

## HISTORICAL TRACES OF CIMMERIAN ETHNONYM IN CONTEMPORARY AZERBAIJAN-TURKIC ONOMASTICS

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**Abstract:** Ethnonyms and historical-geographical names that reflect the names of the ethnoses are a part of the language's interesting vocabulary groups. Without ethnonyms or toponyms, it is impossible to get detailed information about the formation of any people. That is why ethnotoponyms in the onomastic system of language are considered to be the oldest lexical units. It is clear from the studies that the history of the origin of many ethnotoponyms belonging to the Turkic language is older than the history of written monuments belonging to this language. Each nation has given its name to the geographical objects since its formation, or named them with words belonging to own language. As a result, each toponym, is a product of a certain period and keeps the traces of history. *Avshar, Az, Alpout, Bayat, Bayandir, Cagatay, Chepni, Chinchavay, Chul, Khalaj, Khurs, Kulus, Kechili, Kangar, Mugan, Garakhanli, Kipchak, Padar, Pechenek, Turkesh, Sag, Sungur, Suvar, Oguç, Uz* and hundreds of other such ethnotoponyms bear traces of ancient time in the modern stage of Azerbaijan toponymy. Among these ethnotoponyms, the Cimmerians//Gamarli tribe is one of the tribes that bear the traces of history in Azerbaijani-Turkic onomastics as both ethnotoponyms (*Gamardash* - mountain in Lachin region; *Gamarvan* - village in the administrative – territorial unit of Gabala region; *Gamarvan* - river in Gabala region, *Gamarli* - region in Armenia) and anthroponyms (*Gamar* - personal name; *Gamarli* – surname).

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan; Turkic; onomastics; Cimmerians; Gamarli; ethnonym; toponym.

### 1 Introduction

The formation of each nation occurs as a result of continuous ethnic processes throughout history. In certain historical processes, in the process of consolidation or assimilation of ethnically related tribes between different ethnic groups, one of them takes the dominant position by removing the other from the stage of history, or in other words, one ethnos replaces another. That is why, when studying the origin and geographical area of each nation, it is necessary, first of all, to follow the ethnic processes that take place in the places where they live, consistently at all historical stages. In other words, the main condition is to pay attention to the history of its formation in order to accurately determine the historical origin and geography of modern Azerbaijani Turks. For this, first of all, it is necessary to look for traces of many ancient ethnoses, mentioned in ancient sources and went out of the existence, in the toponyms in the territory of Azerbaijan in modern times. It is also possible to determine the historical and geographical borders of Azerbaijan on the basis of existing toponymic facts in the whole territory of South and North Azerbaijan and the distribution area of ethnoses involved in the ethno genesis of Azerbaijanis.

The fact that various types of onomastic units (toponyms, hydronyms, anthroponyms, etc.) reflecting the names of many ancient Turkic tribes that took part in the ethnogenesis of Azerbaijanis in prehistoric times and was registered in Azerbaijan in modern times plays an important role in solving the problems of ethno genesis of modern Azerbaijanis. The study of the origin of ethnotoponyms such as *Alpaut, Avshar, Aza, Bayat, Beydilli, Bichanak, Chakhirli, Eymur, Gargar, Khalaj, Ilanli, Kechili, Kangarli, Kapanakchi, Kolani, Kulus, Gajar, Garakhanbeyli, Qashqarchay, Kazanchi, Gamarvan, Gipchak, Gushchu, Padar, Sarijali, Tatar, Tekle, Turkler, Turkoba, Unus, Ustupuva* which exist in Northern Azerbaijan and *Az//As, Arshag, Bayat, Bayandur, Afshar, Khalaj, Kemer, Sefidkemer, Siyahkemer, Qashqa, Gajar, Kipchak, Pirsaga, Bilasvar, Turkenbur, Turkmen, Uzerli, Kamus, Uzbeysi* in Southern Azerbaijan today allows identifying the early layers of the history of modern Azerbaijani-Turkic onomastics belonging to the prehistoric period.

### 2 Method

The implementation of scientific tasks predetermined the choice of research methods adequate to them and to the practical material itself - descriptive and historical. They make it

possible to systematically study linguistic phenomena and processes occurring in the object of study and reveal the internal structure of onomastic units. Attempts to clarify the etymology of a number of lexical units required the use of comparative historical analysis techniques.

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### *Cimmerians in historical sources*

It is clear from historical onomastic research conducted on the basis of ancient sources that in modern Azerbaijani-Turkic onomastics there are many ethnonyms of ancient times that have not yet been fully studied. One of these ethnonyms is Cimmerians//Gamars, one of the ancient ethnos that dated back to the pre-historic era and played an important role in the ethnogenesis of modern Turkic peoples, especially modern Azerbaijanis, and preserved its historical trace in modern Azerbaijani-Turkic toponymy such as *Gamarli, Kemer, Kemeralti market, Kemerli river, Kukkemer, Sefidkemer, Kemerdarg* and other toponyms and anthroponyms such as *Gamar*. However, it is unfortunate that many Russian-language studies suggest that the Cimmerians are Iranian-speaking. This misconception is found in the studies of M. Artomonov and V. Abaev [1, p. 126]. Artomonov showed that the three great leaders of the Cimmerians in Asia Minor –Teushpa, Ligdamis (Tugdamme), Sandakashatru, as well as the Scythians and Sarmatians were Iranian-speaking [4, p. 21].

Although some studies describe the Cimmerians as a people of Europid race, they are sometimes described as related to the Celts or Thracians, and even to the ancestors of the Armenians. Sometimes, a group of researchers consider the Cimmerians to be a group of Iranian-speaking Scythians or the ancestors of the Bulgars [46, p. 15].

Despite such biased and erroneous position of some researchers in world politics, who sometimes try to bring the history of ethno genesis of modern Azerbaijani Turks into disrepute for political and ideological purposes as a result of the anti-Turkic policy pursued throughout history, the existing historical facts in ancient historical sources and the lexical units in the modern Azerbaijani onomastic system on the basis of these facts completely refute all false and fabricated claims about the Cimmerians. From this point of view, it is not surprising that some of the information provided in a number of modern studies on the national identity of the Cimmerians refers to them as an Iranian-speaking people.

M.Taner Tarhan concluded more correctly about the origin and roots of the Cimmerians, showing that they were ethnically a community of Ural-Altai origin of Central Asia or a part of proto-Turks: “*The Cimmerians are a typical representative of the Kurgan cultures of Central Asian origin. The cavalry tribes, which spread over large areas of the steppes, form a large western branch of culture. The close ties of the Cimmerian-Scythian culture and the undifferentiated cultural equality clarify the disputes about the origin of the Cimmerians*” [45, p. 355-360].

It was clear from the information provided in historical sources in various languages about the Cimmerians, who lived in a very large geography inhabited by Azerbaijanis, as well as modern Turkic peoples, eternizing the traces of the most ancient Turkic history in many geographical names in the modern historical period and mentioned in the extended and short registers of the Ottoman period that they were one of the oldest Turkic tribes involved in the ethno genesis of Azerbaijanis. According to Karoly Czegledy, the Cimmerians had such an important place in world history because they were the first nomadic tribes to dominate the endless steppes stretching from Hungary to the Great Wall of China [16, p. 13-14]. According to R. Grousset's research, a significant number of archaeological findings

belonging to the Cimmerians in the northern part of the Black Sea date their history back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC [23, p. 22-23]. According to I. Tellioglu, the Cimmerians of Central Asian origin migrated west from their native lands in 1800-1700 BC and had a 500-year reign in the steppes of the northern Caucasus [46, p. 15].

In some sources, the name of the Cimmerians is mentioned in the Bible as Gomer among the sons of Yassaf regarding the rebirth of humanity after the flood of Noah [47, p. 370]. Referring to Arabic sources, I. Tellioglu showed that the names of the Cimmerians were mentioned in these sources as *Qumari//Qomer//Kimal//Qimal//Kimmel* [2, p. 870; 46, p. 14]. While Cimmerians were mentioned in Armenian sources as *Kamir//Qamir//Qimir//Qomer* [30, p. 24-25? 121], this ethnos was mentioned as *Qimirri* in Assyrian sources [10, p. 62] and as Cimmerian in the works of Greek and modern European researchers [15, p. 183; 20, p. 66; 27, p. 18, 21; 44, p. 66].

Many sources also stated that, as it was mentioned above, the geography of the Cimmerians covered a very large area and they dominated the steppes stretching from Hungary to the Great Wall of China [17, p. 13-14]. According to Grousset's researches, during archeological excavations in the steppes in the north of the Black Sea, in the Volga and Ural regions, all the historical materials related to the Cimmerians dating back to 1300-1200 BC were related to Turkestan [23, p. 22-23].

Armenian sources contain very valuable information about the rule of the Cimmerians in the Cappadocia region of Turkey, mentioned in various phonovariants such as *Kamir//Qamir//Qomer*. According to Moise Hore, the Cimmerians, who ruled over a large area, including Cappadocia, were named in French sources as the Kamirs, and were called the Kamir country [30, p. 24-25]. This fact was also confirmed in many works on Armenian history, and Cappadocia was mentioned as Qamir region [43, p. 173].

Giving information about the tribes subordinated to the Scythians (Gags) in Asia in 645-620 BC, Sandalgiyan Lospin mentioned that the Cappadocian people called Gomer in various sources and Gamrik in Armenian inscriptions were Turks-Cimmerians. The works of Armenian historians also stated that the Cimmerians, who spread on the shores of the Black Sea, came to Sinop from the Crimea in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC [32, p. 370; 346].

As in all parts of Anatolia, the Cimmerians, who had great economic and political power in the Black Sea region, ruled the region from Sinop to Trabzon for a long time [46, p. 20]. For this reason, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Greeks' claim to capture these territories and establish their own colonies did not come true [6, p. 19]. As can be seen from the sources, the Cimmerians, who dominated the steppes from Hungary to the Great Wall of China, were one of the ancient ethnic groups that played a major role not only in Turkic history but also in world history. According to Turkic mythology, the oldest sources indicated that the Cimmerians were the great ancestors of the Turkic peoples [7, p. 579]. Along with historical research, the fact that the Cimmerians name has a great position in the all-Turkic onomastic system as an anthroponym (*Gamar* – personal name; *Gamarli* – surname), toponym (*Kemer* village, *Kemeralti* market, *Kemerli*, *Gamarli*, etc.) or ethnonym (*Cimmerian*, *Gamarli*) in onomastic research confirms this idea.

Numerous historical toponyms bearing the names of the Cimmerians have been recorded in various geographies inhabited by the Turkic peoples in modern times, in the Crimean region in the north of the Black Sea, in South and North Azerbaijan, in Anatolia, in the territory of the Iravan Khanate: *Kemer*, *Kemeralti* market - in Turkey, *Gamarlu* - in Armenia, the *Cimmerian Bosphorus*, *Cimmerian fortifications* - in Crimea, *Kemerli village* - in Northern Azerbaijan, *Kemer*, *Kemeerdeg* - in Shahrud district of Khalkhal city of South Azerbaijan (in Iran) [26, p. 102].

F.A. Jalilov noted that these tribes settled in Crimea, Transcaucasia, and Asia Minor in the millennia BC and showed that they were mentioned in various linguistic historical sources in the forms of *Kimmer (Greek)*, *Gimirri (Assurian)*, *Gomer (Biblical)*, *Gamir (Armenian)*. Giving information about the relationship of the Cimmerians with the Scythians, the author noted that this ethnos was preserved in the language of many peoples in the meaning of "brave, hero": *Koumir* in Russian, *Gaemri* in Ossetian, *Gmirri* in Georgian [29, p. 82-85]. Along with the anthroponym *Gamar*, which is widespread today in northern and southern Azerbaijan, the name of the Cimmerians still remains for a tribe among the Qashqai Turks living in South Azerbaijan. The *Gamarli* and *Qamarlu* oykonoms in the western part of Azerbaijan, near present-day Yerevan, are also associated with the name of this tribe.

Crimean Tatar historian A. Memetov noted in his article "Origin and language of Crimean Tatars" that Cimmerians lived in prehistoric times [35, p. 4]. Archaeological excavations in the northern part of the Black Sea, as well as in the Urals and the Volga region, Cimmerian tombs and other material cultural artifacts showed that the Cimmerians were ethnically related to Greater Turkestan. Studies showed that the history of these Cimmerian archeological excavations dated back to ancient times, to the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC [25, p. 22-23].

The names of the *Cimmerian Bosphorus* (Kerch Strait), *Cimmerian gate*, *Cimmerian fortifications*, *Kimmerik* ethnotoponyms in modern Crimea were also found in ancient and medieval sources. Herodotus's History, which mentioned that the Cimmerians lived south of the Araz River, gave more information about this [28, p. 196]. According to historical sources, these ethnotoponyms were more common not only in Crimea, but also in Azerbaijan, especially in the East Azerbaijan region of southern Azerbaijan. During the research, it became clear from the etymological analysis that the *Kemerli River* (hydronym) in South Azerbaijan, *Kemer*, *Kuhkemer* (In Ahar), *Kemerdarg*, *Kemer//Gamar* (In Khalkhal), *Sefidkemer* (In Tabriz), *Siyahkemer* oykonoms reflected the names of the *Gamar/Gamarli//Cimmerian* tribes [26, p. 99].

According to Zeki Velidi Togan's research, the Cimmerians, who dominated the northern part of the Black Sea in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, advanced towards the Caucasus, inflicting a heavy blow on Azerbaijan and then Urartu in 714 BC, and from there entered Eastern Anatolia [49, p. 34]. According to Mehmet Bilgin, the Cimmerians then spread to a wider area, to the shores of the Aegean Sea [9, p. 49]. One of the historical toponyms that has kept the name of this tribe in many parts of Turkey is the covered market called *Kemaralti*, an architectural monument with a very ancient history in the center of Izmir, located on the shores of the Aegean Sea.

R. Eyvazova's researches also note that there are several objects related to this ethnos in Afghanistan (*Karakemer cave* - Aybek area of Samangan: *Gara Gamar* area - Badakhshan). In addition, the author gives separate information about the oronym *Gamar* in Herat [18, p. 196]. Many foreign sources stated that after the arrival of the Cimmerians in Anatolia, they became even stronger. According to the Assyrian inscriptions, the appearance of the Cimmerians in the South Caucasus dated back to the last period of Sargon's rule (722-705 BC) [36, p. 188]. The first area of the Cimmerians moving south through the migration routes of the Scythians was the Georgian Plains. Upon their arrival, the Cimmerians radically changed the political situation in the region and overthrew the Kingdom of Colchis on the Black Sea coast of Georgia [42, p. 43].

Some of the toponyms preserving the historical traces of the Cimmerians in the territory of Georgia were also mentioned in the Ottoman sources of the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the "Extended Register of Tbilisi Province" dated 1728, the name of *Kemerli* winter camp, which was subordinated to Inja district, was also derived from the name of Cimmerians [37, p. 187]. In addition, the "The extended register of Iravan Province" dated 1728 stated that the Cimmerians//*Gamarli* lived in *Almali*, *Ugurbeyli*, *Yıva* villages of *Khinzrak* and *Karni* districts of Iravan province [14,

p. 37]. In this register, an ethnotoponym named *Ashkamar*, reflecting the name of the Cimmerians, was registered in Sisian district [14, p. 145].

According to Georgian historians Allen and Lang, the Cimmerian influx played an extremely important role in the socio-cultural life of Georgia. Lang showed that the Cimmerian and Scythian migrations were influenced by the long-term rule of the Iberian-Caucasian peoples living in the Kingdom of Colchis and northeastern Anatolia and Georgia. As a result, the Iberian-Caucasian tribes of the ancestors of the modern Georgian people took refuge in the mountains and were forced to live as vassals of the Medes and Persians. According to Lang, this influenced the Iberian-Caucasian peoples, as well as the Abkhazian and Maghreb peoples [31, p. 67]. Like Lang, Burney's research showed that Armenians and Georgians had long been under the rule of the Cimmerians and Scythians, who overthrew Assyria, Urartu and Babylon. The Georgians' struggle against the Cimmerians was unsuccessful, leading them to retreat and establish their first cities in the region near Gori [15, p. 183-194].

G.A. Melikashvili showed that the Cimmerians lived in the west of Albania [34, p. 134]. In G. Geybullayev's researches, some of the Cimmerians who came to the South Caucasus permanently settled in the western region of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia. Historical researches showed that the names of *Boyük and Kichik Kemerli* (Big and Little Kemerli), *Kemergaya* and *Gamarli* villages in the Gazakh-Borchali region were also connected with the name of this tribe, and it was shown that seven toponyms named *Kemerli* were registered in the Caucasus in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, he noted that in the Middle Ages there was Azerbaijani villages near Yerevan called *Gumri, Gamri* (Armenian pronunciation of the *Gamar/Gemer* ethnonym) [22, p. 132]. Armenian historian Y.A. Manandyan also showed that the toponym written in the form of *Kumyar* in Armenian sources was also connected with the name of Cimmerians [33, p. 21, 132].

#### **Historical traces of Cimmerians in Azerbaijan-Turkic toponymy**

The Cimmerians, who first came to Anatolia in 709 BC, settled in Cappadocia [39]. When the Cimmerians entered Anatolia, the Assyrians, who were trying to unite the whole Middle East under one flag, captured 24 cities in the region of Kargamish, Malatya, Marash, Cilicia, and Taurus, but later retreated due to the threat of the Cimmerians [26, p. 18]. Richard Frye's researches suggested that the Cimmerians, who played a major role in the political and ethnic history of the Assyrian state, invaded Phrygia in the west of the Halys River in 696-695 BC and plundered central Gordion [19, p. 71]. According to some sources, the destruction and looting of Phrygia by the Cimmerians led to the suicide of King Midas [28, p. 770].

Several toponyms reflecting the names of ancient Turkic tribes -Cimmerians -were recorded in the extended and short registers of Irevan, Nakhchivan, Tbilisi, Ganja-Karabakh provinces compiled by the Ottomans in 1728. The position of name of the Cimmerians in the all-Turkic onomastic system in modern times, as well as its reflection in historical toponyms and anthroponyms, is an undeniable confirmation of the close connection of this ethnus with the history of the Turkic people. The onomastic units, registered as *Gamar* - a personal name that exists in the onomastic system of modern Azerbaijan and as an anthroponym, as well as *Gamarli*-surname and toponym as *Kemervillage, Kemeralti market, Kemerli village, Gamarli village* or as an ethnonym *Kimmer, Gamar* confirm this. Interestingly, in the modern Azerbaijani onomastic system, the names of Cimmerians registered as anthroponyms and ethnotoponyms are preserved as oronyms and hydronyms: *Gamardash*- mountain in Lachin region; *Gamarvan* - a village in the administrative - territorial unit of the same name of Gabala district; *Gamarvan* is a river in the territory of Gabala region [17, p. 51].

The name of village *Gamarliin* Karbibasar district of Iravan Khanate was *Gamarli* until September 4, 1945, then was armenianized and renamed as *Artashat*. The name of *Gamarli* village in *Vagharshapat* (Echmiadzin) region was changed to *Metsamor* by the state decision of Armenia on July 15, 1946 [3, p. 165; 8, p. 217; 12, p. 199].

*Gamarli* is a village in the Echmiadzin region. In 1918, after complete expulsion of local Azerbaijani Turks by aggression of Russia and Armenians, Armenians from other countries were settled here [12, p. 199]. In Ibrahim Bayramov's researches, the second name of this village was *Gozlu Gamarli* [8, p. 2016]. Sources from 1588 recorded Turkic-Muslim tribes, the names of the *Kamerlu-ye Atik* and *Kamerlu-ye Jadid* who spent the winter in Karabakh and the summer in Yerevan [12, p. 199].

According to Aziz Alakbarli, originally from Western Azerbaijan, referring to archival documents on the basis of state decisions of present-day Armenia, as a result of the anti-Turkic policy of the Armenians, the administrative division of the *Gamarli* region changed its name several times. According to the administrative division of 1932, Azerbaijani Turks lived in 75% of 102 settlements in *Gamarli* region. With the establishment of *Zangibasar* region in 1937 by the states of Russia and Armenia in order to destroy this union of Azerbaijani Turks, 18 villages from *Gamarli* region were seized and joined to the territory of this region. In 1948-1951, due to the mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from these territories with the support of Russia, *Zangibasar* region was re-established, and the villages that used to belong to *Gamarli* region were annexed into this region. With the re-establishment of *Zangibasar* district in 1969, *Gamarli* district was reorganized in terms of administrative territory.

With the deportation of Azerbaijani Turks in 1964, the population of *Vedi* district was completely armenianized and merged into *Gamarli* district. Since *Gamarli* region was located in the fertile lands of *Agri* valley in a region close to Yerevan, Turks living in all villages of this region were expelled from here in 1948-1951, Armenians from different foreign countries were settled in these villages, and many mountainous villages such as *Chilakhanli, Novruzlu, Garagoyunlu* were destroyed and turned into ruins [3, p. 89-93; 12, p. 216]. Later, *Vedi* region was restored and separated from *Gamarli* and *Gamarli* was renamed [3, p. 89-93].

If we take into account the process of transformation of ethnonyms into anthroponyms or toponyms in modern Turkic onomastics, like many other ethnic names in the Azerbaijani-Turkic name system, such as *Afshar, Cakir, Oguz, Sungur*, the Cimmerians can be seen both as a toponym and as an anthroponym in the Turkic Republics such as Azerbaijan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The names of Cimmerians are used in such phonovariants as *Gamar, Gamarli* in Azerbaijan, *Kamer* in Turkey, *Kamar* in Kazakhstan.

#### **4 Conclusion**

The facts on the basis of historical sources showed that ancient Cimmerians dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC were Turks. This fact is confirmed by the analysis based on historical sources. Each of the geographical names reflecting the name of the Cimmerians in different regions of Azerbaijan provides rich information for the study of the ethnic history of people, especially the problem of ethnogenesis. This suggests that the study of the origin of each ethnus that has left its mark on world history on the basis of ancient sources first of all eliminates the difficulties encountered in the process of studying the origin of the Azerbaijani people and prevents purposeful false concepts against the Azerbaijani-Turkic people.

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