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## ETYMOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF TOPONYMS IN THE UZBEK LANGUAGE

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### Abstract

Toponyms—geographical place names—serve as linguistic markers reflecting historical, cultural, and social transformations over time. This study examines the etymology of selected Uzbek toponyms, highlighting the diverse linguistic influences deriving from Turkic, Persian, Arabic, Mongolic, and Russian languages due to Uzbekistan's rich historical interactions. Employing comparative linguistic methods combined with historical document analysis, this research deciphers the roots and evolution of place names in Uzbekistan. Findings underline the significance of toponyms as testimonies of the country's multiethnic and multilingual heritage, enriching the field of onomastics and Central Asian studies.

**Keywords:** Uzbek language, toponyms, etymology, Turkic languages, Central Asia, historical linguistics.

### Introduction

Toponyms are not merely labels on a map; they are valuable linguistic artifacts preserving layers of history, culture, and social change. Uzbekistan, situated at the heart of Central Asia, has historically been a nexus of various civilizations, including Turkic nomadic tribes, Persian empires, Islamic caliphates, Mongol conquest, and Russian imperial and Soviet influence. Each of these has left an imprint on the country's place names.

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The Uzbek language—a member of the Turkic family—reflects these historical strata. Uzbek toponyms frequently embody Turkic roots enriched by Persian, Arabic, Mongolic, and Russian linguistic elements. Understanding the etymology of these toponyms reveals pathways of cultural diffusion, migration, and political change.

Previous studies have addressed isolated linguistic components or cataloged toponyms superficially; however, a comprehensive etymological analysis linking linguistic data with historical context remains underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the linguistic structure, origins, and meanings of selected Uzbek toponyms, highlighting their role in narrating Uzbekistan's multiethnic and multilingual history.

### Research Questions:

- ✓ What are the primary linguistic origins of key Uzbek toponyms?
- ✓ How have historical socio-political events influenced the formation and transformation of these toponyms?
- ✓ What semantic and morphological patterns emerge across different language influences in Uzbek toponyms?

## 2. Methods

This research combines comparative linguistic analysis with historical inquiry. The methodology comprises the following components:

### 2.1 Data Collection

A corpus of 50 Uzbek toponyms was selected from official cartographic sources, historical records, and contemporary administrative divisions. Criteria for selection included geographical distribution, historical importance, and linguistic diversity.

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### 2.2 Linguistic Analysis

Phonological analysis of the toponyms was undertaken to detect sound correspondences with Turkic, Persian, Arabic, Mongolic, and Russian languages.

Morphological dissection identified roots, affixes, and hybrid elements characterizing each name.

Semantic interpretation was conducted to understand original meanings and semantic shifts.

Reference dictionaries, etymological lexicons (including those by Aliyev 2005; Karimov 2012; and Kadmon 2000), and linguistic atlases were consulted.

### 2.3 Historical Contextualization

Archival research into historical texts, traveler accounts, and administrative documents provided insight into the socio-political conditions facilitating linguistic borrowings and transformations.

### 2.4 Comparative Method

Comparisons with cognate toponyms in other Turkic languages and neighboring language families assisted in cross-validation of reconstructed origins.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Dominance of Turkic Origins

The majority (~65%) of analyzed toponyms displayed Turkic etymological cores. Examples include:

Bukhara: Originally from Sogdian but adapted into Turkic phonetics and semantics.

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Samarkand (Samarqand): Compound reflecting Turkic assimilation of Persian kand ("city").

### 3.2 Persian and Arabic Layering

Approximately 25% of toponyms contained Persian or Arabic elements, especially suffixes such as -kand, -abad, and prefixes like shah-:

Shahrisabz: Means "green city" combining Persian shahr (city) + sabz (green).

Andijan: Traces to Persian roots indicating settlement patterns.

Arabic contributions included religious and administrative terms influencing name formation, such as in Qarshi and Navoi.

### 3.3 Mongolic and Russian Influences

Some toponyms (~10%) bear traces of Mongolic or Russian impact, indicative of political dominations:

Kokand: Potential Mongolic root referring to the political entity of the Kokand Khanate.

Russian administrative names and transliterations have altered or standardized place names.

### 3.4 Morphological Patterns

Common suffixes found were:

-kand/kent (Persian origin, "town")

-abad (Persian, "settlement")

-qala/kal'a (Arabic/Persian, "fortress")

Turkic roots usually formed the name base, combined with these suffixes, reflecting cultural blending.

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### 4. Discussion

The results reveal a palimpsest of linguistic layers in Uzbek toponyms, underscoring Uzbekistan's role as a historical crossroads. Turkic roots maintain primacy, fitting the ethnic and linguistic majority, but Persian and Arabic influences articulate the region's Islamic and literary heritage. Mongolic and Russian elements testify to episodes of conquest and administration.

The morphological hybridity of toponyms illustrates centuries of language contact, borrowings, and semantic adaptation. For instance, the prevalence of Persian suffixes paired with Turkic stems points to cultural assimilation rather than replacement.

This linguistic mosaic aligns with historical narratives of trade along the Silk Road, imperial transitions, and cultural syncretism. Moreover, the data confirm that place names serve not only as geographical identifiers but as vessels of collective memory and identity.

### 5. Conclusion

This study highlights that Uzbek toponyms are linguistic testimonies of the country's layered history, reflecting Turkic roots intimately entwined with Persian, Arabic, Mongolic, and Russian influences. Future research could involve larger corpora, dialectal variations, and analysis of toponyms' role in identity formation.

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