

LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF TOPONYMS IN THE EPIC “NAVOIY VA GULI”

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21256028>

Abstract. The article analyzes the linguocultural features of the toponyms (place names) used in the Uzbek folk epic “Navoiy va Guli.” The place names drawn from the text of the epic — Mag’rib–Mashriq (West–East), Samarqand, Hirot (Herat), Xuroson (Khorasan), Isfahon (Isfahan), Sabzavor–Jahon Bozori, Makka–Madina (Mecca–Medina), the Ka’ba, the otherworldly Jannat–Kavsar–Arosat (Paradise–Kawthar–the Plain of Resurrection), and the rhyming triad Dog’iston–Guliston–Chorbog’iston — are studied in their semantic, structural and cultural dimensions. Their connection with the people’s historical memory, geographical worldview and religious beliefs is examined, as is their figurative-stylistic function within the literary text.

Keywords: onomastics, toponym, toponymy, linguoculturology, epic (doston), bakhshi tradition, artistic space, national-cultural connotation, proper noun.

Introduction.

Place names (toponyms) are among the layers of language most tightly bound up with history and culture. Toponymy, the branch of onomastics, studies precisely these units — the names of spaces such as countries, cities, regions and markets [3; 5]. As A. V. Superanskaya noted, every place name has a historical event, the memory of a people and a cultural conception sealed within it [3]. In a literary text, and especially in folk epics, a toponym takes on an additional function: by anchoring events to a particular space, it lends the work credibility while at the same time carrying figurative and symbolic meaning.

Uzbek toponymy has been studied systematically in the works of scholars such as E. Begmatov, S. Qorayev, T. Nafasov and Z. Do’simov [2; 4; 6; 7]. In recent years, analyzing place names from a linguocultural perspective — through the national-cultural content embedded in them — has become a pressing task [5]. The epic “Navoiy va Guli” is a rich source in this respect: its toponyms span a wide range, from real historical spaces to symbolic-poetic and religious-mythological names. In this article these place names are collected and their meaning, origin, use within the epic and linguocultural content are analyzed. The study employs descriptive, contextual and linguocultural methods of interpretation.

Main body.

Alongside their naming function, the toponyms in the epic also perform a figurative-stylistic role. According to their meaning and function they can be divided into several groups: names of real historical spaces, hyperbolic boundary names, attributive (quality-forming) toponyms, sacred-pilgrimage names, religious-mythological (otherworldly) names, and rhyming-poetic toponyms. They are examined below in this order.

Mag'rib - mashriq — place names of Arabic origin meaning, respectively, “the direction of the setting sun (West)” and “the direction of the rising sun (East).”

Alqissa mana kun chiqish tomonda buyog'i kun botish tomongacha bo'lgan Mag'ribdan Mashriqqacha katta mamlakat bor edi, hududi behad chegarasiz edi [1].

(In short, there was a great country stretching from where the sun rises to where it sets, from the West to the East, and its territory was boundless and without limit.)

This paired toponym does not denote a precise geographical point but functions as a hyperbolic formula expressing the vastness of an empire extending from west to east. Deriving from the bookish-religious style, the mashriq-mag'rib pair sketches, at the opening of the epic, the image of an ideal, boundless country. The toponym has thus shifted from a mark of naming into a means of artistic hyperbole — an onomastic device characteristic of folk oral creativity.

Samarqand — the capital of Amir Temur's empire, the name of a real historical city.

Mana shunday katta mamlakatning poytaxti Samarqand degan shahri azim gavjum, tovlanib turuvchi shahar edi [1].

(The capital of such a great country was a magnificent city called Samarqand, bustling and resplendent.)

Coming with the epithet “shahri azim” (great city), the toponym brings to life the image of a great capital in the people's memory. The name Samarqand is directly bound up with Amir Temur and the Timurid era; it attaches the events of the epic to a particular historical space and lends the artistic interpretation an air of historical authenticity. This demonstrates the function of the proper noun as a carrier of historical-cultural memory.

Hirod (Herat) — the capital of Husayn Boyqaro's realm, a center of learning and culture in the Timurid era.

... kelinchakdek qilib, beklar, bezating e, donolarning eli go'zal Hirotni [1].

(Adorn, O begs, beautiful Herat, the abode of the wise, as though it were a bride.)

The toponym Hirot is exalted with the descriptions “beautiful Herat” and “the abode of the wise,” becoming a symbol of learning, enlightenment and beauty. The simile “adorn it like a bride” animates the toponym, expressing love and pride for the city. Because Herat is a space associated with the activity of Alisher Navoiy, this toponym brings a historical-cultural context into the fabric of the epic and reinforces its ideational orientation.

Xuroson (Khorasan) — a historical region (choronym), a hearth of learning and culture in the Timurid era.

... ana shu mamlakatga Xuroson degan ilmi ma’rifatga moyil bo’lgan yurt ham mana shu Amir Temur Ko’ragon deganning amriga bo’ysunar edi [1].

(The land called Khorasan, inclined toward learning and enlightenment, was likewise subject to the command of this Amir Temur Ko’ragon, belonging as it did to that same country.)

Khorasan is described as “a land inclined toward learning and enlightenment” and is prized as a region of knowledge and culture. The name of the region (choronym) serves in the epic as a means of showing the hierarchy of political subordination among countries. The positive description given to the toponym reflects the people’s view of learning and enlightenment as the highest value.

Isfahon (Isfahan) — **attributive toponym**: a quality-marker derived from the name of Iran’s famous craft city.

... 20 otliq jallodlar qo’liga Isfahon qilichni olib, Sabzovor bozorini yo’liga kirib ... [1].

(... twenty mounted executioners, taking up Isfahan swords, set out upon the road of the Sabzovor market ...)

In the phrase “Isfahon qilich” (Isfahan sword) the toponym appears not in a naming function but as a quality (attribute): a renowned sword of high quality, made in Isfahan. This is an example of the semantic shift (metonymy) by which a toponym comes to express the quality of an object. Through the onomastic unit, the geography of Eastern craftsmanship and the renown of a city’s product have become a fact of language.

Sabzovor – jahon bozori — microtoponyms (agoronyms) used in the epic as the name of Samarqand’s great market.

... Samarqandning katta bozorini Sabzovor deydi, shu bozorg’a borsak, mana shu boyligimizni kambag’allarga ehson qilsak [1].

(... Samarqand's great market is called Sabzavor; let us go to that market and bestow this wealth of ours upon the poor as alms.)

... Samarqand elining Jahon Bozori degan bir bozori boridi, shu bozorg'a yetib kelib ... [1].

(... the people of Samarqand had a market called Jahon Bozori (World Market); arriving at that market ...)

Sabzavor is a minor toponym that specifies the scene of events, lending a real space to the almsgiving episode. Notably, this same Samarqand market is elsewhere in the epic also called "Jahon Bozori" — one object is given two different names. This shows that agoronyms are not fixed in oral creativity and shift freely in the bakhshi's speech. Moreover, historically Sabzavor was a separate city in Khorasan; in the text, however, it appears as the name of a Samarqand market, which testifies to the symbolic reinterpretation of place names.

Makka - madina (and the KA'BA) — the two cities that are the holiest places of pilgrimage in the Islamic world (Mecca and Medina), together with the name of the sacred Ka'ba in Mecca.

... Oxirgi bir niyatime, Makka-Madinaga borayin, borib bir ziyorat qilayin [1].

(... My final wish is to go to Mecca and Medina and make a pilgrimage there.)

... kelib menga suyanch bo'lsangiz, Kaba ziyoratidan ham yaxshi bo'ladi [1].

(... if you come and become a support to me, it will be even better than a pilgrimage to the Ka'ba.)

These toponyms are not ordinary place names but appear in the status of sacred spaces — places of pilgrimage. The hero's longing to go to Mecca and Medina as a "final wish" shows that in the people's faith the hajj-pilgrimage is the highest spiritual goal. In the expression "it will be even better than a pilgrimage to the Ka'ba," the name of the sacred pilgrimage site has become a measure of worth — a means of hyperbole signifying the highest good. These toponyms thus define space not on a geographical but on a spiritual-axiological axis.

Jannat - kavsar - arosat — names of places belonging to the hereafter in Islamic belief: Jannat — Paradise; Kavsar — the sacred spring in Paradise; Arosat (the Mahshar) — the plain where the reckoning is given on the Day of Judgment.

... Joying jannatda bo'lsin, joning Kavsardan oqsin, sening joying jannat bo'lsin [1].

(... May your place be in Paradise, may your soul drink from Kawthar, may your place be Paradise.)

... Arosatda tashlab ketmang, Alisher [1].

(... Do not abandon me on the Plain of Resurrection, Alisher.)

These names are not real geographical points but religious-mythological (otherworldly) toponyms. They are used mainly in fragments of prayer and elegy — at moments of wishing goodness upon the soul of a loved one or of supplication in the face of death. Paradise and Kawthar express the eternal bliss wished for the deceased, while Arosat expresses the dread of standing alone on the Day of Judgment. Such onyms expand the onomastic space of the epic along a “this world – the hereafter” axis and deepen the text’s Islamic worldview.

Dog’iston – Guliston – Chorbog’iston — a euphonic triad of toponyms formed with the Persian suffix “-iston” (land/region).

... butun dunyoga o’zining ash’orlari bilan, ijodi bilan nom qozondi. Dong’i Dog’iston, buyog’i Guliston, buyog’i Chorbog’istonga ketdi [1].

(... he won renown throughout the whole world with his verse and his creative work. His fame reached Dog’iston (Daghestan), and beyond to Guliston, and beyond to Chorbog’iston.)

This triad is introduced at the end of the epic to express how Alisher Navoiy’s fame has spread across the entire world. All three names end in the suffix “-iston” and form a euphonic (rhymed, saj’-like) series; here it is not a precise location but sound and euphony, together with the generalized sense of “everywhere,” that come to the fore. Although Dog’iston is a real region, Guliston (“land of flowers”) and Chorbog’iston (“land of gardens”) are largely symbolic-poetic toponyms. This shows that the onym is chosen freely to meet the needs of rhyme and rhythm — that is, its aesthetic-stylistic function.

In structural-linguistic terms, the toponyms in the epic appear in various forms: single-stem pure toponyms (Samarqand, Hirot, Xuroson), a paired toponym of opposite meaning (Mag’rib–Mashriq), an attributive toponym (Isfahon qilich), sacred-pilgrimage toponyms (Makka–Madina, Ka’ba), religious-mythological toponyms belonging to the hereafter (Jannat, Kavsar, Arosat), and rhyming toponyms with the “-iston” suffix (Dog’iston–Guliston–Chorbog’iston). The naming of a single object by two names (Sabzavor, Jahon Bozori) demonstrates onomastic instability. Modifiers attached to toponyms, such as “shahri azim” (great city), “beautiful” and “the abode of the wise,” in turn prove that they carry an emotional-evaluative connotation.

In functional terms, the toponyms in the epic can be divided into two large categories: referential (naming a real object) and symbolic-connotative (carrying figurative meaning) toponyms. Samarqand, Hirot, Xuroson and Isfahon belong to the first category; they point to a particular historical space. Mag’rib–Mashriq,

Dog'iston–Guliston–Chorbog'iston, and in part Jannat–Kavsar–Arosat make up the second: here the place name expresses not a precise point but a generalized or symbolic meaning such as “boundlessness,” “everywhere,” or “the hereafter.” It is precisely this second category that shows how broad the artistic-aesthetic possibilities of the toponym are in folk oral creativity: the onym moves beyond the bounds of naming and becomes a means of imagery, hyperbole and even euphony.

In terms of linguistic origin, the toponyms in the epic present a mixed picture. Mag'rib and Mashriq are Arabic (“west,” “east”); Sabzavor, Guliston, Chorbog'iston and Xuroson are of Perso-Tajik origin (the affixes “-iston,” “-vor”); Makka, Madina, Ka'ba, Jannat, Kavsar and Arosat are Arabic religious names; while Samarqand and Hirot are ancient local names. This diversity shows that the Uzbek language has historically been in close contact with the Arabic and Perso-Tajik languages, and that this influence is especially strong in the lexicon of the religious and cultural spheres. The toponymy of the epic is therefore a source not only of cultural but also of linguistic-historical information.

The body of toponyms in the epic reflects the people's medieval geographical-cultural worldview. At the political center of this world stand Samarqand and Hirot, at its spiritual pole Mecca and Medina; at its margins lie craft hearths such as Isfahan, and at its outermost boundary the Mag'rib–Mashriq and the rhyming triad meaning “everywhere.” To this horizontal “linguistic map” is added a vertical, otherworldly axis — Jannat, Kavsar, Arosat — completing the conception of space along a “this world – the hereafter” orientation. For this reason, studying the toponyms not in isolation but in their mutual relations — as a system — reveals their cultural content more fully.

It should also be noted that the toponyms in the epic are organically bound up with the movement of the plot. Samarqand is the destination of a journey of almsgiving and charity; Hirot is the arena of learning, enlightenment and statecraft; Mecca and Medina are the direction of the hero's spiritual striving; while Jannat–Kavsar–Arosat are linked to the tragic ending, separation and the conception of the hereafter. Place names thus not only mark space but become an artistic means that also expresses the development of events, the goals and aspirations of the characters, and the mood of the work. This demonstrates the active participation of the onomastic unit in the composition of the text.

Conclusion.

The analysis of the toponyms in the epic “Navoiy va Guli” shows that place names in the work simultaneously perform both a naming and an image-forming



function. Real historical toponyms (Samarqand, Hirot, Xuroson) bind the events to the Timurid era and lend the work historical authenticity, while examples such as Mag'rib–Mashriq and “Isfahon qilich” display the toponym's function of expressing hyperbole and quality-marking.

Mecca, Medina and the Ka'ba define space on a spiritual-axiological axis, while Jannat–Kavsar–Arosat extend the onomastic space as far as the world of the hereafter; the triad Dog'iston–Guliston–Chorbog'iston shows the onym's rhyming-euphonic (aesthetic) function, and the example of Sabzavor and Jahon Bozori shows the assignment of two names to a single object. The toponyms of the epic are therefore not a mere list but an integral cultural system that preserves, in linguistic form, the people's historical memory, geographical worldview and religious belief. The results of the study may enrich observations in the field of Uzbek literary toponymy and may be applied both to the linguocultural study of the epic's language and to teaching practice. In future research, a comparative study of these place names together with the epic's theonyms and anthroponyms will provide a complete picture of its onomastic space.

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