

LINGUOCULTURAL (PHYTOMORPHIC) CODE BASED TEOTOPONYMS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF SURKHANDARYA)

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Resume: This article, dedicated to the study of theotoponyms based on phytomorphic codes, analyzes several theotoponyms in the Surkhandarya oasis, reflecting their semantic scope, religious and ideological views of the population, and their expression based on national and cultural characteristics.

Keywords: theotoponym, linguistic and cultural code, Jing‘ilota, Bedakota, Murchbobo, concept of phytomorphic code, ideological views

Резюме. В данной статье, посвященной изучению теотопонимов на основе фитоморфных кодов, анализируются некоторые теотопонимы Сурхандарьинского оазиса, отражающие их семантический объем, религиозные и идеологические взгляды населения, а также их выражение на основе национально-культурных особенностей.

Ключевые слова: теотопоним, лингвистический и культурный код, Джингилота, Бедакота, Мурчбобо, концепция фитоморфного кода, идеологические воззрения

Some onomastic principles have been developed and substantiated by toponymists for determining the etymology of place names. For instance, T.Enazarov and N. Ulug‘ov identified a set of general principles. In etymological analysis, factors such as phonetic criteria, word-formation patterns, semantic and chronological considerations, as well as dialectal layers and borrowed elements must be taken into account. These criteria must correspond to historical authenticity, follow the laws of word formation, and align with the phonetic system of the relevant language. This process also requires the participation of archaeologists and ethnographers. In our research, we adhered to these methodological requirements. Moreover, it was found that in the case of some teotoponyms, their etymological interpretations appear only weakly associated with the appellatives connected to the linguocultural code.

In the mythopoeics of Turkic and Slavic peoples, certain trees—such as the oak, pine, birch, willow, weeping willow, and juniper—have held a special place. They possess mythic semantics in two central respects:

a) as models of the creation of the universe, and b) as embodiments of the “ancient ancestor¹.”

The well-known narrative in the holy scriptures of Adam and Eve tasting the fruit of the sacred tree demonstrates that the cult of trees has deep historical roots in human civilization. Likewise, in Altai legends, the cosmic tree is imagined as having nine branches, while among Western Siberian peoples, the sacred birch is believed to possess seven branches². Even today, Mongols leave food, drink, and money at the foot of sacred trees in the hope that their wishes will be fulfilled (a similar phenomenon occurs in some Hindu regions of India, though their offerings typically consist of garlands and small clay lamps rather than objects tied to material needs).

The cult of “Yakkatut buva/ota/bobo” (“the Sacred Lone Mulberry Tree”) exists throughout Uzbekistan – including in Kashkadarya and Bukhara regions – and is associated with the veneration of saints. Legends often recount that saints would thrust their staffs into the ground,

¹ Ализаде Р. Культ природы в азербайджанском фольклоре. – Баку: Нурлан, 2008. – 176 с.

² Огяль Б. Турецкая мифология. I том (перевод, автор предисловия и пояснений Р.Аскар). – Баку: МБМ, 2006. – 626 с.

and the staffs would sprout into large mulberry trees, leading to their sacralization. In our view, toponyms formed based on solitary mulberry, plane, or juniper trees once served as landmarks; alternatively, such trees may have survived in climatically unsuitable areas and thus came to be regarded as sacred by later generations.

1. Jing'ilota

In the etymological analysis of the Surkhandarya teotonym Jing'ilota, it was established that the element jing'il / yulg'un (Tamarix) derives from a Turkic root yulg'un (يولغون), a shrub-like tree growing in deserts and stony riverbanks³. Other sources record the form yul-g'un, but this shape does not align with typical Turkic morphological patterns. In our view, jing'il is likely a phonetic variant of yul-g'un / jun-g'il. If we relate this to the "jipkil" lexeme in Dīwāni Luḡāt at-Turk, which carries the meaning "purple, arguvān-colored," this connection becomes more plausible.

The term arg'uvon / arg'avon is described in the Tajik explanatory dictionary as denoting a tall tree with round leaves and striking reddish-purple blossoms, used in medicine. This plant grows in the Western Tian Shan (Ugam, Qurama), in the Hissar and Bobotog ranges, and also in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. It blooms in May and fruits in June; its young branches are reddish-brown; leaves are rounded, kidney-shaped; the flowers appear in small clusters; the pods are 6-8 cm long. It is a highly ornamental species⁴.

Given the existence of 57 to 90 Tamarix species, it is possible that what Mashhad scholars refer to as arg'uvon represents one of the Tamarix taxa. Thus, the semantic association between yulg'un and jipkil (a purple-tinged descriptor) is reasonable, since certain Tamarix blossoms range from white to pink to purplish hues.

Considering the role of the yulg'un/jing'il in naming sacred sites: in Russia, the Tamarix is known as the "Tree of God," grebenchuk, bisernik, and "Astrakhan lilac"; in Kazakhstan, it is called jýñgyl. These regions, as well as China, value Tamarix both for soil reinforcement and its ornamental properties. In Greece, peeled Tamarix branches are used in food; it can also be made into marmalade. Among Christians, Tamarix resin was known as "heavenly manna." Tamarix tolerates drought, salinity, excessive moisture, and severe frost (down to -40.2°C). It provides firewood, stabilizes shifting sands, and its wood is used for carving; its bark contains dyes and tannins; it is an excellent honey plant. Etymologically, the term traces back to the ancient name Tamaris of the Timbra River on the Iberian Peninsula⁵.

Yulg'un thickets–jing'iltepalar–forming part of the barxan landscapes of Surkhan oasis (as described by Sh. Rashidov), are indicators of mineral-rich soils.

2. The Murchbobo Shrine

Murchbobo is a necroteotonym comprising a cemetery and mosque located in the ancient Pattakesar mahalla of Termez. Another cemetery named Murchbobo exists in the Uzun district of Surkhandarya; the two sites are unrelated.

According to oral traditions, the cemetery's guardian was a man named Murchbobo. It is said that the previous caretaker had cut down all the surrounding trees, causing the angels to leave. When Murchbobo became the guardian, he replanted and cultivated the trees, after which the angels returned. The cemetery was then named after him. A large mulberry tree planted by

³ Фарҳанги тафсирии забони тоҷикӣ. – Душанбе, 2008.

⁴ Бинафша гулли арғувон. <http://redbook.uz/uz/site/plant-view?id=8>.

⁵ Бисерный кустарник тамарикс и его выращивание. <https://www.botanichka.ru/article/biserniy-kustarnik-tamariks-i-ego-vyirashivanie/>

Murchbobo has survived to this day and is considered sacred. Locals visit the site, apply moist soil to treat skin diseases, and offer animal sacrifices on Wednesdays.

The second shrine in Termez received its name from a murch (“pepper”) tree that grew over the grave of the Samarkandi merchant Shaykh Said Vali.

Of the two cases, only the second—Termez Murchbobo—arose through a purely phytomorphic code. The first is anthropomorphic in origin: the name derives from the guardian Murchbobo, not from a plant.

3. Bedakota

Historian S. Tursunov interprets the Sherobod toponym Xo‘janqo as stemming from bed-ak + ota, yet does not elaborate on the internal etymology. He asserts that the shrine arose through water and tree cults, with -ota added to sacralize the place. However, this explanation is unsatisfactory⁶.

S. Tursunov assumes that bedak derives from bed with the diminutive -ak, yet this contradicts the semantics of bad/bed (بَد) and fails to explain the sacred tree/water cult. Even if interpreted as beda + k, the meaning does not reflect the cultic essence of the site.

In Dīwāni Luġāt at-Turk, bedük means “the greatest, the largest,” while bezük means “great, high.” Related forms appear in Turkic languages: boy (“stature, height”), Azerbaijan/Turkish/Turkmen bay (“great, large”), Old Uzbek biyik (“high place”), Altai bujuk (“length”), Tatar (“height”), Tuvan (“mountain”), Tofa (“hill”)⁷. If bedak reflects this root, it may originally have meant “great spring” or “large water source,” pointing to its origin in ancient water cults⁸.

Additionally, bedük carries the semantic nuance “to grow” (bedü). Odineyev interprets bud as “poplar.” The suffix -ak, though diminutive in Tajik, can also express “abundance” or “location” in toponymy—similar to -zor in plant-based toponyms. For example, Tajik Remak and Zagirak reflect areas where rem or flax grows abundantly⁹.

Toponymist T. Nafasov also explains bedak as bed “willow” + -ak, “a place with many willows,” which aligns closely with our interpretation.

Summarizing the semantic field: bedak likely derives from the Turkic bedük/bezük/büyük (“great, high, abundant”), originally denoting “great spring” or “large tree.” If Tursunov’s interpretation were accepted, the formation of this teotoponym would coincide with the pre-Islamic period when tree cults (such as among druidic and Hellenistic traditions) were culturally prominent.

Though its name does not reflect a phytomorphic marker, the Mozori To‘q shrine near Xonjiza may also be included in this category, as the hawthorn tree at the site represents a local continuation of ancient tree-cult practices.

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⁶ Турсунов С. Сурхондарё вилояти топонимлари – Тошкент: Алишер Навоий номидаги Ўзбекистон Миллий кутубхонаси нашриёти, 2008. – 152 б.

⁷ Турсунов С. Ва б. Ўзбекистонда топонимик номлар ва уларнинг тарихи. – Термиз: Сурхон-нашр, 2017.

⁸ Турдикулов Ш.Д. Сурхондарё ономастик сатҳида теотопонимлар. // Educational Research in Universal Sciences. Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal October, 2022. – В. 217-220

⁹ Одинаев А.И. Топонимия и микротопонимия Центральной Сады Горной Масчи (лингвистический аспект): Дисс ... канд. филолог. Наук. – Душанбе, 2018.

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