

ON THE USE OF NAMES OF MELON AND GOURD CROPS IN THE KHOREZM  
REGION

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the names of melon (qovun) and gourd (qovoq) seed varieties cultivated in the Khorezm region. The study focuses on the linguistic and cultural features of these names, their etymology, and their reflection of the region's agricultural traditions. The research also explores the influence of neighboring Turkic languages on the formation of these plant names and their role in everyday speech and folk terminology.

**Keywords:** ancient terms, melon crops, naming, historical source, qovun (melon), qovoq (gourd), borrowed layer, colloquial usage.

Since ancient times, the people of Khorezm have been engaged in melon and gourd cultivation (polizchilik), considering it one of their main sources of livelihood. Historical sources indicate that along with primitive irrigated agriculture, melon crops thrived in the river valleys of the Amu Darya, its branches, and artificial canals. Melons grown in the Amu Darya basin have long been renowned for their sweetness, fragrance, and high nutritional value. These melons were so prized that in ancient times they were wrapped in gold-patterned paper and sent as gifts to Baghdad and the palaces of Arab caliphs.

For the people living along the Amu Darya, melons and gourds were a staple food. When embarking on long journeys, they would take melons with them as provisions. A historical episode from the early 19th century vividly illustrates the importance of melon cultivation for the Khorezm population. When the Khan of Khiva besieged Qo'ng'iro't and destroyed its crops, he demanded that the people surrender, assuming they would soon starve. However, the besieged residents defiantly responded:

“Uch oy qovunim, uch oy sovunim, uch oy qovog'im, uch oy chavog'im”

(“Three months of melon, three months of milk, three months of gourd, three months of fish”).

This concise verse reveals that, along with animal husbandry (sovunim – milk) and fishing, melon farming was a vital means of subsistence in this region. The naming of melon and gourd varieties in the Khorezm region reflects unique linguistic and cultural features. For instance, a round, thick-fleshed, juicy, and sweet melon is called gurvak (“round melon”). Local early-ripening varieties grown across the Khorezm districts are known by different names such as qarriqiz, oqnavot, and shirinpechak. In the Yangibozor district alone, melon types such as trish, tarpeda, tarlama, gurvak, and qarriqiz can be found, while in the Hazarasp district, varieties like qarriqiz, bo'rikalla, and oqnavat are especially popular.

In the Uzbek literary language, as in Khorezm dialects, the fitonym qovun carries the following meanings:

1. The name of a specific plant: quvyn ək- (“to plant melons”), quvyn atyz (“melon field”);
2. The fruit of the plant: quvyn ye- (“to eat melon”).

The term *atiz* (“field”) is used in Khorezm primarily to refer to plots where vine crops such as melons, watermelons, and cucumbers grow. Compound forms like *qovun otiz* (“melon field”) and *tarvuz otiz* (“watermelon field”) are widely used [H. Narimov, 2020, p. 28].

Khorezm dialects include many distinct names for melon varieties, some shared with other Uzbek dialects and Turkic languages, while others are unique to the region. They can be divided into two groups:

#### 1. Common names found in other Uzbek dialects and Turkic languages:

*Beshək* / *biyshak* – an elongated, oval-shaped, yellow-green melon with thick, firm rind (Uyghur: *beshekchi*; Kazakh: *beshek*; Kyrgyz: *bäshäk*; Turkmen: *bishek*).

*Gulobi* (*gulavy*, *gulaby*) – fragrant melons with red or pink flesh (Turkmen: *gulabi*; Karakalpak: *gulabi*).

*Begzad* – a noble, premium melon type known as *bekzadi*, *begzot*, *behzoti* in other Uzbek dialects (Uyghur: *behzada*; Turkmen: *bedzada*).

#### 2. Names specific to the Khorezm oasis and neighboring Turkic languages:

*Gurvək* (*gurbək*, *gurvek*) – a round, juicy, sweet summer melon (Turkmen: *gurbek*; Karakalpak: *gurbek*).

*Aqqash*, *aqnavat*, *azgʻin*, *xəsəki*, *tarlavıq*, and *shəkərpə:ra* are also common among neighboring Karakalpak, Kazakh, and Turkmen speakers, indicating close cultural and linguistic ties. For example, *aqnavat* (Turkmen: *aqnabat*), *aqqash* (Turkmen: *akgash*), *tarlavıq* (Turkmen: *tarlavuk*), *shəkərpə:ra* (Kazakh: *shekerpara*; Tajik: *shakarpora*).

Some Khorezm melon names are found only in Turkmen: *murrik* / *murruk* (a small round melon), *lə:shəki* / *ləsheki*, *gökchä* / *chökje* (thick-rinded summer melon with red flesh), *bavashıxı* / *babashıxı*, *vaxarmanı* / *vaxarman*, *nanıygösh* / *na:nygʻö:sh* (dense-fleshed, blue-colored summer melon). Each of these names carries cultural, historical, and linguistic significance that reflects both regional agriculture and interethnic interaction.

In modern times, Khorezm continues to preserve its rich melon-growing tradition. In Khiva, nearly 60 local melon varieties were showcased, including *amiri*, *boʻrikalla*, *ola boʻrikalla*, *gulobi*, *obinovvot*, *koʻkcha*, *temirtirnoq*, *gulasal*, *qoraqand*, *doʻppi*, *sherozi*, and *shakarpalak*. Over 200 farming enterprises presented more than 2,000 tons of produce at this exhibition. Currently, Uzbekistan cultivates around 160 melon varieties, of which 45 are registered in the State Register. Uzbek melons are renowned for their distinctive sweetness, aroma, and health benefits, as well as their diversity in shape and color. Local names such as *Bosvoldi*, *Amiri*, *Obinovvot*, *Boʻrikalla*, *Zargulobi*, *Gurvək*, and *Joʻraqand* are part of this linguistic and agricultural heritage. The *Mirzachol oq urugʻi* (“Mirzachol white seed”) also known colloquially as *Metrovka*, *Torpedo*, or *Jiyan urugʻ* has even become an international brand.

Gourd (*qovoq*) varieties are also widespread in Khorezm. Comparative linguistic data from Turkic and Iranian languages show that alongside *qovoq*, the Persian-Tajik loanword *kadi* / *kedi* is also used synonymously in several Turkic dialects. However, *qovoq* is more prevalent in Uzbek, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz, while *kedi* dominates in Turkmen. For example, in Uzbek and

Karakalpak, both qovoq and kadi are used; in Turkmen, kedi is standard; and in Uyghur, the variants qapaq / kava occur instead.

Names of gourd varieties are also mutually recognizable across Turkic languages: oshqovoq (Uzbek), ashkedi (Khorezm), asqabaq (Kazakh), ashkabak (Kyrgyz), and as qabaq (Karakalpak). These parallels illustrate the deep historical and linguistic interrelations among the peoples of the region.

In conclusion, the study of melon and gourd names in the Khorezm region reveals the interplay of linguistic, cultural, and historical factors in the formation of agricultural terminology. The regional fitonyms serve as living indicators of ethnolinguistic identity, preserving ancient naming traditions that reflect the harmony between language, environment, and culture.

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