

Linguistic Variation and Etymological Interpretations of the Toponym Andijan

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the historical development, etymology, and linguistic variation of the Andijan polisonym, one of the oldest urban names in the Fergana Valley. The study focuses on historical written sources, folklore, numismatic evidence, and scholarly interpretations of the place name, with particular attention to its phonetic and lexical variants. A comparative-historical and lexical-semantic approach is used to trace the development of the forms Andukon, Andukan, Andugon, Andigon, Andigan, and Andijan and to assess competing explanations of their origin. The analysis also considers the relationship between the city name and the regional choronym Andijan through transtoponymization and examines a range of subsequently formed onomastic units, including hydronyms, ergonyms, ideonyms, hemeronyms, and phytonyms. The findings show that the historical variants constitute a coherent chain of linguistic development and that the etymology of Andijan has been interpreted from several different perspectives, including ethnonymic and geographical hypotheses. On the basis of the sources reviewed, the study identifies the principal linguistic pathways proposed for the name and clarifies the role of transonymization in extending the name across the regional onomastic system.

Keywords: Toponym, polisonym, astionym, choronym, oikonym, historical variant, transonymization, transtoponymization, etymology, folk etymology, etymon, hydronym, ergonym, hemeronym, phytonym

INTRODUCTION

Looking back at the history of the Fergana Valley, Andijan became part of Amir Timur's state in the 1370s. From the second half of the fifteenth century, it served as the capital of the Fergana province within the Timurid state. During the rule of Umar Shaykh Mirza and, subsequently, his son Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, the city developed as an important centre of agriculture, scholarship, and culture. From 1504, Andijan came under Shaybanid rule. In 1710, it became part of the Kokand Khanate and remained the seat of the Andijan beylik until the Russian annexation of the Kokand Khanate in 1876.

Today, Andijan denotes both a city and a region in the eastern part of the Fergana Valley. Andijan Region is an administrative region of the Republic of Uzbekistan. It was established on 6 March 1941. Its area is 4.27 thousand km², and its population was 3,545,347 as of 1 July 2026. The region is the most densely populated in Uzbekistan and ranks fourth nationally by population. It currently comprises 14 districts, 11 cities, 79 urban-type settlements, and more than 455 rural settlements.

The administrative centre of the region is the city of Andijan. Accordingly, oikonyms – the proper names of populated places – occupy an important position in the regional toponymic system. From 1926 to 1930, an Andijan district also existed in the area. The city of Andijan (polisonym), Andijan Region (choronym), and the cities and villages within the region have distinct historical trajectories.

Although the historical forms and etymological interpretations of Andijan have been discussed in previous studies, these approaches have generally examined individual aspects of the name separately. The relationship between the historical phonetic variants, their proposed lexical and ethnonymic bases, and the subsequent expansion of the name into different onomastic categories has not been sufficiently systematized. The present study addresses this gap by examining these dimensions as interconnected stages of the linguistic development of the Andijan polisonym.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

The study makes four related contributions. First, it brings together the principal folk and scholarly interpretations of the Andijan polisonym and compares the linguistic assumptions underlying them. Second, it traces the documented historical and phonetic variants of the name across written and numismatic sources and interprets them as stages of linguistic development rather than as isolated forms. Third, it synthesizes the principal etymological hypotheses concerning the lexical and ethnonymic bases of the name. Fourth, it demonstrates how the city name was extended through transtoponymization and transonymization to form a wider set of regional onomastic units. This contribution is intended to provide a coherent linguistic account of the name while preserving the distinctions between documented evidence, scholarly interpretation, and folk etymology. Fifth, the study proposes an integrated model of the linguistic development of the Andijan polisonym, linking historical variation, phonetic transformation, competing etymological interpretations, standardization, and subsequent transonymization. This model demonstrates that the development of the name should be understood not as a series of isolated variants but as a connected process within the regional onomastic system.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employs comparative-historical and lexical-semantic methods and proceeds through four interconnected analytical stages. First, historical, folkloric, and numismatic sources containing the name Andijan or its earlier variants were identified and grouped according to period and source type. The principal materials include Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur's *Baburnama*, Is'haqon Ibrat's *History of Fergana*, numismatic evidence, and studies by S. Jalilov, R. Shamsutdinov, A. Isoqov, B. Kh. Matboboyev, and Z. Z. Mashraboyev [2: 26-30; 9; 10]. Second, the documented forms of the toponym were compared at the phonetic and lexical levels, with particular attention to alternations involving i/u and the topoformants

-*kon*, -*kan*, -*gon*, and -*gan*. Third, the etymological proposals were classified according to their proposed lexical bases and semantic motivations, including ethnonymic, geographical, and folk-etymological explanations. Fourth, the present study examined the subsequent redistribution of the name within the regional onomastic system through transtoponymization and transonymization. Throughout the analysis, source-attested forms were distinguished from later interpretations, and conclusions were drawn by comparing evidence across independent source types rather than relying on a single explanatory tradition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Various views, legends, and narratives have been recorded concerning the emergence of the city and the origin of its name.

One folk account maintains that Indians (*andis*) once lived in the area and that the city was therefore called “Andukon.” The same account associates the form Andukon with the period of the Arab Caliphate and has subsequently been used to support folk etymological interpretations of the Andijan polisonym.

According to another legend, Odinajon, the daughter of Afrosiyob, the ancient king of Turan, suffered from a serious illness and came to this area, where she was cured. The place, situated along streams flowing from the Tahti Sulaymon mountain range, was consequently said to have been called Odinajon. Afrosiyob is then said to have built a residence and a garden for his daughter and to have made the settlement the capital of Turan. Over time, according to the legend, Odinajon developed into Andijan [1: 89].

A further legend attributes the name to the phrase “*Anda qoldi jonim mening*,” translated as “My soul remained there,” while another popular explanation interprets the expression through “*olti jon*,” meaning “six people.” Yet another account associates the name with a person named Andi, who is said to have laid the foundation of the city [2: 26-27].

Some sources relate the name to ethnonyms such as *andi* and *adoq* (*azoq*), thereby connecting the origin of the toponym with an Andi group or with ethnonymic material associated with the area.

The historical record of the Andijan toponym extends back to at least the tenth century, when the name appears in several forms. V. V. Bartold stated that in the tenth century Andijan or Andukon was mentioned as a village, while its transformation into a city occurred during the Mongol period, particularly in the thirteenth century [3: 132-136]. This interpretation, however, should be considered alongside earlier Arab geographical accounts in which Andijan is already referred to as a city.

Ibn Hawqal's *Kitab Surat al-Ard*, written in 977-978, records the form Andukon in its account of the regions of Fergana [4: 80]. In the twelfth century, the form Andukon was also recorded by Abu Sa'd Abd al-Karim ibn Muhammad al-Sam'ani [5: 291]. These records indicate that the toponym was in circulation in the medieval period and that the settlement had already acquired regional significance.

In later sources, the form Andijan appears in Babur's *Baburnama* [6: 34] and in the works of Mahmud ibn Wali, while coins preserve the forms Andikon and Andigon [7: 323-341]. In Babur's *Baburnama*, the polisonym occurs in several passages. One passage may be rendered in English as follows: "Among the settlements on the southern side, one is Andijan, which is situated in the middle" [6: 34].

Is'haqkhan Junaydullohoja Ibrat's *History of Fergana* also contains historical information and folk interpretations concerning the city name. In the section entitled 'History of the City of Andijan,' Ibrat cites a chronogrammatic verse associated with the foundation of the city: "Aral" for Andijan, "maral" for Margilan, / In the Hijri chronology, "g'aral" for Shahrizan [8: 266-335]. According to the numerical interpretation of these forms, the dates 230, 270, and 1230 are obtained respectively, leading to the suggestion that Andijan was founded in 230.

Ibrat also records the Odinajon interpretation, explaining that Andijan was originally Odinajon and that, through linguistic alteration in common usage, the name came to be pronounced as Andijon [8: 324]. As the name of the historical city, Andijan functions as a polisonym; as the name of the region and district, it functions as a choronym. The history, geographical scope, status, location, etymology, nominative motivation, lexical base,

structure, formation, meaning, and phonetic and lexical variants of the Andijan toponym have been examined in historical, archaeological, geographical, and linguistic scholarship.

The folk narratives described above have cultural and historical value, but they do not by themselves provide sufficient linguistic evidence for the development of the toponym. Their explanations generally derive from apparent similarities in the external form of the name and therefore represent folk-etymological reinterpretations rather than demonstrable historical derivations.

S. Jalilov's work is particularly important in the historiographical study of Andijan and its toponymy. Drawing on Babur's notes and explanations in the *Baburnama*, Jalilov produced a number of studies devoted to the history and urban toponymy of Andijan, including works on the city's historical development, fortress, ark, irrigation channels, and its place in Babur's biography [9].

R. T. Shamsutdinov and A. A. Ishoqov reviewed legends, historical interpretations, and source-based explanations of the city name and proposed that the toponym consists of *andi* – “near,” “friend,” or “adopted brother” – and *jon* – “river” or “stream,” producing the sense “the city by the stream” [2: 26-30].

B. Kh. Matboboyev and Z. Z. Mashrabov provide extensive historical documentation of Andijan Region, including written sources, phonetic variants of the city name, and elements of urbanonymy. Their appendices are especially valuable for tracing the linguistic development of the Andijan polisonym and document forms such as *Andukan* (*Andukon*), *Andugan*, *Andagan*, *Andakan*, *Andigan*, *Andidjan*, *Andijan*, and *Andijon*, together with historical oikonyms, *guzar* names, and names associated with architectural and pilgrimage sites [10].

A. Nabiev also reviews folk-etymological interpretations and draws on the views of V. Nalivkin and S. Jalilov. He reports the hypothesis that the name originally had the form *Anjon* and that, after the Russian conquest of Central Asia, the sound “d” was inserted before “j,” producing *Andijon*. He nevertheless concludes that, although the history of the city is clearly documented in written sources, the etymology of the name had not yet been scientifically established [11: 253-261].

S. Jalilov further argues that there is no Turkic tribe called *andi* among the tribes and clans incorporated into the Uzbek and other Central Asian populations and proposes instead that the toponym derives from the name of a Turkic tribe called *ad*. In his interpretation, the ethnonym developed into the Persian plural forms *adgon* and *adigon* and later acquired the sound "n."

V. V. Radlov connects the ethnonym *andi* with the ancient Turkic word *arig'i* and explains its present form through phonetic change. As a geographical term, *arig'i* denotes a branch of a river, a riverside area, or an island [12].

Building on Radlov's interpretation, A. Turgunov argues that *Andijan* derives from the ancient Turkic word *arg'i*, meaning "island," combined with *yon*, associated with "soul," "spirit," or "life." He therefore interprets the name as referring to a community living on the *Andijonsoy* island [13: 130-136].

A. Muhammadjonov proposes that the name results from the combination of *andi* with *gon*, *kon*, or *jon*. In this interpretation, *andi* means "near," while *kon*, *gon*, and *jon* are associated with "water" or "stream," producing the meanings "near water," "by the water," "near the stream," or "by the stream" [1: 89-95].

Mahmud Kashgari, when describing the ethnic composition of the Turkic population of ancient Fergana, notes the presence of the *Argus* in *O'zgand* and nearby *Azg'ish*. S. Ibrohimov relates this evidence to the historical geography of the region and argues that the cities near *O'zgand* included "Osh" and "Andugon," while "Azg'ish" could not have been "Osh" [14: 5].

A dictionary attributed to Sheikh Sulayman Bukhari explains "Adoq" as an ancient name of the city of *Andijan* [15: 488]. On the basis of such historical lexicographic evidence, S. Ibrohimov argues that "Adoq and *Azg'ish* // *Adg'ish* may have related roots." He further suggests that the *Azg'ish* referred to by Mahmud Kashgari could correspond to *Andijan* < *Andugon* and that forms such as *A(n)dgon* > *A(n)di*, or *A[n(du)]gon*, may represent phonetic variants of *Azg'ish* // *Adg'ish* [14: 5]. This proposal has influenced subsequent interpretations of the *Andijan* etymon, including those reflected in more recent reference works [16: 28].

CONCLUSIONS

The evidence reviewed in this study shows that the Andijan polisonym has been preserved in a range of historical forms, including *Andukon* // *Andukan*, *Andiyon*, *Andikon* // *Andikan*, and *Andugon* // *Andugan* // *Andigon* // *Andigan*. The variants are linked by recurrent phonetic correspondences, especially the alternation of i and u, and by variation in the ethnonymic elements and the toponymic elements *-kon*, *-kan*, *-gon*, and *-gan*.

One influential interpretation derives the name from ethnonymic forms *Azoq* // *Adoq* and *Azg'ish* // *Adg'ish* and proposes a combination of the Turkic tribal name *ad* with the historical lexeme *kan*, understood as a term denoting a city. In this account, the forms *adkan*//*adikon* subsequently developed through the addition of *n* and further phonetic change into *A(n)dukan* > *A(n)digan* > *Andijon*. This interpretation should be regarded as a scholarly hypothesis grounded in historical and comparative evidence rather than as an uncontested etymological fact.

At the same time, Z. Ziyotov records evidence for the existence of an *andi*-named Turkic group in the medieval period and associates *andi* with the meaning “near” [17: 34]. Additional support for the broader etymological discussion comes from the occurrence of place names such as *Andijan*, *Andigon*, and *Andikon* in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and from related toponyms recorded in Samarkand, Surkhandarya, and along the Kofarnihon River [16: 29; 18: 158].

Ibrat's explanation of the historical relationship between *Andigon* and *Andijon* provides a further linguistic interpretation. He argues that *Andigon* may have been adapted into the form *Andijon* in Arabic writing and pronunciation, drawing a parallel with the transformation of Azerbaijan into Ozarbayjan [8: 324]. Whatever the precise mechanism, the cumulative evidence indicates that the modern form *Andijan* is the result of a longer sequence of phonetic and lexical development.

The dialectal forms *Anjan* and *Anjon* can be interpreted as reduced variants resulting from the loss of *-di* in the second syllable, consistent with the principle of linguistic economy. In contemporary usage, *Andigon* functions mainly as a historical or stylistic form, *Andijan* is the standard form used in formal and

literary communication, and Anjan and Anjon occur primarily in colloquial or dialectal speech & occasionally in poetry [19: 53-56].

The analysis further demonstrates that names can generate new names within an onomastic system. Polisonymic and choronymic units may become linguistic bases for other toponymic and ergonymic formations as a result of territorial subdivision and the interaction of macro- and microtoponymy. In the case of Andijan, the city name was first transferred to the regional name through transtoponymization: Andijan (city name – polisonym) > Andijan Region (choronym – name of an administrative-territorial unit).

Subsequently, as the city's infrastructure and the region's economic, cultural, and spiritual life developed, the Andijan polisonym and choronym served as naming bases for a wider range of onomastic units. These include Andijan (town – astionym), Andijan District and Andijan Svita (choronyms); Andijonsoy, the Greater Andijan Canal, and Andijan Reservoir (hydronyms); Andijan Biochemical Plant, Andijan Agrofirma Joint-Stock Company, Andijan Grain Products Joint-Stock Company, Andijan Hotel, Andijan Institute of Engineering and Economics, Andijan State University, Andijan Medical Institute, and the folk dance ensemble "Andijan Polka" (ergonyms); the Andijan earthquake and "Andijan Polka" as the name of a dance (ideonyms); Andijan black grape // Black Andijani, "Andijan-1," and "Andijan-2" as wheat varieties (phytonyms); and Andijannoma and Andijan Television and Radio Company (hemeronyms) [7: 323-341].

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