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LINGUOCULTUROLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF TOPONYMS AND REGIONAL IDENTITY (On the Example of Toponymic Facts in Fergana Region)

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Abstract: This article comprehensively investigates the linguoculturological characteristics of the toponymic system of the Fergana Valley, specifically focusing on Kokand, Margilan, and Fergana cities and their surrounding districts. It is scientifically proven that toponyms are not merely names of geographical objects, but rather linguistic phenomena that embody the centuries-old historical memory, socio-cultural worldview, mythological perceptions, and national cultural codes of a specific ethnic group. During the research, the linguocultural semantic fields of microtoponyms and macrotoponyms in the region were thoroughly classified, their national-cultural connotations and aspects related to folk etymology were identified, and their role in shaping regional identity was analyzed.

Keywords: toponymics, linguoculturology, linguistic picture of the world, Fergana Valley, cultural code, ethnotoponym, connotation, folk etymology, regional identity, onomastics.

1. Introduction

The establishment of the anthropocentric paradigm in modern linguistics has prioritized the study of language units in close connection with human beings, their culture, spirituality, and way of thinking. Within this context, linguoculturology stands out as one of the leading fields exploring the integration of language and culture. Toponyms (geographical names) constitute the most stable, conservative, and information-rich layer of linguoculture. They deeply encapsulate the ways of understanding the world, cognitive systems, mythological and religious views, socio-economic lifestyles, and aesthetic values of the peoples who have inhabited and continue to live in a particular territory. Geographical names are not just coordinate indicators, but translators of the national mentality of language speakers.

Since the early years of independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan, restoring historical truth and renaming toponymic objects that were artificially altered during the colonial period in accordance with the ideas of national independence and the historical memory of the people became a priority strategic direction of state policy. The Fergana Valley, with its multi-millennial rich history, specific linguistic dialectal features, and highly diverse, stratified onomastic space, serves as a fundamental practical and theoretical base for linguoculturological research. Analyzing the toponymy of the region, uncovering its national-cultural connotations, and linguistically substantiating the regional identity of the Uzbek people is one of the urgent tasks of contemporary linguistics.

2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is derived from the theory of linguistic relativity put forward by world linguists such as V. Humboldt, E. Sapir, and B. Whorf, according to which language is the primary tool that shapes human thinking and perceptions of the world. Furthermore, the conceptual views of prominent scholars in the modern school of linguoculturology, including V. Telia, V. Maslova, and N. Alefirenko, as well as the theoretical conclusions of the representatives of the Uzbek onomastics school, E. Begmatov, T. Nafasov, and Z. Dusimov, were relied upon.

In systematizing the toponymic materials, descriptive, component analysis, linguoculturological interpretation, and areal comparative-historical methods were effectively utilized. This methodological apparatus allowed for the extraction of hidden cultural sememes (semantic elements) within

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geographical names and the reconstruction of the linguistic world picture of the population in the Fergana region.

3. Main Body and Analysis

When analyzing the onomastic system of the Fergana Valley from a linguoculturological perspective, specifically through the examples of Kokand, Margilan, and Fergana cities and their adjacent districts, it becomes evident that a deep ethnic, historical, and cultural motivation underlies each name. Toponyms are the primary linguistic tools that construct and preserve regional identity.

For instance, alongside historical data regarding the origin of the toponym "Margilan," the folk etymology (also known as folk-etymology) widespread among the local populace is noteworthy. The legend associated with the campaigns of Alexander the Great concerning "Murg and non" (chicken and bread) reflects, from a linguocultural perspective, the local population's approach to the concepts of hospitality, abundance, and prosperity. From a scientific standpoint, however, this name is considered to be related to landscape elements in the ancient Sogdian or Ferganian languages.

The toponym "Kokand" (historically recorded as Khakon, Kakan, Khvokand, Havokand) is also distinguished by its semantic appeal. While one group of scholars connects it with the word "Khagan" (city of rulers, center), others interpret it based on the geographical relief, meaning "hollow city," "depression between mountains," or "a place where the wind blows." These linguistic connotations reflect the subjective relationship of the city's inhabitants to their historical space and their statehood thinking.

Table 1. Distribution of toponyms of the Fergana Valley by linguocultural dominants

Toponymic Type	Semantic Center	Linguocultural Concept	Linguistic Examples
Ethnotoponyms	Clan, tribe, and ethnic group names	Ethnic origin, historical memory, and ancestral gene pool	Nayman, Qipchoq, Ming, Yuz, Jaloyir, Qurama, Turk, Saroy
Agriotoponyms	Natural phenomena, relief, hydrological status	Ecological culture, nature of space, and perception of natural resources	Oltiariq, Toshloq, Quva (*quv* – dry/empty land), Soyboyi, Yazyavon
Anthroptoponyms	Historical figures, saints, religious scholars	Religious-enlightenment value, social and spiritual memory	Sultan Jaloliddin, Khoja Ahror, Poshsho pir, Eshon ota, Avval
Ergonyms	Craftsmanship, profession, and labor activity	Socio-economic lifestyle, culture of labor social groups	Degrezlik, Kosagarlik, Kulollik, Chigiti, Pichoqchilik

The deep study of ethnotoponyms shows that village and neighborhood names like Nayman, Qipchoq, or Ming in the Fergana region do not represent mere abstract cartographic points. At the core of these names lies a complex ethnic symbiosis formed over centuries, and the recording of tribal relationships that participated in the ethnogenesis of the Uzbek people onto the linguistic map. These names are the strongest linguoculturemes that arouse a sense of regional and national identity in the consciousness of modern society, bridging the past of the ancestors with the present day.

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Agriotoponyms and hydroponyms such as Toshloq, Oltiariq, and Yazyavon demonstrate not a simple utilitarian (practical) human relationship with nature, but rather a verbal interpretation in the process of aesthetic, cognitive, and cultural appropriation of the environment. For example, the name Oltiariq (Six Canals) indicates that agricultural and irrigation culture was highly developed in the region since ancient times, while Quva (anciently *Kuba* — hill or dry place) reveals a unique archeolinguistic layer. Ergonyms, on the other hand, are the linguistic reflection of social life; neighborhood names like Degrezlik (Iron-founding) or Kulollik (Pottery) are linguocultural evidence proving what kind of craftsmanship center the region was, even more accurately than historical documents.

4. Conclusion

The toponymic system of the Fergana Valley is a unique "living encyclopedia" and national heritage that reflects the centuries-old material and spiritual culture, historical evolution, and philosophical worldview of the region's population. The linguoculturemes within the geographical names live in an inseparable connection with the national mentality, socio-natural ecology, tribal structure, and religious-mythological worldview. Systematically researching toponyms in their linguoculturological aspect, preserving them, and passing them on to future generations possesses immense methodological and practical significance in the process of self-awareness, reinforcing the national idea, and consolidating regional identity for the Uzbek people.

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