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# On Theoretical Aspects of the Linguoculturological Study of Toponyms in Modern Uzbek Linguistics

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**Abstract:** This article examines the theoretical foundations of a linguoculturological approach to studying place names (toponyms) in modern Uzbek linguistics. It highlights how toponyms, as elements of the national linguistic and cultural system, embody the ethnocultural and historical memory of the Uzbek people. The toponymy of the Tashkent region serves as a case study, revealing linguistic patterns that reflect local traditions, lifestyles, and historical consciousness. The research emphasizes the systemic and structural nature of toponyms within the broader onomastic macrosystem, comprising interrelated microsystems such as oikonymy, hydronymy, and oronymy. It also discusses the processes of conversion, transonymization, and transposition as mechanisms of toponymic formation and transformation. From a linguoculturological perspective, toponyms are viewed not merely as geographic designations but as carriers of cultural, social, and cognitive meanings that reveal the interaction between language, thought, and national identity. The article further argues that studying toponyms within this framework contributes to understanding the anthropocentric paradigm of contemporary linguistics, where language functions as both a cognitive and cultural medium. Thus, the linguoculturological study of Uzbek toponyms—particularly in the Tashkent region—offers valuable insights into how language preserves and reflects the spiritual and cultural values of the nation.

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## 1. Introduction

In world linguistics, system-based study of language encompasses the thematic grouping of linguistic units, the investigation of semantic fields, lexemes and semes, morphemic analysis, and the identification of concepts and the forms of the conceptsphere in cognitive linguistics. In linguoculturology, inquiry along the triad of language–nation–culture is a topical direction.

This foundation supports renewed views on the relationship between language and thought, including the development of linguistic corpora and the advancement of computational linguistics, discourse studies, and sociolinguistics. The study of toponyms in connection with national consciousness, culture, and the history of a people is becoming a priority area of onomastic research worldwide. In particular, the principles of compiling catalogues for each language, and of analyzing toponyms not only semantically, etymologically, morphologically, and phonologically, but also in new formats—linguocognitive, sociolinguistic, and linguoculturological—have strengthened.

## Theoretical foundations of a linguoculturological study of toponyms in modern Uzbek linguistics

Viewing toponymic formants and bases within the onomastic system through a new, anthropocentric lens has important theoretical value for defining the specific linguoculturological nature of the territorial ethnocultural system of the Uzbek language, including the Tashkent area. The toponyms of Tashkent region encode specific ethnocultural and linguistic meanings reflecting notions tied to lifestyle, national traditions and ethnoculture, professional practices, labor character, and the “formation” of the region. A comprehensive analysis of the region’s toponyms as components of national linguocultural heritage—within the frame of “preserving and enriching sources that define the spiritual world of the individual and the culture of peoples” [9, p. 29]—makes it possible to reveal regularities in the development of national thought and the specific linguocultural models underlying toponymic formation.

Today, the development of Uzbek toponymy is “systematized on the basis of normative legal acts.”<sup>1</sup> In recent years, a number of scholarly works have examined toponyms across three directions—linguistics, history, and geography—resulting in about 100 defended PhD and doctoral dissertations. Some of these studies fall within linguistics, analyzing Uzbek onomastic terminology and toponyms from a linguistic perspective. The topic of Uzbek ethnotoponyms has also been studied in depth [16; 20; 23]. Consequently, Uzbek toponymic lexicography has advanced, with notable achievements [6; 12]. As concerns the ancient and historically important Tashkent region, specific research (e.g., works and dissertations by V. Reshetov, T. Fayziev, M. Kadyrov, M. Ramazanov, and others) has been conducted. In addition, the honored scholar S. Karaev’s works present valuable data on Tashkent toponymy [8, pp. 155–159]. These studies describe the region’s specific history in the formation of Tashkent toponyms, the role and significance of ethnonyms grounded in socio-economic and geographic features, local geographic names, and the problems of their etymology and territorial toponymic standardization. However, a linguoculturological study of the region’s toponymy—its classification and description from an anthropocentric standpoint—has not been undertaken monographically as an object of study.

In the history of human civilization, as the search for truth and modes of thinking expands with scientific achievement and the understanding of the world, the system of sciences develops, opening new directions. It is important to stress that any science emerges to meet practical human needs. As knowledge expands, it evolves into disciplines and networks of disciplines. Linguoculturology—one of these newer branches of linguistics—remains relatively new and understudied in modern Uzbek linguistics. It reflects the balance of language and culture. In the first quarter of the 21st century, multifaceted relations among peoples are reaching a new level that can be viewed as humanity’s cultural integration. These processes, of course, do not occur without language—the primary tool of dialogue—or without the human factor that wields this tool. Accordingly, approaching these processes in a linguoculturological perspective—as a new form of social interaction—reflects attitudes toward other peoples’ cultures. These factors have contributed to a new anthropocentric scientific paradigm, now a principal direction of 21st-century linguistics. In this sense, the urgency of studying place names in a linguoculturological perspective within modern linguistics can be articulated as follows:

- First, onomastics within Uzbek linguistics—an integral part of collective memory, culture, and spirituality—has not yet covered a long historical period, which is a scholarly limitation. Nevertheless, considerable work has been done in national linguistics on analyzing place names and their etymology. However, within Uzbek linguistics, place names have been very little studied from a linguoculturological perspective—even though extralinguistic factors (including folk culture) that influence toponymy are crucial.

- Second, the properties of place names have attracted geographers, ethnographers, historians, and linguists, particularly ethnologists. In their semantic environment, they function as vehicles for disseminating cultural-historical, national-ethnic, and geographic meanings. Proper names serve to designate people, animals, geographic sites, as well as various forms of material and spiritual culture. This is especially significant for studying the relationship between language and culture from a new angle, and for the etymological and semantic analysis of place names in connection with scientific and techno-scientific developments.
- Third, a linguoculturological analysis of place names lends clarity to the interaction between language and culture. This analysis allows us to determine the place of proper names within a language's linguoculturological paradigm.
- Fourth, the linguistic analysis of place names helps define the degree to which language is directly intertwined with the history, historical culture, and historical spirituality of our ancestors. This requires an in-depth study of the extralinguistic aspects of toponyms related to folk culture.

The object of the linguoculturological approach—spanning linguistics, cultural studies, ethnography, and psycholinguistics—is the interplay between people and the culture they create through the “carrier” that is language and its units. Proper names (including place names) cannot be divorced from national mentality, ethnocultural, ethnosociological, cognitive, creative, accumulative, axiological, aesthetic, and emotional characteristics, beyond merely distinguishing one object from another [26, p. 64]. In this regard, the toponymy of Tashkent region likewise encompasses the languages and cultures of ethnic groups that have lived here across centuries and live here today.

Before classifying place names as a system, it is useful to address the terms “system” and “structure.” The term “system” derives from Greek “whole,” “together,” “combination,” “collection,” “association.” It is not a simple collection, but a complex of interrelated and interacting parts or elements [14, p. 29]. Objects and phenomena in the world, regardless of scale, possess systemic properties. Systemicity manifests in an object's integrity constituted by relationships among its internal members. Among system features are interaction, interchangeability, conditionality, and hierarchical stratification [15, pp. 12–14].

The linguist M. S. Kagan distinguishes four classes of systems from a synergetic perspective and describes three of them as follows: “Very complex, or anthropo-socio-cultural systems. Unlike biological and mechanical systems of a homogeneous nature, they acquire a heterogeneous essence by combining aspects of human activity, nature, society, and culture. Therefore, this system is very complex. It should be emphasized that language, as a fundamental marker of a nation, belongs to very complex systems” [7, p. 124]. Like other systems, language is self-organizing and self-regulating, enriching and perfecting its composition in the course of gradual development. Our view aligns with I. V. Arnold: “The development of language and thought is inextricably linked with the history of the society and nation to which the language belongs. We work in language with particular manifestations of the general connections between nature and events in society” [1, p. 118]. Since language is inseparable from a nation's history, this also pertains to proper names bestowed as toponyms in different periods.

As is known, any proper name has its own unique composition, morphological structure, and word-formation means. Toponyms, as proper nouns, likewise have a characteristic structure. They are not formed haphazardly; their creation follows certain systems and laws. V. A. Nikonov observed: “Names never exist alone; they are always correlated with each other. To determine the origin of a name, it is necessary first of all to understand that it did not arise in isolation, but only within a certain system of other names” [13, p. 34].

The linguistic units that constitute the language system, the regularities of their interaction, and their interconnections comprise the structure of language. Each layer of the language system – phonetic, lexical, grammatical – is a specific system also made up of defined parts and structural elements (material units) performing specific social functions. Thus, it is logical to state that language is a system of systems.

While the language system is a macrosystem in relation to its levels (internal systems), its internal layers (levels) are microsystems relative to it. “In the philosophical sense, the internal construction and organization of any macrosystem will consist of microsystems” [19, pp. 196–202].

As noted, each layer of the language system, including toponyms (place names), is one of the microsystems forming the macrosystem. For linguistics to be systemic in theoretical terms, it must constitute an integral set of elements – parts, components – and a structure that organizes their interrelations and internal cohesion.

To substantiate that toponyms, as a system, consist of parts and smaller segments, the following conventional schematic was proposed in the original:

**Table 1.** Place names as a macrosystem.

<b>Parts as microsystems</b>					
<b>Oikonymy</b> (from Greek “oikos” – house, residence, space) the branch that studies names of settlements		<b>Hydronymy</b> (from Greek “hydro” – water, moisture, and “onyma” – name) the branch that studies names of water-related geographic objects, geographic names, and administrative-territorial units connected with water		<b>Oronymy</b> (from Greek “oros” – mountain, and “onyma” – name) the branch that studies names related to the Earth’s surface relief	
<b>Components as smaller segments</b>					
Polionyms and Astionyms	Names of cities and towns	Oceanonyms	Names of oceans	Hillonyms	Names of hills
Comonyms or Chorionyms	Names of rural settlements	Pelagonyms	Names of seas	Phyto-oronyms	Names of mountains connected with plants
Dromonyms	Routes, names of lines of communication (directions)	Limnonyms	Names of lakes	Zoo-oronyms	Names of mountains associated with animal names
Urbanonyms	Names of urban objects	Gelonyms	Names of bogs	Ethno-oronyms	Names of mountains formed on the basis of ethnonyms (race, tribe, nation, people)
Drymonyms	Names of forests or parts of forests	Potamonyms	Names of rivers, streams, tributaries, canals	Anthropo-oronyms	Names of mountains formed from personal names, nicknames, surnames

Hodonyms	Names of streets	Bathonyms	Natural objects on the ocean floor, oceanic landforms (shoals, ravines, fissures, ridges, etc.)	Agioronyms and Necroronyms	Names of mountains of residence, formed from agionyms and necronyms
Agoronyms	Names of squares, parks, and gardens	Gimnonyms	Names of lakes and other bodies of water	Georonyms	Names of mountains formed from special names of historical events and periods, such as a specific era, century, year, date, battle, uprising, holiday, artistic and sports festivals
Hagionyms	Famous popular names of things, objects, and persons considered sacred	Speleonyms	Names of objects located underground, with an outlet to the surface (caves, underground rivers, springs, waterfalls, lakes, wells, etc.)		
Necronyms	the well-known name of graves, cemeteries and holy places of this type				

Undoubtedly, this classification is conventional and was applied to place names based on the notions of system and structure in theoretical linguistics. As a structure in the relation system↔part↔component, geographical names—whether oikonoms, hydronyms, or oronyms—are internally interconnected. Over time, based on these interconnections, place names shift into other categories. In dictionaries of onomastic terminology, the transfer of a name from one class to another is called conversion and transonymization [17: 138].

Apparently, two different terms are applied to one linguistic phenomenon. According to Prof. N. Uluqov, when proper names are formed from common nouns without change—toponyms, including hydronyms, anthroponyms, zoononyms, phytonyms—it is appropriate to use transonymization for the derivation of one proper name from another [24, p. 78].

Thus, transonymization is the transfer of a proper name of one type into a proper name of another type. In some onomastic works, phenomena such as words turning into toponyms without special devices, or the transfer of some proper names (anthroponyms, ethnonyms, hydronyms) into toponyms, are also labeled metaphor, metonymy, calque, or transformation [3, p. 12; 10, p. 78].

Prof. D. Yuldashev considers applying these terms to nomination phenomena not entirely correct. Transformation implies transfer without changes, whereas when appellatives and common nouns become toponyms, a series of changes occurs. Therefore, he prefers the term transposition here [26, p. 21]. In his view, three different types of transposition can be observed in toponyms: (1) inter-categorial transposition (Qizil, Ulli, Birinchi, Altmish...); (2) external transposition (Kat, O'g'uz, Ravat, Pil...); (3) internal transposition (Toshkent, Xitoy, O'zbekiston, Do'rmon...) [26, p. 24].

In our view, the term transposition is indeed preferable, because "onomastic units are the result of secondary use of linguistic material in naming an object, i.e., secondary nomination" [26, p. 29]. The scope of transonymization and the range of proper names involved is fairly broad; all types of proper names are observed (anthroponyms, toponyms, hydronyms, zoononyms, cosmonyms) [22, p. 19]. For example, many hydronyms have shifted over time to oikonoms. In the Tashkent valley: Chirchiq (river) → Chirchiq (city); Ohangaron (river) → Ohangaron (city); Sanganak (river, Parkent district) → Sanganak (village, Parkent district); Bo'zsuv (canal, Chirchiq) → Bo'zsuv (residential area, Chirchiq); Piskom (river, Bo'stonliq district) → Piskom (village, Bo'stonliq district), etc.

In a number of onomastic studies, issues of systematization have been explored not only for toponyms but for proper nouns more broadly within the onomastic scope of the Uzbek language, and classified on the basis of theoretical principles characteristic of the field [4, pp. 33–39]. Professor E. Begmatov's monograph "Anthroponymy of the Uzbek Language" discusses these issues extensively [5, p. 94]. Building on Russian scholarship's notions of "onomastic space" and "toponymic space," the Uzbek onomastic scope has been systematized across scales such as superspace, macrospace, microspace, and small space, with features of several onomastic units grouped into eight types.

As E. Murzaev noted, a toponymic system should be understood as a set of features or signs that recur regularly in the formation of geographic names and in their contemporary stability [11, p. 14]. Based on this, a toponymic system comprises toponymic bases, territorially organized complexes of topoformants, and the rules and methods of linking them, alongside the specifics of how certain toponymic formations are perceived. The systematization of place names is also addressed in Russian toponymists' works. In particular, A. Urazmetova observed that "classification of toponyms by the nature of the named objects is consistent and unified across the globe. Despite the vast number of named objects, their entire diversity may be reduced to a relatively small number of types," and provides the following schema [25, p. 6]:

**Table 2.** Classification of toponyms by named objects.

Toponyms		Named objects	
Oronyms		Mountains, hills	
Speleonyms		Caves, grottos, underground systems	
Dreamonyms		Forests	
Pelatonyms	Hydroonyms	Seas	Water objects
Limnonyms		Limnonyms	Lakes
Gelonyms		Swamps	
Potamonyms		Rivers	
Astionyms	Oikonoms	Cities	Localities
Polysonyms		Rural settlements	
Comonyms			
Chorionyms			
Agoronyms	Urbanonyms	names of squares	Small items
Godonyms		Godonyms street names	inside localities

Ergonyms	names of businesses
Buronyms	Large Areas
Dromonyms	Dromonyms Message Paths

## 2. Conclusion

The diversity of approaches to studying toponyms requires appealing to various principles of toponymy in classifying and systematizing the names under investigation. These principles may be divided into intralinguistic and extralinguistic. Structural and linguistic features of toponyms belong to the former, while the latter considers extralinguistic realities surrounding toponymy. Place names reflect the history of a people and a country and its longstanding destiny. They are unique monuments upon which the historical experience of ethnoses and nations with deep histories has been inscribed. In the linguistic dimension, they reflect the same history and fate. From these perspectives, the toponyms of Tashkent region are a linguistic treasury, providing valuable historical information about language, the past, ethnic customs and traditions, professional and economic life, socio-political relations, nature, geography, and more. Therefore, scholarly study of toponyms in any territory has equal value not only for linguistics but also for geography, geology, the natural sciences, history, ethnology, and archaeology.

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