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Linguistic and Historical Layers in the Toponymy of Jizzakh Region

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ABSTRACT

Place names preserve information about the history, languages, economy and natural environment of a territory. The toponymy of Jizzakh region, located at the junction of the Turkestan and Nurata mountain systems, the Mirzachul steppe and the Kyzylkum desert, reflects centuries of contact between Iranian-speaking and Turkic-speaking populations. The purpose of this study is to describe the main types of toponyms of the region and to identify the linguistic and historical layers to which they belong. The research combines descriptive, etymological, structural (topoformant) and comparative-historical methods and draws on explanatory dictionaries of Uzbek toponyms, medieval geographical sources, published studies of the Jizzakh oasis and the current administrative nomenclature. The analysis shows that the toponymic system of the region consists of five chronological layers: an ancient Iranian (Sogdian) substrate, a dominant Turkic layer, an Arabic-Persian layer, a Russian-Soviet layer and names of the independence period. Hydronyms and oronyms prove to be the most conservative groups, whereas oikonyms and district names have been most exposed to renaming. It is concluded that the toponyms of Jizzakh region are a source for the history of the Uzbek language and the ethnic history of the oasis, and that the systematic documentation of local microtoponyms is an urgent task.

Keywords: Toponymy, Jizzakh region, oikonym, hydronym, oronym, ethnotoponym, topoformant, etymology

INTRODUCTION

Toponymy, the branch of onomastics that studies the names of geographical objects, occupies a special place among the humanities because place names outlive the languages, peoples and states that created them. A toponym may preserve a word that has disappeared from the living language, record the former appearance of a landscape or indicate the settlement of a particular tribe. For this reason, place names are often described as “linguistic monuments” of a territory. Modern toponymic research is interdisciplinary: as J. Tent notes, it may follow a typological, etymological, historical or cartographic approach, and the choice of approach depends on the aims of the study [1]. The theoretical foundations of the discipline and its connections with history, geography and cultural studies are summarised in the international handbook edited by C. Hough [2], while the classical classification of names by type of object was elaborated in the works of A. V. Superanskaya [3].

Uzbek toponymy has a well-established research tradition. S. Qorayev systematised the terminology and methods of the discipline and collected extensive field material across the republic [4]. The dictionary of folk geographical terms compiled by E. M. Murzaev remains an indispensable tool for interpreting the appellatives that form Central Asian place names [5]. Explanatory dictionaries of the toponyms of Uzbekistan by T. Nafasov [6] and by R. Khudoyberganov and co-authors [7] provide etymologies for thousands of names, and E. Begmatov emphasised the cultural and spiritual value of place names as part of national heritage [10].

Jizzakh region, which was separated from Sirdaryo region as an independent administrative unit in 1973, occupies a transitional zone between the mountains of the Turkestan range, the Nurata and Malguzar ridges, the irrigated lands of the Mirzachul steppe and the sands of the Kyzylkum. Such a diversity of landscapes, together with a long history of settlement, has produced a rich and heterogeneous toponymic system. Several aspects of this system have already been studied: K. Khakimov and co-authors examined the linguogeographical

properties and topoformants of the region's place names [8], and Q. Almanov analysed the ethnic composition of the Jizzakh oasis and its ethnotoponyms [9]. However, a generalised description of the chronological and linguistic layers of the regional toponymy is still lacking.

The aim of this article is therefore to classify the principal toponyms of Jizzakh region by type of object and by origin, and to show how successive historical periods are reflected in the regional toponymic system. To achieve this aim, the following tasks were set: 1) to identify the main groups of toponyms by type of object; 2) to establish the etymology and structure of the most significant names; 3) to determine the linguistic-historical layers of the toponymy and their characteristic features.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material of the study consists of the names of the administrative districts, settlements, rivers, lakes, mountain ridges and passes of Jizzakh region. The names were collected from the explanatory dictionaries of Uzbek toponyms [6; 7], from the monograph of S. Qorayev [4], from published studies of the Jizzakh oasis [8; 9], from medieval geographical works, in particular *Hudud al-'Alam* [12], from historical research on Transoxania [13], from hydrographic studies of the Aydar-Arnasay lake system [14] and from the current official administrative-territorial nomenclature of the region.

Several complementary methods were applied. The "descriptive method" was used to record and group the names. The "etymological method" was used to reconstruct the original meaning of the names on the basis of dictionaries of geographical terms [5] and toponymic dictionaries [6; 7]. The "structural (topoformant) method" made it possible to divide the names into a stem and a name-forming element (topoformant), following the approach applied to the Jizzakh material in [8]. The "comparative-historical method" was used to compare modern forms with the forms attested in written sources. The classification of toponyms by type of object follows the tradition of [3] and [4], while the division into chronological layers takes

into account the stratification proposed in recent studies of the toponymy of Uzbekistan [11]. All names are given in the modern Uzbek Latin script, with English equivalents where necessary.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Classification by type of object

The toponyms of the region fall into the main groups traditionally distinguished in onomastics [3; 4]: oikonyms (names of settlements), hydronyms (names of water bodies), oronyms (names of relief forms), choronyms (names of larger areas) and microtoponyms (names of small local objects). Representative examples of each group are given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Classification of the toponyms of Jizzakh region by type of object*

Group	**Object**	**Examples**	**Stability**
Oikonyms	cities, towns, villages	Jizzax, Zomin, Gallaorol, Qo‘ytosh, Yangiobod	most frequently renamed
Hydronyms	rivers, streams, lakes	Sangzor, Zominsuv, Aydarkul, Tuzkon, Arnasoy lakes	highly conservative
Oronyms	ridges, mountains, passes	Turkiston tizmasi, Molguzar, Nurota tog‘lari, Ilonutti	highly conservative
Choronyms	steppes, deserts, oases	Mirzachul, Qizilqum, Jizzax vohasi	stable, with parallel foreign names
Microtoponyms	fields, springs, pastures, gardens	local names recorded in villages of Zomin district [4]	vulnerable to loss

Hydronyms and oronyms form the most ancient and stable part of the system: the names of rivers and mountains are used by successive populations and are rarely replaced by administrative decision. Oikonyms, and especially the names of districts, are the most changeable group, since they were repeatedly affected by administrative reforms in the twentieth century. Microtoponyms are extremely numerous: in 1966 S. Qorayev recorded more than

300 toponyms and microtoponyms around a single village, Tamtum in Zomin district [4]. At the same time, this group is the most vulnerable, because such names exist mainly in oral use and disappear together with the objects and the older generation of speakers.

Linguistic and historical layers

The analysis of the origin of the names allows five chronological layers to be distinguished (Table 2, Figure 1). A similar stratification into an ancient substrate, Turkic, Arabic-Persian and Russian-Soviet layers has been proposed for the toponymy of Uzbekistan as a whole [11]; the Jizzakh material confirms this model and adds a distinct layer of the independence period.

Table 2. *Linguistic and historical layers of the toponymy of Jizzakh region*

Layer	**Characteristic elements**	**Examples**	**Period**
Ancient Iranian (Sogdian) substrate	*diz* 'fortress', diminutive *-ak*	Jizzax (< Dizak)	pre-Islamic and early medieval
Turkic	*soy, tepa, tosh, ko'l, qum*; tribal names	Arnasoy, Qo'ytosh, Qizilqum; *yuz, qirq, qipchoq*	early medieval to present (dominant)
Arabic-Persian	*sang, -zor, guzar, -obod*	Sangzor, Molguzar, G'allaorol (hybrid)	medieval to 19th century
Russian-Soviet	Russian names, ideological vocabulary	Golodnaya step, Do'stlik, Paxtakor, Zarbdor	1886-1991
Independence period	commemorative and restored names	Sharof Rashidov district	since 1991



Figure 1. Chronological stratification of the toponymy of Jizzakh region (compiled by the authors)

The ancient Iranian substrate

The oldest layer is represented above all by the name of the regional centre. In the tenth-century Persian geography "Hudud al-'Alam" the town is recorded as "Dizak" [12]. The most widely accepted explanation derives this form from the Sogdian word *diz* "fortress" with the diminutive suffix *-ak*, i.e. "small fortress"; the modern form Jizzax developed through the Turkic phonetic adaptation of the initial *d-*. The name of Forish district has been linked by some local researchers to the Sogdian village name Porasht, interpreted as "foot of the fortress"; this hypothesis, however, still requires confirmation from written sources.

The Turkic layer

It is the most extensive and productive part of the system. It includes transparent descriptive names built from Turkic geographical appellatives such as *soy* "stream valley," *tepa* "hill," *tosh* "stone," *ko'l* "lake" and *qum* "sand" (*Qizilqum* "red sand," *Qo'ytosh* "sheep stone"). The hydronym Arnasoy combines two appellatives: *arna* "large channel, riverbed" [5] and *soy*. A significant group consists of ethnotoponyms derived from the names of Uzbek tribes and clans (*yuz*, *qirq*, *qipchoq*, *nayman*, *mang'it*, *qo'ng'irot*), which reflect the settlement of semi-nomadic groups in the oasis; their historical background is

examined in [9]. Khakimov and co-authors also point to a specific group of appellatives and oikonyms formed on the basis of the names of famous horses, which reflects the importance of horse breeding in the traditional economy of the region [8].

The Arabic-Persian layer

It is represented mainly by lexical elements and topoformants borrowed through the literary Persian language. The hydronym Sangzor is formed from Persian *sang* "stone" and the topoformant *-zor* "place abundant in something," which accurately describes the stony bed of the river. The oronym Molguzar can be interpreted as a combination of *mol* "livestock" and Persian *guzar* "crossing, passage." The formant *-obod* "settlement, cultivated place" remained productive up to the Soviet period (Yangiobod, Zafarobod). Hybrid names are typical of the region: G'allaorol combines *g'alla* "grain," a word of Arabic origin, with the Turkic *orol* "island"; "land between waters," reflecting the importance of grain cultivation.

The coexistence of popular and historical names is well illustrated by the Ilono'tti gorge, through which the Sangzor river passes between the Malguzar and Nurata ridges. The popular Turkic name means "the snake passed," while historical sources also know the gorge as *Temir qopug'* "Iron Gate" and *Oq ko'tal* "White Pass"; its rock inscriptions commemorate the return of Ulugh Beg from his campaign against the Moghuls and the victory of the Shaybanid Abdullah Khan in 979/1571-72 [13]. In modern usage the gorge is also widely known as "Amir Temur's Gate", which shows how a toponym can acquire new historical associations.

The Russian-Soviet layer

It appeared after the colonisation and agricultural development of the steppe. Russian peasants were first resettled in the Mirzachul steppe in 1886, and a number of Russian names appeared in the areas of their settlement [4]; the steppe itself was widely known in Russian as *Golodnaya step* "Hungry Steppe." Large-scale irrigation in the Soviet period produced a new generation of names reflecting the official ideology and the cotton-growing

economy: *Do‘stlik* “friendship,” *Paxtakor* “cotton grower,” *Zarbdor* “shock (worker).” Hydrotechnical changes also generated new hydronyms: after water discharges from the Chardara reservoir into the Arnasay depression in 1969, the Aydar-Arnasay lake system was formed [14], and the name of a local landscape object was transferred to a large artificial lake.

The independence period

It is characterised by the revision of ideologically marked names, the restoration of historical names and the commemoration of prominent figures, for example the naming of Sharof Rashidov district. As noted in [11], these renaming processes intensified after 1991 and remain an active part of language policy.

The results show that each historical period left a recognisable trace in the toponymy of the region, but the layers are unevenly distributed across object types: the oldest names survive primarily in hydronyms, oronyms and the names of old towns, while the youngest layers are concentrated in the names of districts and newly founded settlements on irrigated land. This observation agrees with the general principle that names of natural objects are more resistant to change than names of administrative units [1; 3].

CONCLUSIONS

The toponymy of Jizzakh region is a multi-layered system that reflects the long interaction of Iranian and Turkic languages and cultures, as well as the economic and political changes of the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries. Five chronological layers can be distinguished: the ancient Iranian (Sogdian) substrate, the dominant Turkic layer, the Arabic-Persian layer, the Russian-Soviet layer and the independence-period layer. Hydronyms and oronyms are the most stable and informative group for historical reconstruction, whereas oikonyms and district names are the most changeable. Ethnotoponyms provide valuable evidence for the ethnic history of the oasis. Further research should focus on field collection and mapping of microtoponyms, the compilation of a regional toponymic dictionary of Jizzakh region and the use

of toponymic material in teaching the Uzbek language, local history and geography.

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