

# Hydronyms And Oronyms Of Fergana Region: Linguistic And Historical Aspects

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**Abstract:** The Fergana Region of Uzbekistan forms part of the fertile Fergana Valley, one of Central Asia's most densely populated and historically layered areas. Its place-name system reflects interactions between Turkic, Iranian, Arabic and Russian languages, as well as the region's complex physical geography. While most studies of Fergana toponymy have focused on oikonyms (settlement names), scholars note that local hydronyms and oronyms, though fewer in number, preserve some of the oldest lexical and cultural layers. This article surveys the main water- and mountain-related place names of Fergana Region and analyses their structural and semantic types. Drawing on Uzbek toponymic theory (S. Qorayev, T. Nafasov, N. Uluqov and others) and on explanatory dictionaries of Uzbek place names, the study highlights productive word-formation models such as "colour + water term" (Qorasuv, Oqsoy), "topographic feature + hydronymic formant" (-soy, -suv, -ariq) and "relief term + attributive adjective" in oronyms (Qiziltepa, Ko'ktepa, Qaratau). The article also outlines the main historical-etymological layers—ancient Iranian, early Turkic and new Uzbek/Russian—observable in Fergana hydronyms and oronyms. The results demonstrate that even in a predominantly lowland region, hydronyms and oronyms function as important markers of historical settlement, land use, ethnic composition and linguistic change.

**Keywords:** Fergana Region; hydronyms; oronyms; toponymy; Uzbekistan; place-name etymology.

**1. Introduction:** In modern onomastic theory, hydronyms (names of water bodies) and oronyms (names of mountains and other relief forms) are considered key subsystems of toponymy because they tend to be conservative and preserve archaic lexical units. Uzbek scholars such as S. Qorayev and T. Nafasov have developed a detailed classification of Uzbek geographical names, where hydronyms and oronyms are treated alongside oikonyms, agionyms, and other categories.

Within this national framework, the Fergana Region occupies a special place. It lies in the eastern part of Uzbekistan within the Fergana Valley—a closed intermontane basin surrounded by the Tien Shan and Alay ranges and intersected by numerous rivers and canals. Research on Fergana toponymy has so far concentrated mainly on settlement names and ethnotoponyms, while hydronyms and oronyms have

received more fragmentary attention. Galaxy International Journal+2 At the same time, N. Uluqov and others have shown that valley hydronyms contain valuable diachronic information about language contact and ecological change.

The aim of this article is to give an English-language overview of Fergana Region hydronyms and oronyms, focusing on their typology, word-formation patterns and historical-etymological layers. The analysis is based on published Uzbek-language scholarship, explanatory dictionaries of Uzbek place names and general geographical descriptions of the Fergana Valley.

**2. Physical-geographical background of Fergana Region**

Toponymic structure is closely related to physical geography. The Fergana Valley is described as an ellipsoid depression filled with Quaternary alluvial and proluvial deposits, surrounded by the Kurama, Chatkal and Fergana mountain ranges in the north and the Alay range in the south. Vikipediya The modern Fergana Region covers mainly the southern and central parts of this basin. Its territory is dominated by plains and river terraces; consequently, the number of oronyms and hydronyms is relatively smaller than that of settlement names, a point explicitly noted in a regional survey of Fergana toponymy. [pedagoglar.org](http://pedagoglar.org)

Nevertheless, several major rivers, numerous small streams (soy), irrigation canals (ariq, kanal) and foothill ridges generate a rich, if compact, hydronymic-onymic system. The Syrdarya River flows along the northern edge of the valley; within the region itself important tributaries and canals include the Isfayramsay, Shohimardonsoy, So'x River and the Great Fergana Canal. Vikipediya+1 Foothill zones around Chimyon, Shohimardon and the Alay slopes also contain toponyms that encode traditional pasture use and local perceptions of relief. [www.namdu.uz+1](http://www.namdu.uz+1)

### 3. Hydronyms of Fergana Region

#### 3.1. Structural types

Uzbek toponymists normally subdivide hydronyms into names of rivers, streams, canals, lakes, springs and artificial reservoirs. [Arxiv.uz+1](http://Arxiv.uz+1) In Fergana Region, the most frequent types are:

1. River and stream names with the formants -soy, -su(v), -daryo.

Examples are Isfayramsay, Shohimardonsoy, So'x, Qorasuv and Oqsuv. The formant soy reflects Persian-Tajik influence ('mountain stream'), while su(v) is of Turkic origin ('water'). [Ziyo+1](http://Ziyo+1)

2. Canal and irrigation hydronyms with -ariq, -kanal.

Names such as Oltiariq ("six-canal"), Yangiariq ("new canal") and the Great Fergana Canal reflect the long history of irrigated agriculture in the valley. [Vikipediya+1](http://Vikipediya+1)

3. Lacustrine and reservoir names with ko'l and suv ombori.

Although large natural lakes are rare, there are several small reservoirs whose names combine a local oikonym or tribal name with these hydronymic terms, e.g. Sho'rsuv ombori ("salty-water reservoir"). [www.namdu.uz](http://www.namdu.uz)

#### 3.2. Word-formation models and semantics

Following S. Qorayev's general classification of Uzbek hydronyms, the Fergana material shows several productive semantic models. [Ziyo+1](http://Ziyo+1)

- Colour + water term.

Qorasuv ("black water"), Oqsuv ("white water"), Ko'ksuv ("blue/green water") encode visual characteristics such as turbidity, depth or reflection of vegetation.

- Landscape or soil type + hydronymic formant.

Names like Sho'rsuv ("salty water"), Qumariq ("sandy canal") and Toshsoy ("stony stream") describe physical properties relevant for agriculture and settlement. [Arxiv.uz+1](http://Arxiv.uz+1)

- Anthroponym/ethnonym + hydronymic formant.

In some cases, rivers and canals are named after clans, owners or saints, e.g. Shohimardonsoy ("river of Shah-i Mardon"), linking the hydronym to religious or tribal memory. [Arxiv.uz+1](http://Arxiv.uz+1)

N. Uluqov's diachronic work on the hydronyms of the Fergana Valley, cited in later theses, emphasises that these names can be stratified into several chronological layers: pre-Turkic (Iranian), early Turkic and modern Uzbek/Russian. [340.tersu.uz](http://340.tersu.uz) Hydronyms such as Isfayram and So'x are often interpreted as Iranian in origin, while Qorasuv and Oltiariq clearly follow Turkic word-formation patterns. [uztrj.uz+1](http://uztrj.uz+1)

### 4. Oronyms of Fergana Region

#### 4.1. Definition and classification

In Uzbek linguistics, oronyms are defined as "names of mountains, hills, ridges, passes and other relief forms" and are considered a separate subclass of toponyms alongside hydronyms and oikonoms. [Ziyo+1](http://Ziyo+1) For the Fergana Valley, scholars note that oronyms are less numerous than settlement names because most of the inhabited area consists of plains; however, mountain

ridges on the northern and southern margins have preserved many traditional oronyms.pedagoglar.org+1

Typical oronymic types in the region include:

1. Mountain and ridge names with the formants tog' ("mountain"), tar, qir, bel ("ridge, pass"), e.g. Olay tog'lari (Alay mountains), Qaratau, Qorajon qir.Vikipediya+1
2. Hill and plateau names with tepa, qir, qiya, such as Qiziltepa, Ko'ktepa, Oqtapa ("red/blue/white hill"), reflecting colour and relative height.
3. Sacral and legendary oronyms, where the first component is a title or anthroponym (e.g. Shohimardon, "king of men"; Hazrat-ota), tying local relief to religious narratives and pilgrimage practices.www.namdu.uz+1

#### 4.2. Semantic and cultural features

Oronyms in Fergana Region often encode:

- Colour symbolism, parallel to hydronyms (Qiziltepa, Qoratepa, Ko'ktepa).
- Vegetation and land use (Chimyon < chim "turf, grass" + yon "slope", indicating grassy mountain slopes used as pastures).www.namdu.uz
- Strategic or functional roles (Qo'rg'ontepa "fortress hill", Do'stlik dovoni "pass of friendship"), reflecting military or transport significance.oefen.uz+1

As with hydronyms, many Fergana oronyms belong to early Turkic layers; however, relics of Iranian terminology (safed, sang, koh) are also attested in historical sources and neighbouring Tajik dialects, suggesting earlier Iranian naming practices replaced or adapted by Turkic speakers.Ziyo+1

#### 5. Historical–etymological layers

Across both hydronyms and oronyms of Fergana Region we can distinguish several major etymological strata, largely corresponding to well-known layers in Uzbek toponymy.Ziyo+2www.namdu.uz+2

##### 1. Ancient Iranian layer.

This layer is visible in hydronyms such as Isfayram and possibly So'x, as well as in certain mountainous names with Persian elements like koh ("mountain") or dara

("valley") documented in older sources. These reflect the presence of Sogdian and related Iranian-speaking populations in the valley in the first millennium CE.Ziyo+1

##### 2. Early and medieval Turkic layer.

The majority of modern names belong to this stratum: Qorasuv, Oltiariq, Qiziltepa, Chimyon, Ko'ktepa, etc. They employ basic Turkic lexemes for colour (qora, oq, ko'k, qizil), water (su, ariq), and relief (tepa, qir, qoya).Ziyo+1

##### 3. Islamic and sacral layer.

Hydronyms and oronyms like Shohimardonsoy, Hazrat-ota, Eshon buloq involve Arabic-Persian religious titles (shoh, hazrat, eshon), indicating the role of Sufi shrines and pilgrimage in local spatial identity.oefen.uz+1

##### 4. Russian/Soviet and modern Uzbek layer.

In the Soviet period, several reservoirs, canals and mountain settlements received Russian-based or ideological names; after independence, many were renamed in accordance with national policy, but some hybrid forms remain in use on maps and in everyday speech.Fergana State University Journal+1

These layers overlap and interact, illustrating how hydronyms and oronyms preserve successive stages of language contact and political history in the Fergana Region.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

Although hydronyms and oronyms are numerically less dominant than settlement names in the toponymic system of Fergana Region, they have exceptional value for historical-linguistic reconstruction. The analysis presented here, based on existing Uzbek scholarship and dictionary materials, shows that Fergana hydronyms and oronyms:

- follow productive semantic models such as colour-based naming, description of physical properties and reference to social or sacral figures;
- employ a relatively small but stable set of formants (-soy, -suv, -ariq, -tepa, -qir, -tog'), typical of broader Uzbek toponymy;

- can be stratified into Iranian, Turkic, Islamic and modern layers which mirror major stages of ethnolinguistic change in the valley.

(general background on national toponymic classifications).InLibrary

For foreign readers and researchers, an English-language synthesis of this kind may serve as a starting point for more detailed, data-driven studies—especially those using GIS mapping and corpus methods to trace how hydronymic and oronymic systems respond to contemporary environmental and socio-political transformations in Uzbekistan.

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