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GEOGRAPHICAL BASIS OF THE FORMATION OF PLACE NAMES IN THE KYZILKUM DESERT

Annotation: This article analyzes the main geographical factors influencing the formation of place names (toponyms) in the Kyzylkum Desert region. Based on scientific sources, it is substantiated that the relief, climate, geological structure, and natural resources of the region play a decisive role in the emergence of place names in that area.

Keywords: Kyzylkum Desert, toponym, geographical names, Turkic terms, relief, desert landscape, geological structure, etymology, geographical bases.

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ГЕОГРАФИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ ТОПОНИМОВ ПУСТЫНИ КЫЗЫЛКУМ

Аннотация: В статье анализируются основные географические факторы, влияющие на формирование названий географических объектов (топонимов) в регионе пустыни Кызылкум. На основе научных источников обосновывается, что рельеф, климат, геологическое строение и природные ресурсы региона играют решающую роль в возникновении топонимов данной территории.

Ключевые слова: пустыня Кызылкум, топоним, географические названия, тюркские термины, рельеф, пустынный ландшафт, геологическое строение, этимология, географические основы.

Kyzylkum (42°26'28" N 63°27'41" E) is a vast desert area covering a large part of Uzbekistan, with a total area of more than 300 thousand km². The territory consists of extensive sand massifs, takirs, depressions, and lowlands, with residual low mountains also located in its central part. The natural-geographical structure, geological development, and climatic conditions of the desert have directly influenced the formed structure and the semantic layer of toponyms in this area. The place names found in Kyzylkum are mostly formed in connection with natural landscape elements, flora and fauna composition, relief forms, and historical processes¹. The Kyzylkum region is located on an ancient platform, with its large part consisting of deposits from the Paleozoic and Mesozoic eras. During long geological processes, wind erosion, sand migration, and deflation phenomena dominated, resulting in the formation of various relief structures. These very processes served as the basis for the emergence of toponyms such as “Kyzylkum”, “Oktepa”, “Karakum”, “Kyzyltepa”, “Bo’rili”, “Kumrabort”, “Kyzyljar”. Toponyms related to color – components like red, white, black – are directly linked to the mineralization degree of the desert relief, soil color, and the amount of oxides in the sand. For instance, the name Kyzylkum was formed because sand layers rich in iron oxides had a more reddish hue. Similarly, names like “Okbulok”, “Okjar”, “Okshik” emerged in areas where sandstone and marl layers were dominant. Kyzylkum has a sharply continental climate, with extremely hot summers and cool, windy winters. The desert landscape has been formed as a result of low atmospheric humidity and prolonged absence of precipitation. These processes also entered through toponyms. For example, due to the scarcity of water, watery places acquired special importance and were named with components such as “spring”, “well”, “arik”: Beshbulok, Karabulok, Bibikuduk, Kumariq, Zhuvozsuv. These names not only indicated the presence of water at the location, but also served as an important directional sign for nomadic herders. The

¹ www.wikipedia.org

dunes and sand dunes formed as a result of the windy climate of the desert were reflected in toponyms such as “Kattakurgan”, “Kumqir”, “Kiziljar”, “Koshqum”. Often, sand ridges extending in accordance with the direction of the wind were named by the population and used as geographical landmarks. Desert plants such as ephemerals, saxaul, circassian, and sarsazan predominate in the Kyzylkum desert. The abundance or dominance of these plants in a particular area is reflected in place names: Saxavulzor, Cherkezbibi, Boybuota, Juzumli, Yulgunlik. Since saxaul forests have long served as road markers, there are many toponyms associated with them. The fauna has also influenced toponymy. Names such as Borili, Tulkikum, Koplonlik, Bug'ubulaq, Karakul are associated with areas where certain animals live or have historically been found. The natural conditions of the steppe regions were adapted to the lifestyle of nomadic Turkic tribes, and this process, in turn, led to an increase in ethnic components in toponymy: names such as Kangli, Kipchak, Naiman, Kungirat, Mangit, Karluq are widespread in Kyzylkum. Usually, these ethnotoponyms denoted the territories where the tribe lived, moved, or historically owned. Due to the complexity of the natural and geographical conditions, settlements were mainly located around springs, on the borders of oases, or in areas with mineral resources. For example, the name Uchkuduk (40° N, 64° E) is associated with the presence of cracks and wells in the geological structure of this area. Kyzylkum historically had strategic caravan routes that passed through part of the Great Silk Road, which were formed depending on the natural relief. These roads were often named with geographical terms such as “bel”, “dara”, “dovon”, “qir”, “yayiq”. For example, Kyzylbel, Beltepa, Kumkir, Yoyiqtepa, etc. Caravan routes were constantly identified by geographical signs in the changing conditions of sand migration, so these names also had navigational significance. In Kyzyl-Kum, the residual sands formed by the weathering of reddish rocks in ancient residual low mountains are red in many places. In the southern part of the Kyzylkum, the sands are dark gray. These sands

are formed from deposits brought by the Zarafshan River, not mixed with red soils. The length of the Kyzylkum stretches from about 2.5 thousand to 3 thousand kilometers. It stretches up to 300 kilometers in width, and is separated by mountain slopes, that is, the desert is divided into “Yomankyzyl” and “Kattakyzyl”. The border between them is separated by mountains and the plains at their foot. The inhabitants of the desert collectively called both Kyzylkums “Taelibay” (Tayelibay) [2].

In the context of this article, it should be noted that the toponymic system of the Kyzylkum desert is a complex phenomenon closely related to the natural and geographical features of the territory, historical and ethnolinguistic layers and anthropogenic processes. Toponyms are manifested as a joint formation of the natural, historical, ethnic, social layers of the main territory, which include the color, relief of the territory, the system of water sources located in the desert areas, traces of nomadic culture, ancient trade routes and modern economic activities. For example, let's take Tomdi district, there are not many names originating in Tomdi district, the geographical location, the situation and features of the place and the following toponyms are given as an example: The names of the villages of Tomdi district Ortakuduk, Ayakkuduk mean "village at the foot of the mountain, village on the coast", or "village located in the middle". A group of object names named according to their size, depending on the appearance and shape of the object, such as Jalpakhshi, Jeltsumsuq, Uzunkum, Uzuntepa, Ushaktepa, Dumalaktepa, etc. [1]. Geomorphonyms, hydronyms, and oikonyms in Kyzylkum are intrinsically linked to the region's landscape structure, resource distribution, and historical processes, providing an opportunity to reconstruct the dynamics of its geographical development. Therefore, Kyzylkum toponymy is not only a linguistic and historical source but also a systematic research object of scientific importance for geography, ecology, and territorial planning. It should also be noted in the article that the toponymic system of the Kyzylkum desert

manifests as a multi-layered phenomenon embodying the region's natural-geographical conditions, historical-ethnic processes, socio-economic activities, and cultural memory. Studies show that toponyms formed in the Kyzylkum region simultaneously serve as geographical indicators, historical-legal documents, and ethnolinguistic sources. The desert's relief features – barchans (crescent-shaped sand dunes), takyrs, low-lying valleys, sand ridges, as well as the uneven distribution of fertile areas – constitute the main content of many toponyms. This confirms that the formation of names associated with geographical terms is not accidental but directly linked to the physical-geographical composition of the landscape. The toponyms in the region are also extremely rich from a historical-ethnolinguistic perspective. Ancient caravan routes passing through Kyzylkum, the movement of nomadic tribes, and long-standing linguistic contacts between Turkic and Tajik languages have contributed to the layered and polysemic nature of these names. While some toponyms reflect concepts of color, direction, or sacred territory, others preserve traces of animal husbandry, well systems, historical settlements, and local economic activities. Also, the system of toponyms serves as an important scientific tool in understanding the mechanisms of interaction between human and nature. In which regions there were water sources, which places were historically dangerous or favorable for living, which landscape elements were valued - all this can be restored through toponyms. Thus, the toponymy of Kyzylkum reflects both the gradual changes in geographical development and the ecological adaptation strategies of the local population.

Some toponyms characteristic of the Kyzylkum Desert

№	Toponym name	Toponymic explanation
1.	Kyzylkum (desert)	A raddish - colored, sandy, stable desert with shrubs and other types of vegetation.
2.	Uchkuduk	A town in the Navaiy Region whose name is associated with three adjacent wells, referring either to a settlement that emerged around them or to a remote fortress characterized by the presence of three wells.
3.	Kyzyltepa	District and rural settlement in Navaiy Region situated adjacent to a hill characterized by red or reddish sandy soil.”
4.	Oktepa	A place name referring to the remains of an ancient fortress constructed on a prominent elevation, a height rising higher and larger than nearby hills, as well as the village situated around this elevation.
5.	Okshikh	A rural settlement in Jondor District traditionally associated with the Oqshikh clan, a sub-group of the Shikh tribe within the Uzbek people.
6.	Kyzylbel	The toponym refers to a mountain pass distinguished by red-colored geological formations and a reddish relief surface
7.	Kuyirabot	Kuyirabot is a village in Vobkent District, Bukhara Region. The toponym is composed of two elements: ‘Kuyi’ meaning ‘lower’ and ‘Rabot’, which generally denotes a ‘fortress’, ‘enclosure’, or ‘courtyard’. Thus, ‘Kuyirabot’ literally means ‘the village located lower or to the south relative to surrounding settlements.

The above-mentioned toponyms specific to the Kyzylkum Desert can be found in the books “O’zbek tili toponimlarining izohli lug’ati” by T. Nafasov and V.T Nafasova, and "O’zbekiston joy nomlarining izohli lug’ati" by R.Y

Khudoyberganov, M.T Mirakmalov, V.T Nafasova. If we make a general conclusion, the formation of place names in the Kyzylkum Desert is inextricably linked to the natural and geographical conditions of this area. The description of the desert relief by plains, sandy dunes, balds and plateaus led to the widespread use of units such as “sand”, “bel”, “bald”, “mountain”, “well” in toponyms. As a result of the dry climate of the region, limited water sources and the importance of oases, many place names are associated with the names of wells, springs, stream tracks or seasonal waterways. Also, due to the lack of vegetation cover, plant names such as saxaul, yantak, and shuvok also occupy a strong place in toponyms as geographical signs. Thus, the place names of Kyzylkum are a historical and geographical phenomenon that reflect the natural landscape features and clearly express the ecological, climatic, and geomorphological conditions of the region. Based on the research findings, the following recommendations and suggestions are appropriate:

1. Although place names in the Kyzylkum region have been studied by several scholars, some remain insufficiently researched, and their toponymic meanings have not been fully revealed.

2. GIS (Geographic Information System) maps of toponyms in the Kyzylkum desert have not yet been created.

3. Studying local toponyms contributes not only to a deeper understanding of the region's geography and history but also helps to determine the dynamics of its development.

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