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Hydronymic Indicators (On The Example Of The Hydronyms Of Southern Karakalpakstan)

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Abstract: The article analyzes the linguogeographic, ethnic, and historical features of hydronymic indicators in the territory of Southern Karakalpakstan. The study identifies ancient settlements, interlingual relations, and cultural layers through the names of water bodies. The analysis scientifically highlights the origin, semantic features, and regional variants of indicators such as “darya”, “kul”, “arna”, “yop”, and “kuduk.”

Keywords: Hydronym, indicator, toponym, linguogeographic, semantics, Karakalpakstan, water bodies.

Introduction: Hydronymic indicators are linguistic markers that, through hydronyms (names of oceans, seas, rivers, lakes, springs, and streams), help determine the ancient ethnic composition, linguistic characteristics, and settlement processes of a people. In other words, the names of water bodies within a specific territory provide valuable information about the ancient inhabitants of that area, its linguistic strata, and cultural interactions.

A hydronymic indicator represents a linguogeographical feature that reveals the linguistic layers, ethnic history, ancient settlement patterns, and cultural relations of a particular region through the names of its water bodies. Compared to other toponyms, hydronyms are more stable, as their existence often spans many centuries. The names assigned to them are preserved as living relics of ancient linguistic strata and continue to serve as important sources in contemporary linguistic and historical research. In many cases, the names of rivers, lakes, or springs convey information about ancient peoples who once inhabited those areas, even if their languages have long disappeared. Thus, hydronyms perform an ethnic-indicative function, serving as markers of historical and ethnolinguistic continuity.

METHODS

In the sources of the 16th–17th centuries, the recorded Russian hydrographic terms are predominantly of Slavic origin, with a few terms of Turkic, as well as Greek–Turkic intermediary origin (for example, ерик, лиман) [1:23].

Through hydronymic indicators, it is possible to identify ancient settlement patterns, migration routes, interlingual contacts, and historical–geographical processes. For instance, the term Karasu, widespread in Central Asia, was used to denote spring waters and was also adopted into scholarly literature by hydrologists. This demonstrates the significance of hydronyms as indicators that accurately reflect natural–geographical features [2:466].

G. K. Konkashpaev’s work “Словар казахских географиснеских названий” (Dictionary of Kazakh Geographical Names), published in 1963, is regarded as the first fundamental scholarly research in the field of Kazakh toponymy. Many geographical names in Kazakhstan were recorded in various sources, maps, and academic literature with differing orthography, and there was a lack of uniformity in the process of transcription. Therefore, the book systematized Kazakh toponyms in a consistent manner, establishing unified rules for their transliteration into russian. Typically, kazakh names consist of two words, and less frequently, of three or more. Their structure contains

local geographical terms, which play a crucial role in the formation of indigenous toponyms. Certain terms entered Russian geographical literature and acquired broader scientific relevance as well. For example: сай, сырт, соз, сор, бидаик, адыр, тугай, такыр, томар, торгул [3:186].

Here is the English translation in an academic style, keeping the nuance and precision intact:

The scholarly value of this dictionary lies in the fact that, by systematizing kazakh toponyms, it scientifically documented the richness of Kazakhstan's geographical nomenclature and thus served as an important academic source for subsequent research.

Indicator, indicator – a term, a "signifying element" (from latin indicator – "marker, pointer") – is a terminological component occurring within a toponym that designates its type: mountain, desert, river, stream, village, well, ravine, and so forth. Examples include Qoratog, Mirzachul, Sirdaryo, Uzunkuduk, Kizildjar, etc. [4:320].

In his monograph Khorezm toponyms, Z. Dusimov emphasized that toponyms and indicators are not identical phenomena, despite their genetic interrelation. Although they are interconnected, they remain distinct. Indicators denote a class of homogeneous geographical objects, whereas toponyms single out one specific geographical object from among others. Indicators convey a concept, while toponyms do not possess this function. Indicators signify, whereas toponyms designate. Linguistically, indicators are classified as common nouns, while toponyms are considered proper nouns.

Hydronymic indicators, according to the characteristics of the object, are divided into several types:

1. Indicators denoting rivers and river-derived waters;
2. Indicators expressing minor hydronymic features;
3. Indicators referring to stagnant water bodies;
4. Indicators denoting artificial water objects;
5. Functional indicators.

The hydronymic indicators included in these groups occur not only in Khorezm, but also in the toponymic structure of water bodies in Karakalpakstan and other regions as well [5:66]. Indicators and toponyms constitute two forms of the same category: indicators are common nouns within the structure of a toponym, while toponyms are regarded as proper nouns. Elements of these two lexical groups continually pass into one another. Yu. A. Karpenko notes the properties of abstraction and concretization in indicators [6:37].

O. Rajabov was the first to study the indicators of Khorezm toponymy in a monographic form. He conducted a scholarly-critical analysis of the literature concerning the history of indicators in uzbek toponymy. In his work, indicators were classified according to their meaning and function, demonstrating that dialectal and subdialectal phonetic–morphological features are reflected in them, and indicators were also examined from a historical–etymological perspective. Hydronymic indicators, depending on the characteristics of the object, were divided into several types of this category [7:97]:

1. Indicators denoting rivers and river-derived water bodies;
2. Indicators expressing minor hydronymic objects;
3. Indicators referring to stagnant water bodies;
4. Indicators denoting artificial water bodies;
5. Indicators associated with other types of water objects.

G. Mambetova, who conducted a scholarly study of the hydronyms of the northern districts of Karakalpakstan, established that the hydronymic microsystem constitutes one of the structural components of the toponymic system of Turkic languages. She identified their phonetic, morphological, and semantic features, and demonstrated that the various phonetic and semantic variants of hydronymic appellatives in the karakalpak language, when productively employed in other turkic languages, point to a historically and genetically common foundation of the onomastic system of the Turkic languages. In her monograph, G. Mambetova used the term hydronymic indicators in the sense of hydronymic appellatives [8:16].

RESULTS

In the study of water names, hydronymic indicators serve as a fundamental basis. In the Uzbek language as well, several indicators possess distinctive characteristics. In classifying the hydronymic indicators of Southern Karakalpakstan, and drawing upon the research of Z. Dusimov and O. Rajabov, we have divided them into the following groups:

1. Hydronymic indicators associated with rivers and river-derived water bodies;
2. Indicators expressing minor hydronyms;
3. Indicators denoting stagnant hydronyms;
4. Indicators referring to artificial hydronymic objects;
5. Indicators associated with other types of water objects.

Hydronymic indicators associated with rivers and river-derived water bodies Hydronyms formed with the indicator daryo. In Turkic languages (Turkmen derýa, Karakalpak darya, Kyrgyz dairyo, dariya, etc.), this element is used in the meaning of “large flowing water” (Rus. reka). The element Amu originally entered through Arabic sources, but its root goes back to the name of the ancient city Amul. Examples include:

Amudaryo (in Amudaryo district of the Republic of Karakalpakstan) > Arabic + indicator; Kukdaryo (inter-district collector in Beruniy and Amudaryo districts) > common turkic + indicator; Akchadarya (the name of a canal in Ellikkala district, formerly a river) > common turkic + indicator. Hydronyms formed with the indicator arna. Kazakharna (in Turtkul district) > kazakh + arna = common turkic + indicator;

Paxtaarna > Paxta + arna = persian–tajik + indicator. In Persian, paxta is called "پنبه" (panbe). Xaytbayarna (in Beruniy district) > hayit (Arab. ‘id – “feast”) > transferred to an anthroponym Khaytbay + arna = arabic + indicator.

Mangitarna (in Amudaryo district) > Mangit (originally a mongol ethnonym; representatives of this clan lived in the Dasht-i kipchak and Transoxiana, later becoming turkicized) + arna = mongolian + indicator.

Kipchakarna > Kipchak (Old Turkic: Qïpčaq / Qïvčaq), the name of one of the ancient turkic tribes. Kipchak + arna = Common Turkic + indicator.

Nazarkhanarna > Nazar — derived from the arabic word naẓar (نظر), meaning “look,” “gaze,” “attention,” or “friendly glance.” Among turkic peoples, Nazar became widespread as a personal name. The element khan (turkic–mongolic in origin) is a title meaning “ruler” or “chief,” frequently found in personal names among uzbeks, kazakhs, karakalpaks, uyghurs, and other turkic peoples. Thus, the name Nazarkhan is a compound anthroponym formed from arabic and turkic–mongolic elements. Nazar + khan + arna = arabic + turkic–mongolic + indicator.

Kilichvayarna > Kilichvay + arna = common turkic + indicator. In Khorezm, arna has the meaning of “large irrigation ditch, main canal.” Its etymology and precise language affiliation remain disputed. V. V. Radlov defined arna as a “canal that has turned into a river.”

Hydronyms formed with the indicator ozak Sultanuzak (in Beruniy district) > In arabic, the word sultan (سُلطان) conveys the meanings “authority, power, strength, proof, document.” Sultan + uzak = arabic + indicator. Kukuzak > in the old turkic language monuments (the Orkhon–Enisei inscriptions), the form kök occurs with the meaning “blue, sky.” Kuk + uzak = common turkic + indicator.

Indicators denoting stagnant hydronyms

Hydronyms formed with the indicator ko‘l (lake).

Turkmankul (in Turtkul district) > from the name of one of the ancient turkic tribes. Turkman + kul = common turkic + indicator.

Tozakul > In Persian, the word tāza (تازه) means “new, freshness, delicate.” Toza + kul = Persian–Tajik + indicator.

Sarikul (in Beruniy district) > in old turkic, sarïg represents “yellow”; its shortened form sari is used here. Sari + kul = common turkic + indicator.

Churtanlikul > The word cho‘rtan in uzbek denotes a species of fish (from the family of predatory freshwater fishes). Churtan + -li + kul = common turkic + indicator. Zeykul > The word zey is mainly found in dialectal and subdialectal usage; in literary Uzbek it corresponds to zax (“marsh, swamp”). Zey + kul = common turkic + indicator. Ayazkul > a lake distinguished by its coldness. Ayoz (“frost, chill”) + kul = common turkic + indicator. Akkul > Ak – in both ancient and modern Turkic languages, the word denotes “white, pure, bright.” Ak + kul = Common turkic + indicator.

Akchakul (in Ellikkala district) > The main meanings of Akcha are as follows: “white, light-colored, transparent” → related to natural characteristics; “money, coin, silver” → related to socio-economic history.

In both variants, the components are of purely turkic origin. Akcha + kul = common turkic + indicator.

Other lakes in the same district such as Saraykul and Tozakul can be analyzed in a similar way.

In Amudaryo district, examples include Shumishkul, Tuzlankul, Sakarkul, Bulakkul, Tajigalikul, and Ashshikul. The component ashshi (in karakalpak and kazakh) means “bitter, salty.” In Karakalpakistan: ashshi su = “salty water”; in kazakh: aşşı = “bitter, salty.” Thus, Ashshi + kul = common turkic + indicator.

Hydronyms formed with the indicator aydin:

This indicator conveys the meanings “lake, deep part of a lake, open area of a lake without vegetation, central part” [9:67]. Kamishliaydin > Kamish (“reed”) + -li + aydin = common turkic + indicator.

Hydronyms formed with the indicator chungul:

This indicator denotes “the deepest, circular part of a lake, or of a river and its lakes.” Sarichungul (in Amudaryo district) > Sari (“yellow”) + chungul = common turkic + indicator. Karachungul (in Amudaryo district) > kara (“black”) + chungul = common turkic + indicator.

Hydronyms formed with the indicator yap (variant:

yop)

Bogyop (in Turtkul district) > in old turkic, the element bağ denoted “garden, orchard, cultivated land, enclosed area.” Later, this word was borrowed into Persian, where it became actively used; however, its root is turkic. Bog + yop = common turkic + indicator.

Jagalboyliyap (in Beruniy district) > Jagalboyli is an ethnonym (tribal name). The Jagalboyli (or Jagalbayli) tribe played a role in the ethnogenesis of the karakalpak and kazakh peoples. Jag‘alboyli + yap = common turkic + indicator.

Naymanyap > Nayman — the name of one of the tribes that formed part of the uzbek ethnos. Among them are Kipchak, Nayman, Lakay, Karaqalpoq, Kiyot, Uyg‘ur, and many others [10:10]. Nayman + yap = Common Turkic + indicator.

Chapayyap > Chapay — based on an anthroponym. Chapay + yap = common turkic + indicator.

Kazakyap, Ishanyap > Eshan (Persian “ایشان”) means “religious leader, scholar, spiritual guide.” Ishanyap = Persian + indicator.

Buzyap (in Ellikkala district) > The word buz means “gray, arable land, fallow land left uncultivated for a long period.” Buz + yap = common turkic + indicator.

Indicators denoting artificial hydronymic objects: kuyi, kuduk, havuz and others

In the territory of Southern Karakalpakstan, numerous wells (quduq, qudiq) and water reservoirs (havuz) are attested. Hydronyms based on this indicator include:

Chukurkuduk > chuqur (“deep”) + quduq — common turkic + indicator.

Ashshikuduk > ashshi (“salty, bitter” in karakalpak and kazakh) + kuduk — common turkic + indicator.

Ushkuduk> ush (“three”) + qudiq — common turkic + indicator.

Kilichvay kuduki, Uzunkuduk, Mintay kuduk, Urazboy quduq, Mechit kuduk– formed through combinations of descriptive adjectives, anthroponyms, or ethnonyms with the indicator quduq.

It is noteworthy that in earlier times, wells and reservoirs were often constructed adjacent to mosques. Some of these water sources have survived to the present day. In such cases, the wells were not given independent names but were referred to in a generalized way by the name of the associated mosque, or simply as mechit quduq (“mosque well”).

Indicators related to other types of water bodies

1. Saka / soka:

The hydronymic indicator saka / soka derives from Arabic and means “to irrigate.” In the territory of Karakalpakstan, it is used in the phonetic form saga. Jumaboysaka (Amudaryo district) > Jumaboy (anthroponym) + saga – Common Turkic + indicator. Uchyopsaga > uch (“three”) + yop (“ditch, canal”) + saga –common turkic + indicator + indicator.

2. Kak (kok):

This term denotes a natural water object — rainwater that accumulates in hard, clayey or salty ground depressions (takir), used mainly for watering livestock. Chuqurkok (Ellikqal’a district) > chukur (“deep”) + kok – common turkic + indicator. Depelikak (Turtkul district) > from Turkmen depe (“hill”) + lik (suffix) + qaq – common turkic + indicator.

3. Salma (solma):

This indicator denotes a small irrigation canal or tributary. It is still active in khorezm dialects. Researchers suggest that the word might be specific to the Khorezm area, as it is rare in Iranian toponymy. The term is likely connected with the mongolic root sal. Ayaksalma, Uzunsalma, Tillasalma, Kasipsalma – examples with descriptive or anthroponymic components + indicator. Eshon Bobo solma (Amudaryo district) > eshan (persian origin, “religious leader”) + bobo (Turkic, honorific) + solma – persian + common turkic + indicator. Karis solma – turkic + indicator.

4. Bulak:

The indicator bulak denotes a spring – a natural water source, often forming the origin of small streams, rivulets, or irrigation canals. Sulton Uvays bobo bulak > sulton (arabic) + Uvays (arabic anthroponym) + bobo (turkic, honorific) + bulak — arabic + arabic + common turkic + indicator. Sheyx Jalil bobo bulak > sheyx (Arabic, “elder, leader”) + Jalil (arabic anthroponym) + bobo + bulak — arabic + arabic + common turkic + indicator. Qushbulak (Beruniy district) > qush (“pair, double”) + bulak – common turkic + indicator. Marjonbulak > marjon (“coral,” Arabic) + bulak – arabic + indicator. Toldibulak, Toshbulak (Turtkul district), Kumbulak – common turkic + indicator.

CONCLUSION

The study of hydronymic indicators in the territory of Southern Karakalpakstan demonstrates that they serve as an important linguo-geographic source revealing ancient settlement patterns, ethnic processes, and interlingual relations. Indicators such as darya, kul, arna, yop, kuduk, and bulak reflect historical–etymological roots belonging to different language layers. The analysis shows that indicators, both semantically and functionally, play a foundational role in the formation of toponyms. Therefore, a systematic investigation of hydronymic indicators provides a significant scholarly basis for reconstructing the

historical–toponymic landscape of the region.

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