). The lake is thus perceived as a reflection of the heavens—a “fragment of the sky” embedded within the earth.

Mount Aghdagh: The Protective Elder of the Peaks

Rising above the basin, Mount Aghdagh (“The White Mountain”) occupies a central place in the heroic folklore of Western Azerbaijan.

- **The Personified Guardian:** Unlike distant and impersonal mountain ranges, Aghdagh is depicted as a *Dede* (Grandfather)—a protective elder watching over nearby communities.
- **The Breath of the Mountain:** Folklore suggests that when invaders or “foreign winds” approached, Aghdagh would “breathe” a dense white mist, concealing local inhabitants and disorienting enemies. Even today, sudden fog is interpreted in oral tradition as the mountain “shielding its children.”

The Inscriptions of the Saz: A Musical Geography

One of the most distinctive features of Goycha folklore is the melodic interpretation of geography.

- **Living Monuments to the Ashigs:** Various rocks, cliffs, and meadows are named after Ashigs, particularly Ashig Alesker. These sites are believed to be places where significant poetic works were composed.
- **Geopolitics of Melody:** This phenomenon reflects a form of “musical toponymy,” where landscapes are named according to rhythm, sound, or poetic association. Thus, the terrain itself is perceived as a musical composition, transforming movement through space into a symbolic reading of cultural memory.

The Moral Landscape

In these legends, both water and stone function as moral agents.

- It is widely believed that impure intentions can disturb the natural order: lake water may turn murky, while stones are said to “weep” or “resonate” in response to injustice.
- This belief system reflects an ecological ethics, where the environment is treated as a conscious participant in human morality.

The Zangezur Region: Fortresses, Giants, and the Echo of History

If Goycha represents the lyrical dimension of Western Azerbaijani folklore, Zangezur embodies its heroic and defensive aspect. The region’s mountainous terrain has shaped narratives emphasizing resilience, protection, and ancestral strength.

The Etymology of Resonance: The “Zang” of the Mountains

The name *Zangezur* itself is embedded in folkloric interpretation.



- **The Sound of the Bell:** According to legend, the name derives from “Zang-ezur” (the sound of the bell). Bronze bells were believed to be placed on mountain peaks, creating an early warning system against approaching enemies (Namazov, 2002).
- **The Echo of Defense:** This interpretation portrays the mountains as an integrated defensive network, amplifying sound through natural acoustics.

Govur-Gala: The Architecture of Giants

The ruins of ancient fortresses, known as Govur-Gala, are prominent in Zangezur folklore.

- **The Alp Tradition:** These massive stone structures are attributed to the Alps (mythical giants) described in *The Book of Dede Korkut*. Their scale suggests construction beyond human capability, reinforcing their mythological origin (Bayat, 2003).
- **A Pre-Islamic Echo:** The term “Govur” refers to ancient peoples, emphasizing the deep historical layers embedded within the region’s cultural memory.

Stone Statues: The Petrified Guardians of the Steppe

Zangezur is also known for its zoomorphic stone monuments.

- **The Frozen Heroes:** Beyond their archaeological significance, folklore interprets these statues as heroes who transformed into stone to protect their homeland (Seyidov, 1994).
- **Symbolism:** The ram symbolizes strength and fertility, while the horse represents mobility and the nomadic spirit. These statues are believed to remain spiritually active, guarding the land.

The Socio-Cultural Function of Toponymic Legends

Toponymic folklore in Western Azerbaijan serves essential cultural functions:

1. **Identity Preservation:** Naming geographical features after ancestors or tribal groups establishes a direct connection between people and land (Khalilov, 2018).
2. **Moral Instruction:** Many legends function as ethical narratives, reinforcing values such as honesty, purity, and respect for nature.
3. **Resistance to Erasure:** Oral traditions preserve original place names even when official names change, ensuring continuity of historical memory (Hajiyeva, 2021).

Comparison of Regional Motifs: Goycha vs. Zangezur

- **Primary Element:**
 - Goycha – Water (lake, springs)
 - Zangezur – Stone (mountains, fortresses)



- **Central Symbol:**
 - Goycha – The Blue Mirror / Purity
 - Zangezur – The Bronze Bell / The Giant
- **Common Hero:**
 - Goycha – The Poet (Ashig Alesker)
 - Zangezur – The Warrior (Alp)
- **Dominant Tone:**
 - Goycha – Lyrical and melancholic
 - Zangezur – Heroic and defensive

Time and Space in Western Azerbaijani Folklore

In this folkloric system, time and space function as active and dynamic elements rather than passive settings.

The Concept of Space: The Sacred and the Sentient

Space is structured into three primary zones:

- The **Center** (village, hearth)
- The **Periphery** (mountains, pastures)
- The **Otherworld** (caves, deep waters, ruins)
- **Space as a Living Witness:** Mountains such as Aghdagh and Kaputjukh are portrayed as conscious entities that observe and protect.
- **Verticality:** Elevated spaces represent purity and heroism, while lower spaces correspond to everyday life and hidden forces.
- **Petrification:** In Zangezur, space often represents “frozen action,” where transformation into stone preserves historical memory.

The Concept of Time: Cyclical and Eternal

Time in these narratives is not linear but cyclical and symbolic.

- **Mythic Time (Ulu Zaman):** Events from the past are perceived as continuously present. Stories of Ashigs and epic heroes are experienced as timeless realities.
- **Nature’s Clock:** Time is measured through seasonal cycles, such as migration between *yaylaq* (summer pastures) and *qishlaq* (winter settlements).



The “Stagnant” Time of Ruins

Ruins such as Govur-Gala represent “stagnant time,” where the past is preserved in physical form. These sites function as symbolic gateways connecting present-day observers with mythic history.

The Chronotope of the Homeland

The intersection of time and space—referred to as the *chronotope*—reveals distinct patterns:

- **Goycha:**
 - Space is fluid and reflective (lake-centered)
 - Time is melodic and flowing
- **Zangezur:**
 - Space is rigid and fortified (mountain-centered)
 - Time is monumental and enduring
- **Connection:**
 - Goycha is experienced through sound (music)
 - Zangezur is experienced through sight (monuments)

The “Garib” and the Construction of Atemporal Space

A critical element within these toponymic narratives is the profound transformation of time and space experienced through exile. In the folklore and collective memory of displaced Western Azerbaijanis, the physical geography of Goycha and Zangezur undergoes a transition into what may be termed the “atemporal.” Because physical return is often impossible, the homeland is no longer perceived within linear, historical time; instead, it is preserved in a state of “perpetual spring” or “eternal beauty” within the narrative imagination (Hajiyeva, 2021).

Within this folkloric reconstruction, the homeland is transformed into a form of utopian space—derived from the Greek *ou-topos*, meaning “no-place.” It exists beyond the reach of temporal decay, administrative transformation, or environmental change. This “frozen” landscape fulfills a crucial psychological and cultural function: it preserves Azerbaijani heritage in an idealized and immutable form. By removing the homeland from the flow of time, the narratives of the *Garib* (the exile or stranger) ensure that the cultural identity associated with these regions remains intact and uncorrupted.

In this sense, space becomes a sanctuary of memory—a symbolic domain where the mountain bells of Zangezur continue to resonate and the springs of Goycha never cease to flow. This imagined geography provides a permanent spiritual anchor for a displaced community, reinforcing continuity despite physical separation (Khalilov, 2018).



The “Spiritual Geography”

In the folklore of Goycha and Zangezur, time and space converge to create what may be described as a “spiritual geography.” Movement across the land is not merely spatial but historical and symbolic. A traveler does not simply traverse physical distance; rather, they move through layers of myth, memory, and cultural meaning.

For example, when a site is named “The Fountain of the Forty Maidens,” the location immediately evokes a specific mythic temporality. The name functions as a narrative trigger, collapsing past and present into a unified symbolic experience. Through such naming practices, history is not preserved as a sequence of dates but as a living, animated landscape in which “the stones speak and the water remembers.”

Thus, toponymy becomes a mechanism through which cultural memory is continuously reactivated and transmitted across generations.

Conclusion

The toponymic legends of the Goycha and Zangezur regions represent far more than a collection of regional narratives; they constitute the foundational framework of a collective Azerbaijani identity. These legends function as a bridge between the physical environment and the spiritual consciousness of a people, where the lyrical “blue” myths of Goycha’s waters and the heroic “stone” narratives of Zangezur’s mountains converge.

Through these narratives, Western Azerbaijanis have historically transformed a challenging physical landscape into a deeply meaningful and sanctified homeland (*Vətən*). This transformation reveals an essential socio-linguistic insight: geography is not solely a product of physical terrain but is equally shaped by language, myth, and collective memory (Khalilov, 2018).

While Goycha contributes a lyrical and aesthetic dimension—expressed through Ashig traditions and hydronymic myths—Zangezur provides a parallel narrative of endurance and resilience. Its legends of petrified guardians, resonant mountain bells, and ancient fortresses serve as enduring symbols of cultural continuity.

Together, these dual traditions perform a vital socio-cultural function: they operate as an indelible cultural archive. In the context of displacement and the loss of tangible heritage, this “oral map” remains preserved within collective consciousness. Even when physical access to the land is restricted, the conceptual geography of the homeland endures.

By continuing to name springs, peaks, and settlements in songs, proverbs, and oral narratives, the community ensures that the land continues to “speak” its original Azerbaijani identity. Toponyms such as Goycha, Basarkechar, Gorus, and Sisian are not merely geographical markers; they are vessels of historical memory containing the cultural DNA of a displaced people.



Ultimately, these toponymic legends demonstrate that a homeland is never entirely lost as long as its narratives persist. As long as its stories are transmitted to future generations and its names are spoken with reverence, the cultural essence of the land remains alive. While physical landscapes may change and political borders may shift, the “toponymic soul” of Goycha and Zangezur endures as a permanent and defining element of the Azerbaijani cultural horizon.

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