

LINGUO-CULTURAL PECULIARITIES
IN GEOGRAPHIC NAMES OF AYAGOZ REGION

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Abstract: *The article aims to study geographic names of Ayagoz region. Toponymy of Ayagoz region is tightly connected to the past of the nation. In the article we classify the formation of toponyms into four large groups. Based on this classification we distinguished in four lexical groups: (1) ancient Turkic layer; (2) Cuman layer; (3) entry layer and (4) basic linguistic layer. The statements are proved by some examples on the onomasiology of the Ayagoz region. Moreover, toponymy is further divided into individual and complex toponyms. We claim that geographic names, i.e. typonymy, describe physical and geographical features of the region in the past. By studying geographic names of Ayagoz region in close relationship with the history of the nation, its economy (farmery or agriculture), culture, faith and beliefs, we can come to many scientific findings and make conclusions.*

Keywords: toponyms; ancient Turkic layer; Cuman layer; entry layer; basic linguistic layer.

Nowadays, in the era of scientific and technical crisis, the language aims to reframe research paradigms of linguistics, revive the past, to set a scientific balance by distinguishing interrelation between the present and the past. Following the words by A. Kaidar: “The centuries-long development of an ethnos, its symbols and signs can be extant in the form of stone sculptures and cuneiform characters on rocks, cultural monuments and various buildings. But they are just a small part of the life of an ethos, its true wisdom and views are preserved only in its language. Each epoch contains denominations of instruments, weapons, clothes, food, household items, traditions, customs, beliefs, entertainments and celebrations that are needed in life, their features and specifics etc. can reach us as linguistic facts only, that is, as individual words, word combinations, phrases or proverbs”¹, it is common knowledge that in the history of evolutionary development of any nation or culture the

¹ A. Kaidar, *Actual problems of the Kazakh language*, Almaty, Ana tily, 1998, p. 304.

spiritual value and language of each epoch play the role of specific cultural information bearers, which in the course of time evidence the human development. Such cultural information takes special place in contemporary linguistics. Linguistic information does not just witness its historical era, but it can also reflect ethnic and mental aspects of the real world in the development stages of humanity and culture, and it can be expressed by language units. Such data contained in linguistic units gives full information about cultural life, mentality, location, customs and traditions of the people. Among the linguistic units special place is given to onomastic names, which support a word. Like other linguistic units, onomastic names are also referred to as a symbol forming a cognitive model or an object the view a real life, which can be understood as the objects that shape the image of the world. Toponyms represented in linguistic units are distinguished by historical-ethnographic, cognitive and symbolic attributes.

The Kazakh toponyms were studied first in the monograph by A. Abdrakhmanov, which was published in 1959 under the title *Kazakh Land and Water Names*. The scholar gave a valuable insight into the etymological analysis of the personal and semantic structure of geographic names. The scholars started paying attention to geographic names as an object of linguistic studies in 1992. Today the list of authors who wrote valuable scientific works that contributed to the formation of the theoretical research basis of onomasiology includes A. Abdrakhmanov, Ye. Koishybayeva, T. Zhanuzakov, Ye. Kerimbayev, K. Rysbergen, etc.

The main linguistic peculiarities of the Kazakh toponyms

The formation of toponyms in the territory of a particular population is dependent primarily on the history, lifestyle, socio-cultural life, occupation and neighboring countries. According to the onomasticians, several factors influence the formation of the toponymy in the Kazakh language. Based on these factors, we can distinguish the following several layers in the formation of the Kazakh toponymy: **(1) Ancient Turkic Layer.** Land and water names as well as place-names used in Orkhon-Yenisey inscriptions, common to Turkic peoples (Kultegin, Tonyukuk, Bilge Qaghan), that were first mentioned by turkologist Mahmud al-Kashgari who lived in the period of Oguz, Kimek, Kara-Khanid Khanates in his manuscript titled *Divan Lughat al-Turk* and other sources are similar in specifics of word formation and grammatical structures to the toponyms of contemporary Kazakh language. These similarities show that some part of the toponymy in the Kazakh language can be used from the ancient Turkic period either in lexicology, or in formation aspects. That is why we classify such toponyms to the Ancient Layer. **(2) Cuman Layer.** Dating back to the 11th century, historical toponyms of medieval Cumans (Kipchaks) who inhabited near the Irtysh and Dniester rivers, in the Desht-i-Qipchaq

(Cumania) steppes, are closely linked to the history of the formation and development of our national toponymy. Therefore, by comparing anthroponyms and ethnic toponyms in the etymology of onomastic names in the Kipchak language and modern Kazakh onomastics, we can see historic continuity. Thus, identification of the ancient semantics of anthroponyms in the Kipchak language will give an opportunity to determine the ethnogenetic interrelation and historical continuity between toponyms in the modern Kazakh language and the Kipchak language. Ethnogenetic interrelation and historical continuity form the Cuman layer on the Kazakh onomastics. **(3) Entry Layer.** Toponyms in this group include anthroponyms and ethnic toponyms that came from Arabic and Persian languages, neighboring Mongolian and Russian languages as a result of the spread of the Muslim religion on the Kazakh steppes. **(4) Basic Linguistic Layer.** This group includes names of the bulk from the major word fund of our language. So, the study of toponyms, which is the main object of linguistic science, gives us opportunities to come to significant research findings.

This article focuses on the linguistic peculiarities of toponyms in Ayagoz district of East Kazakhstan. Ayagoz district is located in the western part of the East Kazakhstan region. The district was founded in 1928. The population of the district is 88.2 thousand people. The land area is 49.5 thousand square kilometers. The district center is the town of Ayagoz. The landscape of Ayagoz district differs by its diversity. It certainly has a significant impact on the formation of toponyms in the region. For example, such place-names as Akzhailau, Akshatau, Aktubek, Akshi, Auliebulak, Barshatas, Kyzyltas, Koktal, Yemeltau, Zhalgyzsu, Yegindybulak, Karasu, Kyzylkiya, Sandyktas, Mynbulak, Sarykamys, Tomar, Shubartas, Kaskabulak, Karatau, Shubartau, Taldybulak give good and clear description of the relief of the region. The rich reserve of land-water names in the area is a historical and cultural heritage. This is because place names were formed many centuries ago, and are a set of geographical names preserving the ancient and present-day history of the nation that lived in that region, and giving information derived from spiritual culture and everyday life, as well as from the natural environment of the region.

Formation of the toponymic system of Ayagoz district has a centuries-old history. Since ancient times before Christ, we have evidenced the influence of Huns, Saks, ancient Turks, Oguzs, Cumans and Mongols domination, conflicts between Dzungars and Kalmyks, Russian colonialism, and other historical events which left an imprint on the toponyms of the region. Taking into account such peculiarities of geographic names in Ayagoz region, we can divide them in four lexical groups: (1) ancient Turkic layer; (2) Cuman layer; (3) entry layer and (4) basic linguistic layer.

Ancient Turkic Layer is one of the main layers in the formation of toponyms in Ayagoz district. It starts from the ancient Turkic language, i.e. the

period of reign by Kultegin, Tonyukuk, Bilge Qaghan, and includes the periods of ancient Uighur and Kara-Khanid Khanate, that is shows the continuity and consistency between contemporary place names and the linguistic layer used in such historical works as the *Altun Yaruk*, *Dīwān Luġhāt al-Turk*, *Kutadgu Bilig*, *Divan-i Hikmet*, *Aqiqat Syiy (The Gift of Truth)*. For example, *Ai* (river name), *Aizgyz* (settlement name) and *Bozay* (village name): all of these toponyms include the word *Ai* in the name which was met in the first line on the eastern face of Kultegin monument with the meaning “thirty days” and “moon in the sky.” Likewise, the words *boz* and *kok* in such toponymies as *Bozay* (settlement), *Koksala* (village), *Koktal* (settlement) are also mentioned on the thirty-third and first lines of the eastern face of Kultegin monument. *Boz* means “light ground color,” *kok* is used in the meaning of “color of the sky or green color.” As can be seen from the examples, the phonetic composition of the words in the toponyms, their lexical meaning has been preserved despite the fact that thousands of years have passed.

Also, one of the invaluable works in identifying the ancient Turkic layer of toponyms is Mahmud al-Kashgari’s *Divan Luġhāt al-Turk*. The manuscript is the first and one of the most original works of the Turkic-speaking people, which analyzes the linguistic peculiarities and vocabulary of the people of that time, which collects and describes all toponyms used in that era. The names of some land names that are described in the *Divan Luġhāt al-Turk* as part of the place names in Ayagoz district provide information about ancient Turkic layer of the region. For example, there is Karasengir mountain near Tarbagatai settlement. Mahmud al-Kashgari also mentions the name “Kenchek Sensir” which is located in Talas neighborhood. That is, it is considered as the northern part of Kashgar city². The word “sengir” (Kaz. *peak, top*) in this name stands for oronym and means linguistic and semantic interrelation from ancient times to today. Second, in the *Divan Luġhāt al-Turk* the author defines the word “sengir” as a projecting part, shoulder of the mountain³. “Sengir” is a word used since the ancient Turkic language. This word, which has been used as *senir*, *sengir* in Middle Turkic languages, has the meaning of “an edge of any wall.” In the ancient Cuman language, the word “senir” means a mountain or a hill⁴. In Mongolian, the word “seger” means back or top side of the mountain⁵. In the languages of modern Turkic peoples, the word “sengir” is used in different phonetic variants, such as *senir*, *sengir* (Kaz. *сеңір, сеңгір, сенгір*). For example, the Turkish scientist Besim Atalay, referring to the etymology of the word “senir”, mentions “Senirkent” in Anatolian (Anadolu) region of Turkey as an example. It is also spelled by people as “Sengirkent” in the spoken

² B. Atalay, *Divanü Luġat-ü Türk, I-IV*, TDK Yayınları, Ankara, 2006.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ N. Poppe, *Comparative Grammar of Altaic Languages*, Ana tili, Almaty, 1965.

language⁶. The word “sengir” contained in *Karasengir mountain* in Ayagoz district also relates the onomasiology history of our language back to the ancient Turkic era. Another example of the ancient Turkic layer of Ayagoz district toponymy is lake Borli, located at the north-west of the Tarbagatai ridge, in the Baltatarak river gorge, sometimes referred to as Burli⁷.

Divan Lughat al-Turk mentions a word “borun” (Kaz. бөрүн) in relation to the above mentioned hydronym. The word was used only once in the said manuscript. According to Besim Atalay, the word *borunis* a word describing the cracks in the earth caused by water⁸. Clauson defines *borun* as a hydronym with the meaning of “water waves”⁹. There are also such words as “boren, bogech” (Kaz. бөрөң, бөгеч) used in deep waters in the modern Turkish and Azerbaijani languages. We can assume that the name “Borly” (Kaz. Борлы) in the Kazakh language originated from the word borun-boru-bor + suffix *ly* (бөрүн-бөрү-бөр/бор + лы) with the meaning of a lake, when it is flown into by a plenty of waters in spring, and which dries up in autumn with cracks in the earth. Moreover, to rely on folk etymology saying “Probably, in those times, Lake Borly was a large and deep river, but now it is a river with a wide riverbed,” Clauson’s statement seems to be appropriate¹⁰. Because, according to Clauson, the word *bor* in the name Borly (Kaz. Борлы/Бөрли) means “deep waters with waves running high”.

Likewise, there is a village in Ayagoz district called *Baikoshkar*. People say that the name is associated with a person’s name. Similarly, *Divan Lughat al-Turk* mentions a lake named “Konchgar Bashy” located in southwestern Balasagun¹¹. In any case, the words *Konchgar* and *Koshkar* in these two names are phonetic variants that bear the same meaning. Although the toponym of the village Tansyk in Ayagoz district was also called in the name of a person, in *Divan Lughat al-Turk* the word “tansyk” is explained as “tang-suk (tang-suk-neng) –something splashed or spread, a miraculous thing” which is similar to modern meaning of the word¹².

The place names such as Ashchisu, Zhalgyzsu, Karasu, Laisu, Mamyrсу, Naryn su, which form the toponymy of Ayagoz district, belong to the ancient Turkic layer. Because whatever Turkic-speaking population we consider, in onomasiology there is no nation that does not use the word “su” (water) in its

⁶ B. Atalay, *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk, I-IV*, TDK Yayınları, Ankara, 2006.

⁷ S. Uzbekov, *Legacy*, Kainar, Almaty, 1998, p. 304.

⁸ B. Atalay, *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk, I-IV*, TDK Yayınları, Ankara, 2006.

⁹ Ö. Akbulak, “Divanü lûgat-it-türk’te yer şekillerine ilişkin terimler”, in *Turkish Studies – International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, 2014, vol. 9, no. 6, p. 17-38.

¹⁰ S. Uzbekov, *Legacy*, Kainar, Almaty, 1998, p. 304.

¹¹ B. Atalay, *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk, I-IV*, TDK Yayınları, Ankara, 2006.

¹² M. Vefa Divanü Lugati-t Nalbant, *Turkish grammar-I-noun*, Publications of Bilgeoguz, Istanbul, 2008, p. 293.

place names. For example, we can often meet such place names as Aksu, Kyrmyzysu, Karasu in Turkic language. Based on these data, we can see that the majority of Ayagoz toponymy is formed mostly by ancient Turkic layer.

The analysis of the Kazakh toponyms

The impact of the Cuman layer on the Ayagoz toponymy is evident. Naming the vast territory from Altai to Volga with the word Desht-i-Qipchaq itself proves that Cumans inhabited this region. The nation of Cumans, their traditions, customs and language were formed in the Desht-i-Qipchaq. The Cumans became the basis for the formation of the Kazakh people. Also, deep inside in the modern Kazakh language, especially in onomastics, there is a clear sign of the Cuman layer. By relying on the lexico-semantic peculiarities of anthroponyms and anthrotoponyms in the ancient Kipchak language, we can state that the names contained in the Cuman layer originate from the names of different tribes, kindreds and kinships that inhabited Ayagoz, half-forgotten terminological names. Toponyms of the tribal names include: Baikozha, Baiten, Kerey Mountains, Malgeldi, Mambet, Satai, Tolendy, Kyrgyz Zhaly and others. Also, this layer includes the names with unknown meanings that are met only in the old Kipchak (Cuman) language. For example, *Syrt*, *Shaktar*, etc.

The entry layer of Ayagoz district toponymy consists of the names borrowed from Arabic-Persian, Mongolian and Russian languages. We can claim that there are no Russian-language names in the region nowadays. 33 place names from the Soviet era were replaced by Kazakh language and were called with those names. Mongolian names dominate in the toponymy of the region. For example, the hydronym Kalzгутты, which is located near the village Akshatau, was originated from Mongolian language. The core of the name comes from Mongolian language galuu “Қаз, ҚАЗДЫҢ” (goose, anserine)¹³. And the ending +t means plural form in Mongolian. The formation way is *Gallut*>*Gallutty*>*Kalgutty*. Ending +ty in the name *Kalgut+ty* is a suffix in the Kazakh language which converts nouns into adjectives. That is, the name of Kalzгутты is a term bearing the meaning of a “river with a great population of geese.” Likewise the name of the village Dagandy also has influence of the Mongolian language. Yu. Kryuchkin’s Bilingual Translation Dictionary defines it as follows: 1. daaga is a *two-year-old foal/colt, yearling*; 2. daagan chikh is a *Rumex Confertus*¹⁴. According to our conclusion, the name may have a second meaning. In other words, the Daagan Chikh – Daaghan – Dagan+dy is a name given due to a large number of horses that inhabited near the village. Based on these examples, the words borrowed from Mongolian language to the Kazakh

¹³ Yu. Kryuchkin, *Large Modern Russian-Mongolian – Mongolian-Russian Dictionary*, Vostok, Moscow, 2006, p. 924.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

language show the interrelation by letters *g-k* (Ғ-К, Қ) in the beginning of the word and letters *g* (Ғ-Ғ) in the middle of the word.

The toponyms that came from the Arabic language are mainly the names of religious denominations, which were influenced by the Islamic religion. The list of names that were adopted from the Arabic language includes word combinations with such words as *әулие* (*saints*), *молада* (*mullah/mahwa*), *мола* (*grave*), *меуим* (*mosque*), *мазар* (*necropolis*), *кесене* (*mausoleum, shrine*), *зират* (*cemetery*). For example, the Akhmet Bazy, necropolis Kyz Aulie, Auliebulak, Mausoleum of Barak Sultan, Mausoleum of Zholdybay, cemetery of Kagaz Ana, Mustafa, Mausoleum of Zhalba, grave of Katpa Batyr, Mausoleum of Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu and the grave of Kudaiali Batyr, etc.

Among the place names that existed in Ayagoz district, we met ancient names adopted from the Persian words. For example, in the name of the village named Barshatas, it is suggested that in the folk etymology of the region, this name was derived from the combination of the word *barsba* – “ala” “shubar” and *tas* (stone). However, there is no information neither in the modern Kazakh dictionaries, nor ancient Turkic and medieval antiquities that relate *barsba* with the meaning of “ala” (Kaz. *black-and-white*) and “shubar” (Kaz. *spotty*). However, in the Turkish-Kazakh translation dictionary, the meaning of the word “ПАРҶА-парча (*samite*)” is a nomination that came from Persian, 1. A solid lump, a cut or a slice; part, fraction, particle, section; fracture, fragment”¹⁵ may be the basis for the formation of the name Barshatas. Because, in our opinion, the name is a nomination given due to the physical and geographical features of the region. That is, this place name originated as a result of combination of *Parchatash - Barshatas* – “*parcha*” (fractions, fragments, fractures, cracks), meaning “a stone fragment” to the stone fracture, particle of the stone or stone hill, and the word *tas* (stone). Over time, the word “*parcha*” was adapted to phonetic peculiarities of the Kazakh language and changed *p* to *b*, *ch* to *sh*. Such sound change combinations among Turkic languages can be a clear evidence of this fact. We think that the word “*parcha*” has made the basis of this name since the ancient Turkic time.

The list of words that came from Russian language includes such names as *Officer, Pskov, Sergiopol, Stalin*, etc. Bulk of the place names borrowed from the Russian language was named as a result of the Soviet power establishment and by the names of its leaders. However, from the moment of gaining independence, the names in the region adopted from Russian were renamed with their previous ancient names or they gained new Kazakh names¹⁶.

¹⁵ A. Bainiyazov, Zh. Bainiyazova, *Turkish-Kazakh dictionary*, Atamura, Almaty, 2007, p. 808.

¹⁶ L.M Barna, *Stumbling Blocks in Incultural Communication*, Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, 1997; D. Holland, N. Quinn (eds.), *Cultural Models in Language and Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 400.

The basic linguistic layer includes the toponymy common to the Kazakh language. This layer includes local, native toponyms of the Kazakh language that were formed in different historical conditions. The nominations common to the Kazakh language give a lot of information about the physical characteristics of the environment, the historical, cultural, political and social life of the people (Akshatau, Akshauli, Aschisu, Baltatarak, Donenbay, Kairtakty, Zhamanegin, Zhylandy, Kairakty, Karaagash, Karazhal, Kyzyltas, Maltugel, Samen, Satay, etc.). They are mainly named in relation to tribe and kinship names, names of famous heroes of the region, names of people honored by their people, historical events, various farmstead names, as well as based on physical specifics of the region¹⁷.

The lexico-semantic peculiarities of the places names in Ayagoz district are mainly formed due to circumstances that describe some events that people had experienced or cultural and spiritual life of the country. By describing such lexico-semantic peculiarities, we can classify the toponyms of Ayagoz district into the following two groups: 1) the toponyms giving information on physical and geographical nature of the region, 2) the toponyms giving information on the professional and household economy and public relations of the people.

(1) Toponyms, which provide information on physical and geographical nature of the region, are the names based on physical and geographical features of the region, flora and fauna, characteristics, size and color of physical-geographical basis of the region (Akbulak, Tarbagatai, Aktilek, Aktubek, Akshauli, Baltarak, Barshatas, Batpak, Borly, Zhuzagash, Zhalgyzsu, Karazhal, Karasu, Kalgutty, Dagandy, Kaskabulak, Kyzyltas, Laisu, Mynbulak, Sarykamys, Tomar, etc.)

(2) Among the toponymy which provides information on the professional and economic life of people there is toponymy which gives information about life, tribes, kinship, personal names, cultural and spiritual life of the population that inhabited the region (Zhamanegin, Egindy Bulak, Temekili, Akhmet Bazy, Apatai, necropolis Kyz Aulie, Bayten, Beknur palace, Donenbay, Yeskene spring, Karaul Tobe Hill, Mambet, Tolendy, Ileba settlement, etc.)

Based on grammatical analysis of structure of geographic names in Ayagoz region, we can identify various types of tools and methods of toponymy formation. In general, after study of the structure of the toponyms in Ayagoz region, we differentiated two groups of geographic names: individual and complex toponyms.

One-root individual geographic names are further divided into main and derivative root toponyms. Main root toponyms include names that cannot be segmented into morphemes such as *Kopa*, *Tommar*, *Syrt*. Main root toponyms

¹⁷ H. Abzhanov, *Kazakhstan: History. Language. Nation*, Ana tili – Ata tarih, Astana, 2007, p. 272; A. Esalnek, *Intra-genre typology and ways of its study*, MGU, Moscow, 1985, p. 183.

are made using suffixes, such as -ly/-li (-лы/-ли), -dy/ -di (ды/-ди), -ty/-ti (-ты/-ти). For example, *Shaktarty*, *Temekili*, *Dagandy*, *Kalgutty*, etc.

Compound toponyms in Ayagoz region is made up of two or more words. Depending on the number of root morphemes contained in the land names, geographical names in Ayagoz region can be grouped as one-component, two-component, three-component and multicomponent toponyms:

1) One-component toponymy includes such names as *Tolendy*, *Kopa*, *Baiten*, *Syrt*;

2) Two-component toponymy includes the following names: *Aqshi*, *Aktubek*, *Barshatas*, *Shakpaktas*, *Shubartas*, *Terissairyk*, *Sholpan Olgen*, *Zheldikara*, *Shynkozha*, *Kyrgyz Zhaly*, etc.;

3) Three-component toponymy includes: the grave of *Kara Batyr*, *Kali Kabash* palace, mausoleum of *KagazAna*, Mausoleum of *Zhobalai Bi*, spring of *Birali Batyr*, etc.;

4) Multipomponent toponymy includes Mausoleum of *Tezekuly Kissyk*, Mausoleum of *Kozy Korpesh - Bayan Sulu*, *Sadzhanuly Tumarbai Bi Canyon*, etc.

Toponymy of the region is made by lexico-semantic, synthetic and analytical ways of word formation. However, when analyzing the examples, the priority is given to the analytical approach.

Conclusion

To sum up, geographical names of the Ayagoz region are language units, which provide extensive information on the historical formation and development of the Kazakh language, its peculiarities and historical stages of the nation. Their origin has primarily originated from the geographical terms used since the ancient Turkic era.

For example, such words as *шоқы* (jaq/hill), *мүбек* (peninsula/a neck of land), *ой* (lowland), *қырат* (hilly area/upland), *сеңгір* (vertex/top), *таc* (stone/rock), *бұлақ* (spring), *төбе* (top/roof), *май* (mountain) in of the antiquities of the ancient Turkic era, which form part of geographic names, made the basis for the formation of the Kazakh onomasiology. Despite the fact that long period of time has passed and the sounds underwent some changes, such words which form part of geographic names have preserved their original meaning.

In other words, by being a part of geographic names such words describe physical and geographical features of the region in the past. Additionally, mythology that was preserved through formation geographic names gives more information about the etymology of the region as well. Sometimes there was a gap felt between the folk etymology and the scientific

etymological conclusions, and we could meet two different and quite incompatible examples. At the same time, toponymies of Ayagoz region contain the names that were formed due to the people who inhabited that region, due to their lifestyle, farmery or agriculture, customs and traditions, faith and belief. Therefore, the study of geographic names of Ayagoz region in close relationship with the history of the nation, its economy (farmery or agriculture), culture, faith and beliefs can bring us to different scientific findings and conclusions.