

Research Article

THE MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF MOUNTAIN CULTURES IN THE NORTHEASTERN REGION OF AZERBAIJAN: TALES, TRADITIONS, AND LEGENDS

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Abstract

One of the oldest and most enduring facets of the national spiritual culture in Azerbaijan is the Mountain Cult. Mountains are seen as living things, bridges between Earth and Heaven, and guardians of the ancestry in this intricate mythological system, which goes beyond simple respect for geography. The Upper World: The peaks, frequently covered in clouds, are the homes of gods or holy spirits. In Azerbaijani mythology, as in other Turk and Caucasian cultures, the mountain serves as the vertical connection between the three realms. The slopes of the Middle World are home to both people and animals. The Lower World: The caverns and mountain base, frequently connected to the underworld or ancestors. This research synthesizes some seminal legends from the Sheki region—"White Silence," "Seven Brothers," and "The Mountain Man", "White rock"—to identify a unified system of indigenous governance. Using Collaborative Ethnography and Functionalist Analysis, the study reveals how these narratives regulate internal social conduct, mobilize external defense, and enforce environmental stewardship. The findings suggest that the personification of the mountain serves as a powerful psychological mechanism for maintaining communal resilience. This study advocates for the "Applied" use of these legends in modern conservation and social mediation efforts within the Caucasus.

Keywords: Collaborative Ethnography, Performance Theory, Sheki Oral Tradition, Environmental Functionalism, Transgenerational Conflict, Caucasian Folk-Law.

Introduction

The Caucasus Mountain is more than just a geographical range; it is a mythical border where the real and the otherworldly worlds meet in Azerbaijan. The fabled Mount Gaf is intrinsically linked to its identity both historically and mythologically. According to Islamic and Eastern mythology, Mount Gaf was a vast range of emerald mountains that surrounded the entire planet and served as the "pillars" holding it in place. Because the emerald light of the Caucasus peaks is reflected in the sky, it has been said that the sky is blue. "The ancient denizens of the Caucasus perceived the art of shepherding as a vocation favored by benevolent deities, enthusiastically bequeathing it from one generation to the next" [Gaffarli, 334]. It indicated where the known world ended. Beyond Caucasus were the "unseen" realms, which were inhabited by the enchanted Simurgh bird, Jinns, and Peris (fairies). Some of the earliest "Titan" myths in human history are set in the Caucasus Mountains: long before the Gar adam (Snowman) mentioned a giant hero Prometheus who was chained to the highest peaks of Caucasus for stealing fire from the gods to serve humanity, this myth was told.

Sheki and its surrounding villages are among the regions of Azerbaijan where oral folk literature, and particularly mythological thinking, is at its richest. The legends collected from the elderly generation living in these areas have reached the present day, having passed through the filters of both history and ancient beliefs.

A prevalent misunderstanding is that people live "outside" of nature, peering in. We are actually intricately entwined with the ecosystems of the planet. Humans have historically played an important role in the ecosystem and can continue to do so, despite the fact that our current impact is frequently portrayed as only harmful. Humans are perhaps the most effective long-distance seed dispersers in history. This is the process of seeds being moved by human activity. We have introduced drought-resistant crops to new regions and carried plant DNA across mountains. Ancient human "refuse piles" (middens) often created nutrient-rich soil patches that supported unique plant communities that wouldn't have existed otherwise. According to Gaffarli, "One of the earliest natural entities revered and worshipped by the Turks was the mountain. Its proximity to the Sky God led their great ancestors to elevate it in their minds and view it as a primary link between humanity and the Creator" [Gaffarli, 326]. Anderson calls for a system of environmental management that "Includes ethical and moral code which builds upon strong human emotions" [Anderson, 3]. According to Bayat, "The image of the mountain in "The Book of Dede Gorgud" is not a description of nature, but is connected to a sacred archetype preserved by epic memory. [Bayat, 3]. The core difference in environmental ethics is anthropocentrism, or human-centeredness, which holds that nature is only valuable when it serves human needs. Here, the "moral code" is centered on sustainability—protecting resources to ensure the survival of humankind in the future. The idea that all living things have intrinsic worth regardless of how useful they are to us is known as biocentrism (life-centered). Non-interference and a profound respect for the right of species to exist are the "moral code" in this context.

“There is a very old conception of verbal art as communication which goes back at least to Plato’s insistence that literature is lies” [Bauman, 292]. Despite the rich oral heritage of the Caucasus, many traditional narratives are frequently relegated to the realm of "literary curiosity" or "children’s fables," thereby stripping them of their original socio-legal and ecological functions. In the Sheki region of Azerbaijan, the legend of "White Silence" represents more than a supernatural myth; it is a fading system of indigenous governance that historically regulated community behavior and environmental interaction. The core problem addressed in this research is the eroding efficacy of traditional pedagogical tools in the face of rapid modernization. As the younger generation shifts away from the "Laws of the Mountain," there is an observable increase in:

Ecological disconnection: The loss of traditional respect for the landscape, leading to deforestation and unsustainable land use.

Social fragmentation: The breakdown of elder-led mediation and the rise of interpersonal conflict within rural settlements.

Ethno-cultural amnesia: The transformation of "living memory" into "static folklore," where the cautionary power of the narrative is lost.

Without an Applied Folklore intervention to analyze and re-contextualize these stories, the sophisticated mechanisms for social harmony and environmental stewardship embedded in Azerbaijani oral tradition risk becoming obsolete. This research seeks to bridge this gap by demonstrating how the "White Silence" can be utilized as a contemporary framework for community-led conservation and restorative justice.

Ultimately, the silence of the Snowy Mountain does not represent an absence of sound, but a presence of history. By listening to what the silence says, modern society can rediscover a sustainable blueprint for living in harmony with both the land and one another.

2. RESEARCH AIMS

Studying the mythological underpinnings of the mountain cultures in northeastern Azerbaijan, particularly in the Sheki region, is similar to removing layers from an extremely complex and ancient tapestry. Due to their millennia of existence at the intersection of the Caucasus, these high-altitude communities have developed a distinctive fusion of folk Islam, Zoroastrianism, and pre-Islamic paganism.

Legends are passed down through "elder-to-youth" oral tradition in many villages surrounding Sheki. As urbanization increases, this "living library" is at risk. The northeastern region is a melting pot of Caucasian Albanian history, Turk influence, and Islam proximity. For mountain dwellers, the landscape isn't just scenery; it's a living entity.

The aims of the research work are:

- To systematically document and archive tales of mountain spirits, local deities, and hero myths before they vanish.
- To trace how ancient Caucasian Albanian motifs or fire-worship symbols have morphed into contemporary folk legends.
- To explore how the geography of the Greater Caucasus (peaks, caves, and waterfalls) shaped the moral and social codes of the people.

Beyond academic curiosity, this research helps define regional identity. In a globalized world, understanding why a village in Sheki performs a specific ritual or tells a certain ghost story provides a sense of continuity and belonging that is vital for cultural tourism and local pride.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a. How the geography of the Greater Caucasus (peaks, caves, and waterfalls) shaped the moral and social codes of the people?
- b. What traditional "taboos" exist in Sheki villages regarding the diversion of mountain springs or the cutting of specific "sacred" trees?
- c. How the mountains change from being geographical features to being places of worship?

4. METHODOLOGY

Both functionalist applied folklore and collaborative ethnography are used in this study's dual-framework methodology. The Sheki region's "White Silence" narrative serves as the primary source of information. The study analyzes the legend's "whispered" delivery using Performance Theory (Bauman, 1977), viewing storytelling as a social contract between the young audience and the elder performer. As a Regulatory System, the story is decoded using the "Applied Folklore" model (Jones, 1994). As a collection of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) markers used for conflict resolution and community resource management, we examine the text more than just as a literary artifact. The concept of "Disappearance-into-Memory" is analyzed from the perspective of Ontological Security, exploring how the environment acts as a tangible repository of collective wrongdoings. Local interpretations are consulted in order to determine how the legend changes to reflect contemporary society.

5. THE LEGENDARY ROOTS OF MOUNTAIN SOCIETIES IN AZERBAIJAN'S NORTHEAST

The process of how mountains became "sacred" in Azerbaijan folklore and human consciousness is a fascinating transition from physical height to metaphysical depth. The gods (weather, sun, stars) lived in the sky, according to prehistoric human reasoning. It was

believed that mountains were the actual points of contact because they are the highest physical points. It makes sense that if the Divine is "up," then the individual on the mountain is "closer" to the Divine. As a result, the mountain transforms into a ladder or a throne instead of just rocks. A mountain's immense size makes a person feel humbled. A feeling of "holy fear" is created by the storms, thinning air, and vertical drops. Revelation is made possible by the "rupture" that the quiet of a summit cause from the commotion of the village. Almost all cultures have a tripartite structure that divides the world into the Upper World (Gods/Light). Middle World- daily life and people. Lower World- chaos and the ancestors. The mountain is the only thing that is present in all three at the same time. Its body is located in the human realm (middle), its peak is lost in the clouds (upper), and its roots are deeply ingrained in the earth (lower). It is therefore the World Axis. According to Seyidov, "A number of Turk peoples, particularly various tribes, viewed such mountains as a great forefather, and occasionally as a great foremother, the beginning and the foundation of their lineage. For this reason, women would cover their heads upon seeing these mountains from a distance and would refer to them as 'father-in-law.' Such a custom also existed in the territory of Nakhchivan [Seyidov, p. 253]. Cafarli wrote that "A mountain is said to be cursed when its water does not flow, its grass does not grow, its deer do not run, and it has no lions or leopards... When these five elements cease their activity and die, the curse takes hold of the mountain—meaning the mountain itself dies. Thus, in the Oghuz epic tradition, the semantemes of water, grass, deer, lion, and leopard, which constitute their concept of a 'living mountain,' represent the spirit and soul of the mountain" (Cafarli, p. 145).

The Northwest of Azerbaijan presents a distinct essence of mythology. In this region, the foundations of mountain culture are intertwined with the Silk Road, the emergence of influential Khanates, and a profound, mystical link to the thick Caucasian woods. The tales of Sheki and its adjacent peaks are rooted in a legacy of artistry, resistance, and a "Caucasian" heritage. In the mountains of surrounds Sheki and its villages lies the legend of "Forty Maidens". The Maiden Tower of Sheki then called "Gelersen-gorersen" (Come and See) fortress is shrouded in the legend of stubborn resistance. It is said that when a powerful invader demanded the city's surrender, the local ruler simply replied, "Come and see." Legends say the mountain villages were protected by a "Guardian Queen" who turned her soldiers into the very beech trees that cover the slopes to hide them from the enemy.

The village of Kish, perched just above Sheki, holds the most significant legendary-historical site in the region: the Church of Kish -The "Mother of Churches". During excavations, skeletons of immense height (over 2 meters) were found under the church floors. This has birthed a persistent local legend that the original mountain inhabitants were a race of giants or "ancient heroes" who possessed superhuman strength to move the massive stones used in the region's foundations.

"Turk peoples possessed a profound reverence for mountains. The Orkhon monuments designate the Ötüken mountains as the ancestral homeland of the Turks, describing them as a sacred or 'blessed' mountain." [Vəliyev, p. 28-29]. Many mountain trails lead to Pir (holy

sites), where legends say the water flows only for those with a pure heart. "There are numerous traditional beliefs in Azerbaijan regarding the acquisition of rain-summoning stones specifically from mountain regions"[Abdullayev, p. 111].

If the Northeast is a "Fortress of Stone," the Northwest is a "Fortress of Green." Its legends are softer, focused on beauty, trade, and the preservation of ancient Caucasian Albanian world.

5.1. The Functional Role of the Narratives

The mountains surrounding Sheki are the source of many "mountain spirit" legends and the regional roots are unique. It is presented some folktales in this research work:

"White Silence" [1] is the legend and frequently function as unwritten laws in folklore. In the Sheki region, this legend serves as a social control mechanism.

The Taboo: The legends outline specific prohibited behaviors—quarreling, theft, and the destruction of fruit-bearing trees.

The Consequence: The mountain is personified as a sentient judge ("It listens to us"). The avalanche is not a random natural disaster but a punitive strike against moral decay.

Collaborative Meaning: The community "collaborates" on this meaning by whispering the warnings. It creates a collective psychological boundary that keeps the youth in check through fear and respect for the "White Silence".

5.2. Environmental Ethics (Eco-Folklore): Applied folklore often explores how traditional stories promote sustainable living.

Resource Management: The elders' advice to not cut down trees is a primitive form of sustainability. In the harsh winters of the Caucasus, trees provide both food (fruit) and protection against erosion/avalanches.

The Mountain as a Sentinel: By claiming the mountain "listens," the folklore creates an environmental ego. The mountain isn't just rock; it's a living entity that requires "reverence." This is a classic example of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) wrapped in myth.

5.3. The Concept of "Collective Memory"

The most striking part of the analysis is the conclusion: "The mountain did not kill them; it turned them into its own memory."

Applied Lesson: In a collaborative setting, this suggests that the individual is secondary to the history of the land. The "disappeared" youth become a permanent warning.

The Footprints: The detail that footprints only go up and never down serves as a visual metaphor for the "point of no return" in

6. Collaborative Interpretation: The "Living" Legends

From a collaborative standpoint, the story is likely adaptive. Notice how it mentions "the youth forgot the laws." This indicates a generational tension common in many cultures.

The story is used by the elders to reclaim authority when they feel the modern world (or the next generation) is moving too fast or becoming too selfish. The "White Silence" represents the ultimate end of communication—if you don't listen to the elders, you eventually encounter a silence where "words freeze" and you can no longer speak at all.

Through the lens of Collaborative and Applied Folklore, the second legend, "Legend of the Seven Brothers Mountain" [3], reveals a story intended to inspire patriotism and communal resilience. This story emphasizes sacred sacrifice and territorial integrity, whereas "White Silence" concentrated on moral punishment.

Functional role: The "Sacrifice for Sovereignty"

In applied folklore, "The Seven Brothers" functions as a heroic charter. It provides a template for behavior during times of external threat. The transition from a deceased biological mother to "Mother Earth" creates a powerful psychological bond. By protecting the mountain, the brothers are performing a filial duty. The transformation is not a tragedy but a strategic victory. In a collaborative sense, the community uses this story to teach that physical death is secondary to the "eternal life" of the nation's borders.

Applied folklore often examines how people project human traits onto geology to make the land "theirs." The brothers do not simply die; they become the geography. This creates an inalienable claim to the land. If the mountain is the brothers, then to lose the mountain is to lose one's kin. Each peak carries a name. In applied terms, this is a method of toponymic preservation, ensuring that the history of the tribe is literally mapped onto the horizon.

The "Spring Morning" ritual

The "strange sound" heard every spring is a folkloric mechanism for intergenerational renewal. The "Long live the Motherland" shout acts as a psychic anchor for the village. It is told specifically to remind the youth that their safety is built upon the literal bones/rocks of their ancestors.

The legend "Mountain Man" [2] is the third legend involved in the study. This legend is a goldmine for researching the mythological foundations of the Sheki region. It isn't just a fairy tale; it is an ethno-ecological blueprint that explains how mountain cultures view their environment. This story is a prime illustration of animate nature in folklore, in which the landscape is a sentient character with its own moral code rather than merely a setting.

Shukrulu wrote a science fiction book about this legend called "Yeti". In this book he describes "... a dark figure about the height of a man - a mountain man: a terrifying face surrounded by a green light, a hairy man covered in leather" [Şükürlü, pp. 10, 15].

The Applied Folklore model allows us to dissect how this story serves as a tool for environmental management, psychological processing, and social regulation. Storytelling frequently functions as "unwritten laws" in applied folklore. Applying the Plasma Mythology lens to this Sheki story, the shifting shadows and disappearing moonlight are traditional depictions of atmospheric shifts.

A representation of the local spirit is the "Mountain Guardian" (Snowman). The footsteps and the "mountain breathing" symbolize the idea that the mountain is a living, vibrating entity—the Plasma/Energy connection we previously discussed. Mist is considered a "liminal state" in folklore, serving as a portal between the material and supernatural realms. The hunters left human time and entered "mythic time" by going into the mist. "Applied folklore studies how people use stories to find their way around the world. Naturally occurring mountain phenomena include "whispers in the mist" and "wind howling like a human voice" (wind through canyons, shifting rocks). The poetic way of processing death and disappearance without the closure of a body is to say that the third hunter became part of the mountain's memory. By incorporating the tragedy into the scenery, it turns the mountain into a living cemetery that is worthy of reverence. A useful safety and survival tip is "Do not go up the mountains on a misty night."

5.2. Based on the "Mountain Man", here are the core motifs in the study:

1. The Motif of the "Living Mountain": The elders say the mountain is made of "spirit." This reflects Animism, the belief that natural objects possess a soul.
2. The "Mountain Man" as an Anthropomorphic Deity: The character is described with a chest of rock and eyes like valleys. He is a personification of the landscape.
3. The Motif of "The Wrath of Nature" (Ecological Balance): The landslides are not random; they are a reaction to human interference (blocking springs, heavy burdens).
4. The "Hero's Journey" and the Mediator: Eloglu acts as the bridge between the human world and the supernatural world. He doesn't conquer the mountain; he listens to it.

DISCUSSION

This section synthesizes the two legends—"White Silence" and "The Seven Brothers"—to illustrate how they form a comprehensive "Dual code of conduct" for the communities of Northwestern Azerbaijan. While they appear to be separate stories, an applied folkloric analysis reveals they are two sides of the same pedagogical coin. "In ancient times, mountains were believed to be the dwelling places of spirits and gods"[Nuruzade p.119].

The juxtaposition of these two narratives reveals a sophisticated folkloric system that governs both internal morality and external security. In applied folklore, it is categorized these as the dual pillars of communal survival "Inward-Facing" and "Outward-Facing" narratives.

a. Internal Regulation vs. External Defense: The "White Silence" acts as an internal regulator. Its purpose is to maintain the social fabric by punishing domestic sins like theft, disrespect to elders, and environmental destruction. Conversely, "The Seven Brothers" is an outward-facing heroic charter. It defines the community's relationship with "the other" (the invader) and establishes the mountain as a physical and spiritual fortress.

Synthesis: To survive, the village must be morally pure (White Silence) and physically brave (Seven Brothers). If the youth fail internally, the mountain buries them; if they succeed externally, the mountain elevates them.

b. The Metamorphosis of the Human Form: Both legends utilize metamorphosis as their primary symbolic engine, but with opposite results: In "White Silence," the youth are turned into "memory"—an invisible, cautionary absence. Their footprints lead to a void, signifying that those who break social laws lose their place in the living world. In "The Seven Brothers," the heroes are turned into "stone"—a visible, permanent presence. Their transformation into peaks ensures they remain part of the landscape forever.

c. Acoustic Markers as Social Reminders: The use of sound in both legends serves as a "call to action" for the community: The Bell/Muffled roar in "White Silence" is a sound of dread, signaling that the boundary of patience has been crossed. It is a warning to "freeze" or "stop" harmful behavior. The Collective Shout ("Long live the Motherland!") in "The Seven Brothers" is a sound of vitality. It is an auditory "re-charging" of the land's sanctity, performed every spring to synchronize the community with the spirit of the ancestors.

Integrating the "Tale of the Mountain Man" into our research creates a powerful trilogy that covers the three essential pillars of community existence: Social morality (White Silence), territorial defense (Seven Brothers), and environmental stewardship (The Mountain Man).

This research project has demonstrated that the mountain legends of Northwestern Azerbaijan are not merely stories; they are a Living Law (Lex Montis). Through the methodology of Collaborative and Applied Folklore, we see that these narratives provide a robust framework for:

Sustainable Resource Management: By mythologizing the "breathing" of the mountain and the "flow of springs," the culture prevents ecological collapse.

Social Cohesion: By using the "White Silence" as a deterrent, the community enforces a code of ethics without the need for a formal police force.

National Identity: By petrifying its heroes into the landscape, the community ensures that its history is unerasable.

Environmental Policy: Use the "Tale of the Mountain Man" in regional water-management awareness campaigns. Framing "blocking springs" as an offense against the "Mountain Man" may resonate more deeply in rural areas than modern bureaucratic fines.

Cultural Tourism: Develop "The Legend Trail" in Sheki, where hikers can learn the ecological lessons of each site, transforming tourism from a passive activity into an educational pilgrimage.

Education: Integrate these "Applied Legends" into local school curricula to teach ethics, geography, and history through a unified, culturally relevant lens.

In Sheki and the surrounding villages, the mountain is considered a sacred and protective place. The snowman can act as an anthropomorphic embodiment of that sacred place. This is a remnant of the archaic animism layer.

4. The Mythological Trail of Sheki's Mountains

Kish Village is the temple of the ancients, the site of the giants and the "Mother of Churches." Its mythic role represents the origin and is the bridge between the celestial (Moon cults) and the earth. Key Concept of this place is being the sacred ground. The belief that certain heights are chosen by the divine for the first humans.

4.1. The Mythic Role of the legend "Ag Gaya" [4] represents morality: The "Rock that keeps the oath" and the petrified lovers. The mountain acts as a living judge that punishes betrayal and rewards truth. Key concept of the legend is petrification. The transformation of human emotion (the oath) into eternal geological form (the white stone). The Legend of Ag Gaya (The White Rock) shows how social ethics, particularly the sanctity of the "Oath", are anchored in local geography. An oath is a cosmic contract observed by nature in Turk and Caucasian cultures, not merely a promise. The legend of Ag Gaya is an environmental contract rather than merely a tale of romance. It turns a particular landmark into the village's "Legal Center.". It conveys to the community: "Your statements are significant. Your treachery will be documented by the earth itself if you lie here". In applied folklore, "turning to stone" motif is a common teaching strategy used to instill loyalty and the telling of the truth. The externalized conscience is represented by the rock. A "silent judge" that is constantly present is created by the community by imprinting a moral value onto a permanent physical object. The "petrified hands" that are visible on the rock act as a constant visual alert. This supports the notion in a village society that a broken promise leaves a noticeable and lasting mark on a person's legacy. The legend uses a supernatural explanation for physical abnormalities to make the setting more "intimate" and controllable. The rock is described as feeling "warm at night" in the text. Large rocks absorb solar heat during the day and radiate it at night, which is a common observation of thermal mass. In folklore, this scientific fact is interpreted as a "beating heart," converting a geological feature into a spiritual presence that deters people from disrespecting or loitering.

4.2. The Underworld: The Labyrinth of Fazil Village [Muxtarov, p.1-9]

The Legend: The underground burial "homes" and ritual pottery. The Mythic Role represents ancestry. It is the point where the mountain culture looks into the earth to communicate with those who passed. Key concept is the serpent guardian. The transition from the sunny peaks to

the dark, protected depths of the mountain. The ancient habit of burying the dead on high ground or "Kurgan" mounds reflects the mountain cult. Being buried "high up" was a way to ensure the soul was closer to the celestial Tengri (God) and further from the impurities of the lower earth.

Comparative Motif: The Three Worlds of Sheki

Layer	Location	Symbol	Mythological Function
Upper World	Kish	The Moon	Divine Vision & Origin
Middle World	Oxud	Stone	Human Morality & Oaths
Underworld	Fazil	Pottery	Ancestral Wisdom & The Afterlife

In the legendary realm of Sheki, Fazil Village acts as the "Gateway to the Interior." As Kish stretches toward the heavens and Okhud aligns with the living, the tales of Fazil gaze into the mountain's "belly." The archaeology in this area is renowned for the area of Tapabashi digs, yet the local legends that endure are even more suggestive of an "Underworld" culture.

When viewed together, these legends provide a complete Ontological Map for the people of Sheki and the surrounding regions. They teach that the land is not a passive resource but an active participant in human history.

In a modern context, these stories can be applied to restorative justice programs. For example, a youth who commits a social transgression is reminded of the "White Silence" (the danger of being forgotten/erased), while those who contribute to the public good are aligned with the "Seven Brothers" (the honor of being a pillar of the community).

CONCLUSION

The legends of about mountains in the Sheki region transcend the boundaries of simple myth, functioning as a sophisticated system of socio-ecological governance. Through the lens of Applied Folklore, this research demonstrates that the mountain is not merely a geographic landmark but a moral anchor for the community. The narrative's power lies in its ability to transform abstract values—such as environmental stewardship and social harmony—into a tangible, feared, and respected reality. Our analysis leads to three primary conclusions:

Environmental Reciprocity: The "Snowy Mountain" serves as a precursor to modern conservation ethics. The prohibition against harming "fruit-bearing trees" highlights a historical understanding of biodiversity and resource management that remains vital for the fragile ecosystems of the Caucasus today.

The Architecture of Silence: The "White Silence" is a potent metaphor for the breakdown of communal dialogue. In an age of increasing social fragmentation, the legend warns that when words lose their weight and respect is abandoned, the result is an ontological erasure—a loss

of identity where individuals are "turned into memory" rather than remaining active participants in their culture.

Pedagogical Resilience: Despite the pressures of modernization, the "whispered" delivery of this lore suggests that traditional knowledge systems are resilient. These stories remain the most effective tools for intergenerational value transfer in rural Azerbaijan.

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