

Linguocultural Analysis of Historical Toponyms and their Role in Preserving Cultural Memory

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ABSTRACT

This article studies the linguistic functions of historical toponyms used in Ishakhon Ibrat's work History of Fergana. The purpose of the study is to substantiate that toponyms are not only units naming geographical objects, but also active onomastic units expressing historical reality through linguistic means. The study draws on the theoretical views of V. A. Nikonov, A. V. Superanskaya and V. D. Belenkaya, as well as the works of representatives of Uzbek onomastics – S. Qorayev, T. Ernazarov and S. Karimov. The research methodology is based on descriptive and contextual-semantic analysis. All toponyms found in History of Fergana were identified and classified depending on the nature of their use in the text and their contextual function. As a result of the analysis, four functions of toponyms were identified – nominative-identifying (associating events with geographical space), informative (representing the administrative-historical status of the object), cumulative (storing historical-linguistic information) and descriptive (revealing the motivation for naming) – each of which is illustrated with specific examples taken from the work. The study shows that these functions do not operate independently, but often interact within the framework of one toponym depending on the context, which indicates the need to analyze them both separately and in their interrelation. These functions contribute to the systematic study of the toponymy of History of Fergana and to research on the historical development of the Uzbek onomastic system.

Keywords: Historical toponyms, linguistic function, onomastics, *History of Fergana*, Ishakhon Ibrat, nominative-identificational function, informative function, cumulative function, descriptive function.

INTRODUCTION

In historical texts, toponyms are not merely units naming geographical objects but also linguistic means actively involved in representing historical reality. The question of the linguistic functions of toponyms has been studied by various scholars within onomastics. In particular, V. A. Nikonov distinguishes the address, descriptive, and ideological functions of toponymic meaning (Nikonov 2011: 57). However, A. V. Superanskaya critically reassesses this classification, arguing that descriptiveness should be interpreted not as the function the toponym actually performs but as a genetic feature specific to its stage of formation: the name absorbs certain information during its creation, but in subsequent use it is the name itself – not that information – that performs the address function (Superanskaya 1973: 272-273). V. D. Belenkaya, analyzing the naming function of toponyms from the standpoint of their perception by society, distinguishes such types as a pure indicator, an indicator combined with a characterizing feature, and an indicator fused with ideological or emotional coloring (Belenkaya 1969: 20-21). These views demonstrate that a toponym is a complex linguistic unit that simultaneously identifies a geographical object and carries additional information related to it. In Uzbek onomastics, similar functions of toponyms have likewise been emphasized. In particular, S. Qorayev notes that the primary function of names is to distinguish objects from one another (Qorayev 2006: 5-6).

Taking into account the specific features of historical texts, the nominative-identificational, informative, cumulative, and descriptive functions of toponyms can be distinguished on the basis of the material of *History of Fergana*. These functions make it possible to describe what linguistic roles place names perform in a historical text.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research methodology is based on the descriptive method and the method of contextual-semantic analysis. Toponyms in *History of Fergana* were collected through continuous sampling and then classified according to their place of use in the text and their contextual function. Each occurrence of a toponym in the text was examined individually to determine which linguistic function it performed; on this basis, toponyms sharing similar features were grouped into the four categories outlined above.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. *The nominative-identificational function of toponyms*

The nominative-identificational function is one of the primary linguistic functions of toponyms. This function manifests through naming geographical objects and distinguishing them from other objects of the same kind. Each toponym, as the individual name of a particular geographical object, makes it possible to differentiate that object from others. In other words, this function is defined by the toponym's role in indicating where an event took place.

Naming and identification are mutually presupposing processes: a geographical object is distinguished from other objects of the same kind precisely through its name and functions in speech as an independent referent. Consequently, the nominative function of a toponym does not manifest in isolation from the identificational function but appears in organic unity with it. In this way, each toponym makes it possible to single out a particular geographical object as an individual linguistic unit.

In *History of Fergana* this function is consistently manifested. In narrating historical events, the author uses the names of cities, provinces, countries, rivers, mountains, and other geographical objects, thereby identifying them precisely and linking the events to a specific location. For instance:

...Farkatda va ani(ng) usti ilan Ovluqq'a borub, andan Chodak yo'li ilan tog'dan oshub o'tub, Marg'zordan o'tub, Namangon usti ilan Uchqo'rgong'a, andin o'tub... Ketmontefaga... (Ibrat 2024: 82)

"...from Farkat, and passing over it, going to Ovluk, then crossing the mountain by the Chodak road, passing through Margzor, and via Namangan to Uchkurgan, and from there... to Ketmontepa..."

In this passage, the toponyms used in succession name, one by one, the geographical objects along the route of movement, thereby ensuring the spatial coherence of the historical narrative. A similar pattern is observed with the toponyms Khujand, Uratapa, and Jizzakh:

Rusiyaga askar jam (qilib) muhoraba qilgani sababidan va muxolafat izhor qilgani illat bo'lib, Xo'jand, O'ratapa va Jizzax qo'ldan ketdi, Rusiya zabt etdi (Ibrat 2024: 100)

"Because of gathering troops to wage war against Russia and displaying opposition, Khujand, Uratapa, and Jizzakh were lost, and Russia conquered them."

In this passage, the three toponyms listed in sequence indicate precisely which territories were encompassed by a single historical event – the Russian conquest – thereby clearly delimiting the spatial boundaries of the event. In this connection, another important property of toponyms is that they allow a person to orient themselves in space, to distinguish between topographic objects, and to be aware of their relative positions (Ernazarov 2019: 10). By referring to a particular geographical object, each toponym makes it possible to form a precise picture of where and in what direction an event unfolded. As a result, it is linguistically ensured that the historical narrative unfolds not within an abstract territory but within a clearly defined space. It is precisely through this property that these toponyms perform the nominative-identificational function.

Thus, in the work, the nominative-identificational function of toponyms manifests through linking historical events to a specific geographical space and precisely determining the place where they occurred.

2. *The informative function of toponyms*

In addition to functioning as nominative units, toponyms in a historical text also serve to express information necessary for

understanding a particular geographical object. The informative function manifests through the textual-contextual usage of a toponym and expresses variable information about the administrative-political or territorial status of an object. Here, the central issue is not *where* the toponym is located, but *in what status* – under what administrative or historical-political condition – it is referred to.

The informative function of toponyms consists in the fact that, in a historical text, they are not limited merely to linking events with a place but also shape the reader's conception of the region being described. Certain historical place names are used by the author together with additional clarifications, thereby serving to specify the political, administrative, or historical status of the geographical object.

In *History of Fergana* it is through this function that the author provides additional information about the historical, political, or administrative status of certain geographical objects. As a result, the reader learns not only where events took place, but also gains an integral picture of the relative positions of the regions described, their historical standing, and their place in the unfolding of events. The fact that the same toponym expresses different territorial content in different textual contexts within *History of Fergana* is likewise a manifestation of the informative function. For instance, the toponym Farg'ona:

Turkiston viloyatining muzofotga taqsim qilgonda to'rt o'blustning biri Farg'ona o'blusti bo'lib, bir voyennoy gubernatur idorasida bo'lur (Ibrat 2024: 61)

"When Turkiston province was divided into districts, Fergana oblast was one of the four oblasts, under a military governor's administration"

In this sentence denotes an administrative-territorial unit (an oblast) of the Russian imperial period, whereas in:

Ya'ni Farg'onaga kelib, anda bo'lgan mog'ullar ilan muhoraba qilib, Xorazm va Naxshab va Kesh odamlaridan madad talab qilgonda,... (Ibrat 2024: 60)

"That is, having come to Fergana and waged war with the Mongols who were there, when he sought aid from the people of Khorazm, Nakhshab, and Kesh..."

It is used in the sense of a historical-geographical region. A similar pattern is observed with the toponym Koson. In one part of the work, this name is used as an administrative-territorial object, denoting one of the four *beklik* (districts) subordinate to the governor of Namangan:

Bu Namangonning hokimiga qarashli to'rt qasabot o'lib, To'raqo'rg'on, Chust va Chahortoq, Koson degan yerlar bo'lub, har biri bir beklik yer edi" (Ibrat 2024: 123)

"These were the four districts subordinate to the governor of Namangan — Turakurgan, Chust, Chahortok, and Koson — each of which was a separate beklik"

In another passage, however, the same name appears as a component part of the name of a historical event:

Har ikki azizlar Koson urushida kelib, bul yerda shahid qilgan ekan [Ibrat 2024: 123]

"Both saints, having come to the Battle of Koson, were martyred here"

In this case, the toponym no longer serves merely to name a geographical object but also provides the basis for naming the historical event associated with that object. This demonstrates that the informative potential of a toponym manifests not only through its own meaning but also through other derived naming units formed from it.

3. *The cumulative function of toponyms*

Another important linguistic function of toponyms is the cumulative function – that is, the function of accumulating and preserving historical-linguistic information. As linguistic units formed over a long process of historical development, place names retain within themselves information about the naming traditions, phonetic features, and historical-geographical

conceptions of a particular period. Toponyms are thus not limited to naming geographical objects alone but also acquire significance as important onomastic units that transmit historical-linguistic information from generation to generation. Here, attention is directed to the toponym itself – to how it has been preserved or changed in sound and form – which distinguishes this function from the informative function. Place names are often regarded as one of the forms of historical memory: it is specifically noted that toponyms reflect the history, ethnography, and culture of the peoples who have inhabited a given territory (Karimov & Buriyev 2006: 5).

The cumulative property of toponyms consists, above all, in the fact that they are linguistic units reflecting historical naming traditions. Each historical place name indirectly preserves information related to the political, social, and cultural life of a particular period. In this respect, toponyms serve as a reliable linguistic source for studying the historical development of the language, naming traditions, and the evolution of conceptions of geographical space.

In *History of Fergana* this function is clearly manifested in the fact that historical toponyms have preserved their ancient forms, making it possible to observe the phonetic and lexical changes of certain place names relative to the present day, and to determine whether certain historical names have survived to the present or have fallen out of use.

The fact that the source records the ancient forms of certain toponyms along with their historical variants is a vivid manifestation of the cumulative function. In particular, the co-occurrence in the work of the forms Qubod, Qubo, and Quvo makes it possible to reconstruct the historical stages of development of this toponym:

Qubodni o'z ismiga Qubod qo'yub, holo dolni tarxim qilib Qubo yozarlar. Avom un-nos bo'lsa, og'izda Quvo derlar. Quvoni hech ma'nisi yo'q (Ibrat 2024: 60)

"They named it Qubod after his name; now, dropping the letter *dol*, they write it as Qubo. As for the common people, they say Quvo in speech. Quvo has no meaning at all."

A similar situation is observed with the toponym Tirgov: in the work, this name is used in one place as Tirg'ov, and in another as Tirgova:

Tirg'ova qishlog'idan bo'lak xalq inqiyod qilmay, har qaysi jamoada bir biy bo'lub kelsa ham, Oltun beshikning biylik'i shuhratliroq bo'lub,... (Ibrat 2024: 65)

"Apart from the village of Tirgova, the people did not submit, and although each community had its own biy, the rule of Oltun Beshik was more renowned..."

...oxiri ichlaridan birisi chek qilmoq bo'lganda uch taqsim qilib, chek solib, beshik saroyliklarga, yovug'lari chinkatliklarga, bola Tirg'ovga tushganda, har qaysilari oz cheklariga tushgan nimarsalarni olib ketib, bolani tirgovaliklar tarbiyat qilib,... (Ibrat 2024: 65)

"...when in the end one of them decided to divide it, they cast lots and divided it in three: the cradle went to the Saroyliks, the *yovug'i* [certain relics] to the Chinkatliks, and the child fell to Tirgov; each took what fell to their share, and the child was raised by the people of Tirgova..."

The natural co-occurrence of these two forms within a single text directly reflects the phonetic-morphological state of the toponym during that period. Moreover, the use in the text of the word *tirgovaliklar* [people of Tirgova], derived from this toponym, shows that the place name had taken deep root in the life of society, to the extent that a new linguistic unit had been formed from it. The preservation of these forms in the text shows that linguistic information about the phonetic development of the historical toponym has been transmitted down to the present day. Unlike the descriptive function, this phenomenon reveals not the etymological aspect of the toponym but its property of preserving historical-linguistic information.

The variant historical forms of names found in the work not only reflect the historical forms of particular toponyms but also serve as an important scholarly basis for identifying their diachronic change. In this respect, the toponyms used in the work acquire particular scholarly value as important onomastic units preserving historical-linguistic information.

4. *The descriptive function of toponyms*

The descriptive function manifests through the internal etymological structure of a toponym and expresses stable information about the reason for the naming of an object — that is, its natural or historical distinguishing feature. It is connected not with the external status or historical form of the toponym, but with its internal, etymological meaning – why the object came to be called precisely so. This function manifests in cases where the etymological meaning of a place name has been preserved, and it serves to express the natural, historical, or other significant features of a geographical object. Such toponyms, in addition to performing a naming function, also reflect within themselves a conception of certain properties of the object. It is in this respect that the descriptive function is of particular importance in revealing the semantic content of a toponym.

The distinctive feature of the descriptive function is that, here, the toponym manifests itself not merely as an individual name but as a linguistic unit also expressing additional information about a particular geographical object. Especially in place names whose etymological motivation has been preserved, features such as the natural conditions, geographical characteristics, historical events, or ethnic composition of the object are conveyed through the internal semantics of the name. Thus, the descriptive function serves as an important theoretical basis for identifying the motives behind the naming of historical toponyms and for elucidating their internal semantic content.

In *History of Fergana* this function is clearly manifested in the author's provision of the origin, motivation, and etymological explanations of certain place names. In particular, Ishakhan Ibrat provides a detailed account of the origin of the toponym Khoqand, explaining that its original form was Khokkand, which subsequently, under the influence of Turkic pronunciation, changed to Khoqand, and in Russian to the form Kokand:

...ul yerlarni(ng) ismi "Xo'k kand" bo'lub, xo'k kand aytmoqda qiyin bo'lub, bizni(ng) turkiyda "qof" harfi qaviy uchun Xo'qand bo'lgan, forsiy "kof"ni turkiy "qof"ga badal qilganlar turkiylar lafzidir. Mana, endi yana bir badal bo'ldi, ruscha aytmoqda "qof" yo'q, "Ko'kand" bo'ldi (Ibrat 2024: 64)

"...the name of that place was 'Khok kand,' but as 'khok kand' was difficult to pronounce, in our Turkic [speech], because of the strength of the letter *qof*, it became Khoqand – it is characteristic of Turkic speech to substitute the Turkic *qof* for the Persian *kof*. Now, yet another substitution has occurred: in Russian pronunciation there is no *qof*, so it has become 'Kokand.'"

Through explaining the motivation behind the naming of the toponym, the author seeks to reveal its internal semantic content. The phonetic variants are cited here as a means of substantiating this explanation. A similar situation is observed with the toponym Marg'inon, though in this case the author presents the etymological explanation in the form of a folk legend:

Anda hazrat Iskandar savol qilibdurlarki: "Bu nimadur?" deb. Anda arz qilguvchi: forsiylar javob beribdurlarki: "Murg'u non". Ya'ni tovuq ilan non deganlarida, podshoh Iskandar: "Arzlaringiz nimadur?" deganda,... Farg'ona shuhrat topgan, ammoki alholda Marg'inon derlar. O'shal tovuq ilan non tutgan erdur Marg'inon shahri ismi bo'lib, Farg'ona umumiy iqlimiga ismdur" (Ibrat 2024: 56-57)

"There, His Majesty Iskandar asked: 'What is this?' Whereupon the one who was to answer – the Persians – replied: 'Murg'u non,' that is, they said 'chicken and bread.' When King Iskandar asked, 'What is it you are saying?'... [thus] Farg'ona became renowned, though now they call it Marg'inon. That very place where the chicken and bread were held became the name of the city of Marg'inon, while Farg'ona is the name of the region as a whole."

In this legend, the toponym is interpreted as deriving from the words *murg* (chicken) and *non* (bread). Such an explanation is not confirmed from a historical-etymological standpoint and represents an instance of folk etymology, connected to the widespread tradition of legends about Iskandar Zulqarnayn [Alexander the Great]. Nevertheless, this instance manifests a distinctive manifestation of the descriptive function. The author, by associating the sound structure of the toponym with familiar words, seeks to give it a meaningful explanation – reflecting how the toponym has been "understood" in the popular consciousness.

Ishakhan Ibrat seeks to reveal the internal semantic content of certain toponyms by explaining the motivations behind their naming. Such explanations demonstrate that historical toponyms are not merely nominative units but semantic units reflecting a particular historical-geographical reality. In this way, toponyms, in addition to naming a geographical object, also form a conception of the features underlying its naming.

It is also worth noting how these functions, described separately above, manifest in mutual interaction within the text. Although the nominative-identificational, informative, cumulative, and descriptive functions discussed above have been distinguished separately for analytical purposes, in the material of *History of Fergana* they frequently manifest in mutual harmony. A single toponym may perform several functions simultaneously, depending on the textual context.

The toponym *Khoqand* illustrates this situation. By explaining the origin of this name, the author sets out its etymological analysis – this constitutes the descriptive function of the toponym. At the same time, the successive presentation of the forms *Khokkand* – *Khoqand* – *Kokand* also performs the cumulative function, in that it preserves historical-linguistic information about the phonetic development of the name across different periods. Elsewhere in the text, the toponym *Khoqand* is used as a nominative-identificational device linking historical events to a specific geographical space.

A similar situation is observed with the toponyms *Qubod* – *Qubo* – *Quvo*, as well as with Farg'ona. The forms *Qubod* – *Qubo* – *Quvo* manifest the cumulative function through the preservation of historical variants, while the author's remark *Quvoni hech ma'nisi yo'q* ("Quvo has no meaning at all") also brings out the descriptive function, in that it expresses an assessment of the etymological aspect of the name. The toponym Farg'ona, for its part, demonstrates the mutual interweaving of the informative and nominative-identificational functions by expressing, in different textual contexts, either a historical-geographical region or an administrative unit. For this reason, in studying the toponymy of a historical text, it is expedient to

analyze these functions not only individually but also from the standpoint of their mutual interrelation.

CONCLUSIONS

The linguistic functions of historical toponyms examined above are consistently manifested in the material of *History of Fergana*: the nominative-identificational function establishes the spatial basis of historical events, the informative function expresses variable information about geographical objects, the cumulative function preserves historical-linguistic data, and the descriptive function reveals the semantic content of certain toponyms. At the same time, the fact that the toponyms recorded in the work have preserved their ancient forms, and that these differ from their present-day forms, renders these units a valuable linguistic source not only for historical geography but also for the study of the historical development of the Uzbek language. A systematic study of the historical toponyms in "History of Fergana" thus makes it possible to shed deeper light on their stages of formation and development, as well as on their place within the historical text.

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