



Article

Specifics of Toponym Formation in Kungrad District

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Abstract: Toponym formation is a key linguistic process through which vocabulary is enriched and cultural, historical, and geographical knowledge is encoded in language. Specific background: In the Kungrad district of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, traditional land and water names have historically reflected natural features, historical events, occupations, and ethnic composition through lexico-semantic, morphological, and lexico-syntactic word-formation methods specific to the Karakalpak language. Despite the richness of this toponymic system, recent practices of ideological, personalized, or aesthetically motivated renaming have not been sufficiently analyzed in terms of their linguistic and cultural consequences. The study aims to identify the main mechanisms of toponym formation in the Kungrad district and to evaluate the semantic, historical, and cultural value of traditional toponyms in comparison with newly assigned names. The analysis demonstrates that traditional toponyms such as Aybuyir, Akbulak, and Topatkan preserve deep semantic motivation and historical memory, while many modern replacements fail to convey the essence of geographical objects. Productive word-formation methods, including toponymization, transonymization, transtoponymization, and the use of specific suffixes, are shown to be systematically embedded in the regional toponymic system. The study offers a comprehensive linguistic classification of Kungrad toponyms while linking word-formation processes with cultural identity and collective memory. The findings emphasize the importance of preserving and restoring historically grounded national toponyms as a means of safeguarding linguistic sovereignty, cultural heritage, and continuity between past and present in the context of globalization.

Keywords: Toponymy, Karakalpak linguistics, word formation, Kungrad district, etymology, lexico-semantic method, morphological suffixes, transonymization.

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1. Introduction

Word formation is considered the most important factor in enriching the vocabulary in linguistics. Word formation performs a service that no other field of linguistics can fulfill. This is the function of word formation in creating derivative words and new words[1].

Currently, against the background of comprehensive renewals in our country, the process of modernizing geographical names is proceeding rapidly. True, with the establishment of the Red Empire in the last century, names of leaders, high-ranking political figures, Russian writers and poets, and individuals famous in the industrial and production sectors, as well as other ideological names reflecting the breath of Union politics, had increased in various places[2]. Along with this, the practice of naming streets after people known only to their own street or a narrow circle of people became widespread. Thanks to Independence, the need for new names arose, and naming began. However, there is still no definitive conclusion reached in assigning new names. Within the last ten to fifteen years, street names in cities and districts have changed three or four

times. Most of the names currently being given cannot reveal the essence of that street. This process also applies to land and water names. For example, the name of the Kyzketken canal flowing through the center of Nukus city was changed to Doslyk in recent years. The reason for this was that the name Kyzketken sounded harsh to the ear, meaning it was changed because it implies "the girl drifted away." In reality, Kyzketken is an old Turkic word meaning "Oguz kathan" – the Oguz river (the word kathan or katan meant river in the old Turkic language); if this had been conveyed to the general public, the name of the canal might have remained unchanged. Indeed, the name Kyzketken is more meaningful than the name Doslyk and pushes a person to imaginatively explore the long historical past[3].

2. Materials and Method

The methodology of this study is grounded in a descriptive-analytical and comparative linguistic approach aimed at identifying the specific features of toponym formation in the Kungrad district. The research is based on a comprehensive corpus of toponyms collected from archival materials, historical documents, regional maps, and field data, including locally used land and water names preserved in oral tradition. These toponyms were systematically classified according to their word-formation mechanisms, allowing for an in-depth analysis of lexico-semantic, morphological, and lexico-syntactic processes characteristic of the Karakalpak language[4]. Special attention was given to diachronic analysis, which made it possible to trace semantic shifts, ideological renaming practices, and cases of transonymization and transtoponymization over time. The etymological interpretation of selected toponyms was carried out through comparison with data from explanatory dictionaries of the Karakalpak language and related Turkic languages, ensuring linguistic accuracy and historical validity. In addition, contextual and socio-cultural analysis was applied to reveal the connection between toponyms and historical events, natural features, occupations, and ethnic composition of the region. The methodological framework also integrates principles of onomastic theory, which view toponyms as linguistic units that reflect collective memory and cultural identity. By combining structural linguistic analysis with historical and ethnographic perspectives, the study provides a holistic understanding of how traditional naming practices in the Kungrad district have evolved and how they function within contemporary processes of language development and globalization[5].

3. Result and Discussion

Even though the name Kyryk Kyz was given in honor of the Karakalpak folk epic, it cannot convey the character of the name Aksholak, which was given by the local people long ago. This is because there is no grave of forty girls there, nor have any myths or legends related to it been preserved in that area. As for Aksholak, there are legends, and in essence, the word sholak was given according to the short-turned part of the Ustyurt ravine, revealing the true picture of that place[6].

Names such as Birlik, Bilimtuw, Azatlyk, Erkin, Avangard, Abadan, and Miynetabat, which replaced the names given by our ancestors, cannot reveal any character of that place. However, names like Aybuyir, Akbulak, and Topatkan each have their own history of origin, and each has a deep meaning. For example, Lake Aybuyir was given this name because its side (buyir) resembles the moon (ay). In the name Akbulak, perhaps not everyone knows that the determinative "ak" does not represent color but signifies "fresh water." The history of the origin of the name Topatkan is as follows: Torebiy, aiming to seize the khanate from his younger brother by force through war, moved from Khiva to the city of Kungrad. He built a fortress on the edge of Kungrad city. The Khan of Khiva came and fired a cannon (top atkan) at the city of Kungrad. Since then, the name Topatkan has been preserved. Later, this place turned into a shrine[7].

At this point, it can be seen how skillful our wise people have been since ancient times in naming land and water. As the famous Kazakh writer Abish Kekilbayev said, our

people have given names to land and water that they would not even spare for their own sons. Therefore, long-standing names should not be replaced by the names of famous people, ideological names, or "beautiful" words.

The main task of toponym formation is not only to preserve national names but also to create national toponyms that demonstrate national identity in the era of globalization. As the Karakalpak language continues its path of development as the state language, the entry of unsuccessfully formed names or names coming from outside cannot be allowed from now on[8].

Therefore, below we discuss toponyms formed through word-forming methods. They are: 1) Toponyms formed by the lexico-semantic method; 2) Toponyms formed by the morphological method; 3) Toponyms formed by the lexico-syntactic method; 4) Toponyms formed through analytical methods.

Toponyms Formed by the Lexico-Semantic Method

As a result of lexico-semantic word formation, a new word is not created phonetically, but meanings change. "Through the lexico-semantic method of word formation, a word moves to another branch of words without changing its morphemic structure".

"The lexico-semantic method of word formation is created by certain words acquiring new meanings, being polysemous, and most importantly, appearing in homonymous series"[9].

It is appropriate to mention that fresh methods not often encountered in other areas of language are also used in the formation of toponyms. These are the methods of toponymization, transonymization, and transtoponymization.

A) The method of toponymization refers to general geographical terms (determinatives) turning into toponyms without any suffixes. Such a method is found among the toponyms of Kungrad district, though rarely. For example: Kashi – the name of a village citizens' assembly, Ustyurt – the name of a village citizens' assembly.

These names have shifted from hydronyms and oronyms toward oikonyms. Kashi is a hydronym, meaning: soil piled high in front to hold back water during a flood; Ustyurt is an oronym, meaning: a place that is somewhat elevated, a hill, a ridge, a mound. At the same time, it is the name of the plateau between the Aral and Caspian Seas[10].

B) The method of transonymization – the turning of anthroponyms (people's names) and ethnonyms into toponyms without any suffixes. Toponyms formed through this method are frequently encountered in the district territory. For example: Abadan, Almambet, Arbabay, Akhunbabayev, Ayapbergen, Barlybay, Berdak, Dawletkerey, Eshmuratbek, Ajibay, Ajigeldi, Ajiniyaz, Isatay, Kunkhoja, Kabanbay, Markabay, Orazbay, Ongar, etc.

Toponyms created through the method of transonymization are called anthropotonyms and ethnotonyms in toponymic science. Through this method in the Karakalpak language, mostly microtoponyms emerge. Also, if we consider that anthroponyms can also appear as components of compound toponyms, the method of transonymization can be called a productive method in Karakalpak toponymy. The process of shifting people's names to toponyms and toponyms to people's names is a linguistic and historical-ethnographic phenomenon that has existed since ancient times.

Toponyms formed from ethnonyms: Kungrad, Kiyat, Kipchak, Nayman, Sayat, Nogay, Jalpaktil, Ashamayly, etc[11].

C) The method of transtoponymization – the shifting of toponyms from one class to another and their use as the name of a new object. Land and water names formed through this method are also encountered among the toponyms of Kungrad district. For example:

Rawshan – 1) canal, hydronym; 2) name of a village citizens' assembly, populated point, oikonym;

Suwenli – 1) canal, hydronym; 2) village citizens' assembly, oikonym;

Kungrad – 1) name of a district, choronym; 2) name of a city; name of a village citizens' assembly; name of a neighborhood citizens' assembly, oikonym;

Jingishke – 1) canal, hydronym; 2) name of a neighborhood citizens' assembly, oikonym;

Tallyk – 1) canal, hydronym; 2) name of a neighborhood citizens' assembly, etc.

Many such examples can be encountered.

The productive use of this method indicates that they are fully established in our toponymic system today[12].

Toponyms Formed by the Morphological Method

Like other Turkic peoples, the morphological (synthetic) method is widely used in the Karakalpak language to create new words. In the Karakalpak language, there are various word-forming suffixes with different levels of productivity in creating new words with various meanings.

Derivative toponyms in our language are formed by adding various suffixes to the base. However, according to G.I. Donidze, not all affixes of word formation, but only special suffixes participate in creating geographical names. Suffixes that are found only within geographical names can be called special suffixes. According to V.A. Nikonov, "toponymy does not invent a new method of word formation; it takes what exists in the language, but uses it to a very small extent."

From the toponymic materials collected from Kungrad district, it was observed that noun, adjective, and verb suffixes are actively used in the formation of the region's land and water names[13].

The suffix -ly// -li, -dy// -di, -ty// -ti

It is known that the suffix -ly// -li, -dy// -di, -ty// -ti originated from the noun and adjective-forming suffix -lygh (-ligh, -lykh, -lik) in the old Turkic language. These affixes are among the most productive word-forming suffixes in the language. They are used within a toponym to indicate the presence or abundance of an object in that place, and through them, mostly phytotoponyms, zootoponyms, and names indicating the abundance of some object in that location are formed. For example: Kundyzy (a lake with many otters), Jideli (a place where many oleaster trees grow), Aktikenli (a place where the white thorn plant grows), Akbasly (a place where the akbas plant grows in abundance), Jayranly (a place with many gazelles), Shybyndy (a place with many flies), Shakpakty (a place where many flint stones are found), Boyanly (a village with much licorice), Juwsarly (a ravine where wormwood grows thickly), Suwenli (a canal abundant with pike-perch fish), Bakaly (a lake with many frogs), Tayly (in the old Turkic language, "tay" meant mountain. Thus, a mountainous place), Kulanly (a place where wild donkeys used to be found frequently), etc[14].

The affix -ly// -li is also used in naming a geographical object by comparing it to some item. Example: Monshakly (a lake whose water stands like beads).

Usually, the affix -ly// -li is considered a suffix that forms an adjective from a noun, but in this case, as an individual word, it performs the function of a land-water name, i.e., a noun.

We cannot view the toponyms Ashamayly (village) and Bugejeyli (canal), which are based on ethnonym names, as derivative simple toponyms, because these names had already managed to form as primary simple toponyms before becoming toponyms.

The suffix -sha// -she

sha// -she is a suffix that adds a diminutive meaning to a word. Example: Sorsha (the name of a lake with salty water), Korgansha (a fortress built in the Middle Ages at the foot of Ustyurt).

The suffix -ma// -me, -ba// -be, -pa// -pe

The suffix -ma// -me, -ba// -be, -pa// -pe is a productive suffix in our language that forms a noun from a verb. Example: Kasarma (named so because even when people blocked the source of the water, it stubbornly continued to flow), Kulama (a descent from the Ustyurt plateau. The appellative "kulaw" [to fall] is also related to this), Sulama (a place where water flows down from a mountain. Formed by adding the suffix -ma to the base word sula [to sprawl/lay down]), Akushpa (lake).

The suffix -lyk// -lik

Toponyms are also formed in our language through the affix -lyk// -lik. F.G. Garipova states that the affix -lyk// -lik has been forming words in Turkic languages for a long time, and in the Tatar language, they are used in relation to trees and plants.

More ideologism names are created through the -lyk// -lik suffix. Example: Azatlyk, Jaslyk, Bostanlyk, Doslyk, Birlik, Janabirlik. However, such names cannot express any meaning related to a land-water name: Bostanlyk, Azatlyk, Jaslyk. Also, it is used to indicate the abundance of something, or names of water, forests, etc., occupying a large territory. For instance: Tallyk (a place where many willows are planted), Daryalyk (a place where river water occupies a large territory). Here, with the addition of the affix -lyk to the words "tal" [willow] and "darya" [river], words with new meanings have emerged[15].

The suffix -shy// -shi

The suffix -shy// -shi is used toward those engaged in some profession, and the places where those people live are called by that name. Example: Boyrashy (a village of people engaged in selling mats), Boyawshy (a village where people engaged in dyeing live), Garrekshi (a village of craftsmen who weave various items from reeds), Sherimshi (a village of craftsmen who sew footwear from leather).

In addition to these, the following non-productive suffixes are also found within the region's toponyms:

1. -wyk// -wik. Example: Gurkirewik.
2. -shylyk// -shilik. Example: Shiyitshilik (cemetery).
3. -khana. Example: Bazbankhana, Kalenderkhana.
4. -zar. Example: Almazar.

The affix -syz// -siz is also considered non-productive. Example: Jansyz (lake) – a name given in relation to a stagnant lake in Kungrad district.

Among the derivative root names in the toponyms of Kungrad district, it can be observed that the suffixes -ly// -li, -ma// -me, -ba// -be, and -pa// -pe are actively used in the formation of geographical names.

Toponyms Formed by the Lexico-Syntactic Method

Sometimes certain word combinations possess a specific meaning (objective meaning, characteristic meaning, etc.) as a single word and express a single concept. Such combinations can be a meaningful word with an auxiliary word, a free word combination, a phraseological word combination, or even certain sentences. Land-water names where a word combination thus possesses the meaning of a single word, called the lexico-syntactic method, are frequently encountered among the toponyms of Kungrad district.

Compound toponyms that emerged by the lexico-syntactic method in Kungrad district are structured in the following model:

Compound toponyms whose components are based on an attributive connection. The components of such compound toponyms appear in the form of modifier + modified. This word combination, which basically originates from paired or izafet connections, is viewed as a compound toponym and a proper name. For example, a) names formed from word combinations connected through pairing: Kumtobe, Kumjar, Seksewilsay, Topyrakkala, Tomarkala, Tasboget, Tamdala, Tazajol, etc.;

Toponyms formed from word combinations in an izafet connection. Here, the possessive case suffix may also appear implicitly: Sashka koli, Amanjap, Sagyrdyn takyry, Madenbaydyn kudugy, Berdibek gumbezi, etc.

Compound toponyms based on an objective connection. Toponyms like these are based on the connection between an object and a predicate formed through government. In this, the accusative case suffix appears in an implicit form in the member performing the function of the object and expresses the meaning of a single word (name). Example: Gellekeser (one who cuts the head), Kelinberdi (gave the bride), Atshabar (one who runs the horse), Tengeshashkan (one who scattered coins), etc.

Compound toponyms that have entered into a predicative relationship. Here, a subject and a predicate participate. However, we recognize these not as a syntactic unit, but as a word or a name. That is, such compound toponyms are also structured in the form of modifier + modified. However, the modifier component of the toponyms in most cases appears in the form of a word combination, and one component of the compound toponyms appears as a participle with the suffix -ghan// -gen. Example: Kyzlarshykan, Baltaketken, Dawkesken, Kazanketken, Mashynketken, Alpyskazgan, Kiyatjargan, Taylaktaygan, etc.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of toponym formation in the Kungrad district demonstrates that geographical names function as significant linguistic, historical, and cultural markers reflecting the long-standing relationship between the Karakalpak people and their natural environment. The study confirms that traditional toponyms, formed through lexico-semantic, morphological, and lexico-syntactic methods, possess deep semantic motivation and are closely connected with historical events, natural features, occupations, and ethnic composition of the region. These naming practices reveal a high level of linguistic creativity and cultural awareness, through which land and water names were carefully selected to convey the essence and characteristics of specific locations.

The findings show that the replacement of historically grounded toponyms with ideological, personalized, or aesthetically appealing names often results in the loss of semantic depth and cultural memory. Examples from the Kungrad district illustrate that newly assigned names frequently fail to represent the historical or geographical realities of a place, whereas traditional names such as Aybuyir, Akbulak, and Topatkan preserve valuable information about the past and encourage historical imagination. The productive use of suffixes and word-formation mechanisms further highlights the richness and systematic nature of Karakalpak toponymy.

In the context of globalization and ongoing language development, the preservation of national toponyms emerges as a crucial task for maintaining linguistic sovereignty and cultural identity. The study emphasizes that toponym formation should not be guided solely by ideological trends or external influences but should rely on historically and linguistically justified principles. Maintaining and restoring meaningful geographical names ensures continuity between past and present and safeguards collective memory for future generations. Thus, the toponymic landscape of the Kungrad district represents not only a linguistic system but also a vital repository of national heritage and identity.

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