

Toponyms of To‘raqo‘rg‘on District: Linguistic Transformation and Lexical-Semantic Changes (A Diachronic Approach)

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Abstract. *This article analyzes the historical development, linguistic transformation, and lexical-semantic changes of toponyms found in To‘raqo‘rg‘on district of Namangan region based on a diachronic approach. The study examines the formation of place names, their evolution from ancient layers to modern forms, as well as semantic shifts influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors. It also explores phonetic, morphological, and semantic mechanisms of toponymic change and determines their role in the linguistic and cultural system of the region. The results contribute to a deeper understanding of the historical-linguistic layers and etymological features of To‘raqo‘rg‘on toponymy.*

Key words: *toponym, diachronic approach, linguistic transformation, lexical-semantic change, etymology, microtoponymy, Namangan, To‘raqo‘rg‘on, place names, linguoculturology.*

Introduction

Toponyms represent a crucial layer of a nation’s historical memory, cultural heritage, and linguistic worldview. As elements of the lexical system, place names function not only as geographical identifiers but also as carriers of rich information about the ethnic composition, historical events, socio-economic conditions, and cultural traditions of a given region. In this sense, toponyms serve as a unique linguistic archive through which the past can be reconstructed and interpreted.[1]

The study of toponyms from a diachronic perspective provides an opportunity to trace their origin, development, and transformation across different historical periods. Such an approach enables researchers to identify the stages of formation of place names and to analyze the processes of lexical-semantic change, including semantic expansion, narrowing, and shift. Moreover, diachronic analysis allows for the reconstruction of the original meanings (motivations) of toponyms and reveals how these meanings evolve in response to changes in social, political, and environmental contexts.[2]

The toponymic system of Uzbekistan, and particularly that of To‘raqo‘rg‘on district in the Namangan region, is characterized by a complex stratification of historical-linguistic layers. These place names have emerged under the influence of various language groups, including ancient Turkic, Persian-Tajik, and later modern Uzbek. As a result of prolonged historical interaction and cultural exchange, many toponyms in the region have undergone significant phonetic, morphological, and semantic transformations. These transformations reflect both internal linguistic developments and external socio-historical influences, such as migration, settlement patterns, economic activities, and administrative changes.[3]

The diachronic approach, therefore, serves as a fundamental methodological framework for examining the relationship between the earliest recorded forms of toponyms and their contemporary variants. It facilitates the identification of underlying linguistic mechanisms that drive change, including phonetic reduction, morphological reanalysis, and semantic reinterpretation. Through this approach, it becomes possible to uncover not only the original motivations behind place naming but also the emergence of new semantic layers that correspond to evolving cultural and social realities.[4]

In addition, the study of toponyms within a diachronic framework contributes to a broader understanding of linguocultural processes. It highlights the interaction between language and culture, demonstrating how place names function as symbols of identity, collective memory, and territorial belonging. Therefore, the investigation of To‘raqo‘rg‘on district toponyms is not only relevant for linguistic analysis but also for understanding the historical and cultural development of the region as a whole.[5]

Literature Review

Toponymy is one of the widely studied fields in linguistics. Research in this area focuses on the origin, formation, and semantic evolution of place names.

In Uzbek linguistics, Sh. Rahmatullayev’s works are of particular importance. According to him, toponyms belong to the oldest lexical layer of language and reflect the historical memory and ethnic development of a people [6].

N. Jabborov, in his work “Uzbek Toponymy,” considers toponyms as territorial-linguistic units and emphasizes the role of geographical, social, and cultural factors in their formation [7].

A. Superanskaya, in general onomastic theory, analyzes toponyms as an essential component of the onomastic system and explains their semantic transformation over time [8].

V. A. Nikonov highlights the interaction between natural geography and human activity in the emergence of place names, considering them linguistic traces of historical development [9].

Researchers such as M. Mamatov and Sh. Qodirov also focus on microtoponymy and analyze local place names in relation to regional dialects and phonetic changes [10].

The literature shows that toponyms are not only linguistic units but also intersections of historical, cultural, and social processes. However, the diachronic transformation of To‘raqo‘rg‘on toponyms remains insufficiently studied, which defines the relevance of this research.

Methodology

This study is based on a diachronic approach. Historical-etymological analysis is used to determine the origin and initial forms of place names. Lexical-semantic analysis is applied to examine semantic changes. Historical maps, archival materials, and scientific literature serve as the main sources. A comparative-historical method is also used to compare ancient and modern forms of toponyms.[11]

Analysis and Results

The toponymic system of To‘raqo‘rg‘on district represents a complex, dynamic, and multi-layered linguistic structure formed as a result of long-term historical development. Diachronic analysis reveals that the formation and evolution of these place names have passed through several historical-linguistic stages, shaped primarily by the interaction of ancient Turkic, Arabic-Persian, and modern Uzbek language elements. Each of these layers has contributed to the phonetic structure, morphological composition, and semantic content of the toponyms, creating a rich and diverse onomastic landscape.[12]

From a semantic perspective, the toponyms of the district can be systematically classified into three major groups: geographical toponyms, anthroponymic toponyms, and ethnocultural toponyms. Geographical toponyms are primarily motivated by natural features such as relief, water bodies, soil characteristics, and vegetation. These names often preserve archaic lexical elements that describe the physical environment of the region. Anthroponymic toponyms, on the other hand, originate from personal names, tribal affiliations, or names of influential historical figures, reflecting patterns of settlement, ownership, and social hierarchy. Ethnocultural toponyms tBale 1. are closely associated with cultural practices, religious beliefs, and traditional ways of life, thus embodying the symbolic and spiritual dimensions of the community.[13]

Table 1.

Examples of Diachronic Transformation of Toponyms

Current toponym	Original form / etymology	Type	Semantic change
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To‘raqo‘rg‘on	“To‘ra” + “qo‘rg‘on” (fortified settlement)	Anthroponymic	From military-defense meaning to administrative center
Qorasuv	“Black water”	Geographical	From water color to settlement name
Yangiariq	“New canal”	Geographical	Stabilized with irrigation development
Qumqo‘rg‘on	“Sandy fortress”	Geo-anthropogenic	From sandy terrain to inhabited locality
Bo‘ston	Persian “garden”	Ethnocultural	Transformed into a cultural-agricultural center

The data presented in the table illustrate that many toponyms have undergone significant semantic transformation over time. One of the most prominent processes observed is semantic expansion, whereby the meaning of a toponym broadens beyond its original reference. For instance, the toponym “To‘raqo‘rg‘on” initially denoted a fortified structure or defensive settlement associated with authority (“to‘ra”), but in contemporary usage, it functions as the name of an administrative and territorial unit. This shift reflects broader socio-political changes, including the transition from military-based settlements to organized administrative systems.[14]

In addition to semantic expansion, other types of semantic change—such as narrowing, metaphorical reinterpretation, and functional shift—can also be identified in the toponymic system. For example, names that originally described specific natural features (e.g., water color or terrain type) have gradually come to denote entire settlements or regions, indicating a shift from descriptive to nominative function.

Phonetic transformations constitute another important aspect of diachronic change. These include processes such as sound reduction, assimilation, elision, and simplification, which are particularly evident in the evolution of microtoponyms. In many cases, the modern forms of place names differ significantly from their original forms due to the influence of oral transmission and local dialectal pronunciation. This is especially true in rural areas, where unofficial or colloquial variants of toponyms coexist alongside standardized forms.

Moreover, morphological changes—such as affixation, compounding, and reanalysis—also play a role in the transformation of toponyms. Over time, certain elements within compound place names may lose their original semantic transparency, leading to reinterpretation or restructuring by speakers. This process contributes to the emergence of new lexical units that may no longer be directly associated with their original meanings.

The analysis demonstrates that the toponymic system of To‘raqo‘rg‘on district is not static but highly dynamic, continuously evolving under the influence of historical events, socio-economic developments, and cultural transformations. Toponyms in this region function not only as geographical labels but also as linguistic indicators of historical continuity and change. They encapsulate layers of meaning that reflect the interaction between language, environment, and human activity, thereby serving as valuable sources for both linguistic and interdisciplinary research.[15]

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the toponymic system of To‘raqo‘rg‘on district represents a complex, multilayered linguistic structure shaped by long-term historical development. The application of a diachronic approach has made it possible to trace the evolution of place names from their earliest forms to their present-day usage, revealing consistent patterns of phonetic, morphological, and lexical-semantic transformation. These changes are not random but occur systematically under the influence of both internal linguistic laws and external socio-historical factors.

The coexistence of Turkic, Persian-Tajik, and modern Uzbek linguistic elements within the toponymic landscape of the district clearly reflects deep-rooted historical interactions and cultural

integration processes. This multilingual layering indicates that the region has historically functioned as a zone of active cultural contact, where different ethnic groups, languages, and traditions have intersected and influenced one another. As a result, toponyms in To‘raqo‘rg‘on cannot be viewed solely as linguistic units; rather, they should be interpreted as ethnocultural markers that encode valuable information about the region’s historical identity, settlement patterns, and cultural transformations.

Furthermore, the analysis confirms that semantic changes in toponyms are closely linked to shifts in socio-economic structures and human activity. For instance, place names that originally described natural features or defensive structures have gradually acquired new meanings associated with administrative, economic, or social functions. This process of semantic expansion, narrowing, or re-interpretation illustrates how language adapts to changing realities while preserving traces of earlier meanings. In this regard, toponyms serve as a form of linguistic memory, preserving the “echo” of historical events, environmental conditions, and cultural practices.

Particular attention should be given to microtoponyms, which exhibit a strong dependence on local dialects and oral traditions. Unlike official geographical names, microtoponyms are more dynamic and susceptible to phonetic simplification, variation, and reinterpretation. Their study provides valuable insights into living language processes, regional speech patterns, and the everyday linguistic behavior of local communities. Therefore, microtoponymy represents an important source for understanding not only linguistic change but also the intangible cultural heritage of the population. In conclusion, the diachronic study of To‘raqo‘rg‘on district toponyms proves to be highly significant for several reasons. It allows for the reconstruction of etymological origins, the identification of semantic development trends, and the interpretation of linguocultural features embedded in place names. Moreover, such research contributes to broader fields including historical linguistics, ethnolinguistics, cultural studies, and regional history. Future studies may expand this research by incorporating fieldwork data, GIS-based mapping of toponyms, and comparative analysis with other regions, thereby deepening our understanding of the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and space.

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