



STUDY OF TOPONYMS IN HISTORICAL WORKS (AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE WORK “BABURNAME”)

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Annotation

Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur’s work “*Baburname*” (“*Vaqoyi*”) is considered a historical source across various disciplines, especially in the study of place names. It provides rich information not only for the region of Turkestan but also for Afghanistan and India, making it a valuable resource for examining place names in these areas. Currently, new information related to the historical geography of “*Baburname*” and different aspects of Babur Mirza’s state is being collected and introduced into scholarly discourse. The results of these toponymic studies undoubtedly contribute to both the preservation and restoration of intangible heritage, enriching the nation’s toponymic gene pool, and advancing research into historical place names to a new theoretical and practical level.

Keywords: Babur Mirza, “*Baburname*”, toponyms, ethnotoponyms, athroponyms, Ferghana valley, Kabul, India, The Baburids Empire, “Ho Darwish”, “Mehtar Lam”, ethnic tribes, etymology, “Burakuh”.

Introduction

In particular, the primary objective of this article is to investigate the types of place names mentioned in “*Baburname*”, including those named after ethnic groups (ethnotoponyms) and individuals (anthroponyms). The name of any ethnic group is called an ethnonym (from the Greek *ethnos* – “people” and *onym* – “name”). Many place names emerged in connection with ethnonyms. The names of clans, tribes, tribal alliances, and ethnic groups that formed in ancient times may have been preserved or evolved over time until the present day. Any geographical area named after an ethnonym is called an ethnonymic toponym. Some ethnonymic toponyms are oikonoms, representing important sources that reflect the historical formation, development, ancient relationships, integration, and migration of regional populations.

Main part

Ethnotoponyms are more densely distributed in areas where civilization developed — along waterways, in fertile agricultural and pastoral lands, in large settlements, and in places where representatives of various ethnic groups lived either mixed or side-by-side. In some cases, ethnonymic data plays a significant role in identifying the distribution areas of extinct peoples and languages [2;80].

Anthroponymy (from *anthropo* – “human” and Greek *onym* – “name”) studies personal names, their distribution, origins, and usage in society, along with the structure and development of anthroponymic systems. Types of proper nouns, such as pseudonyms, nicknames, titles, and



various methods of addressing individuals, are also sources for research in anthroponymy [3;565].

From an ethnographic perspective, studying Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur's "Baburname" allows us to identify and analyze the place names (ethnotoponyms) and personal names (anthroponyms) recorded in the work, which holds significance in ethnographic and geographic contexts.

The types, meanings, and origins of the toponyms mentioned in "Baburname" are of great value. These toponyms are categorized according to the types of objects they represent:

Names of countries – Afghanistan, India, Arabia, Mongolia, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Egypt, China;

Names of cities – Andijan, Margilan, Bukhara, Urgench, Tashkent, Delhi, Ghazni, Mashhad, Kabul, Varanasi, Lahore;

Names of villages and settlements – Beshkent, Qulba settlement, Yarkand, Navkand, Khudak settlement, Archakent, Dehi Ghuloman;

Names of forts and fortresses – Qalai Dabusiy, Qalai Zafar, Olakurgan, Tashkurgan, Asfidak fortress;

Names of caravanserais – Rabat-e Sarhang, Rabat-e Zavraq, Surh Rabat, Rabat-e Rozak, among others.

Aside from studying inhabited locations (*oikonyms*), the branch of science that examines mountains and elevations is called *oronimy*. In "Baburnama", many oronyms are referenced, with Babur Mirza noting the etymology of some.

Mountain names mentioned in the text: Olatagh, Kapetagh, Olatoghi, Mount Mehtar Suleiman (Burakuh), Mount Murghan, Mount Shavdar, Mount Shunkorkhona, Mount Kirmash, Mount Khoja Ismail, among others. In some cases, the Persian word *koh*, meaning "mountain", is included in the names, such as Anbarkoh, Burakoh, Damankoh, Koh-i Jud, Koh-i Safid, Koh-i Sof, and Koh-i Por.

Names of mountain passes: Anbahor Pass, Bodi Pass, Gunbazak Pass, Zarrin Pass, Oktagh, Sangdok Pass, Karokuba Pass.

Names of valleys: Valley of Boy, Valley of Bot, Valley of Gaz, Valley of Zang, Valley of Zindon, Valley of Nur, Valley of Suf, Valley of Khush, Kamrud Valley, Pashgroi Valley, Puromin Valley, Tutumdara, and Obdara.

Names of high mountain trails: Itmak Trail, Kandirlik Trail, Muhammad Peak Trail.

When discussing oronyms in "Baburnama", Babur Mirza provides valuable information on the location, mineral resources, flora and fauna, routes, climate, and hydrography of these mountains, valleys, and passes. For instance, he writes about a mountain near Hujand as follows: —...*daryoning shimol tarafida bir tog' tushubtur, Mevag'ul o'tliq, derlarkim, bu tog'da firuza koni va ba'zi konlar topilur. Bu tog'da bisyor yilon bor*"["Baburname",35]¹. ...*bir giyoh, eshitildikim, Yettikentning tog'larida bo'lur, ul el "ayiq o'ti" derlar, mehrgiyoh, xosiyatliq, g'olibo mehrgiyohdur, ul el bu ot bila ayturlar*"["Baburname",36]².

In describing the city of Osh, Babur mentions that Barakuh Mountain is located in the center of the city, where he built a room with a veranda. However, we discovered a typographical error in the name of the mountain in the text, which should actually be written as "Burakuh"

¹ Boburnoma. 35-bet.

² Boburnoma. 36-bet.



(رکوه). In Urdu, the word “bura” means "camel," and given that there are no other mountains in Osh and this mountain resembles a camel, our proposed name “Burakuh” is more accurate.

Discussion

Most of the *oikonyms* (place names) mentioned in “Baburnama” have retained the form in which the author originally recorded them. Notable examples include Andijan, Bukhara, Piskent, Zomin, Isfara, Vorukh, Hujand, Sokh, Khushyor, Kabul, Delhi, Mashhad, and Agra. Some place names, however, have reached us with various phonetic changes [4;18]. For instance, the city name Dizak is now Jizzakh, Kandibodom is now Konibodom, Marginon is now Margilan, Uzgand is now Uzgan, Toshkand is now Tashkent, Qubo is now Quva, Huqon is now Kokand, Tirmiz is now Termez, Khuzor is now Guzar, Karmina is now Karmana, Rushdon is now Rishton, Siyohob is now Siyob, and Gavo is now Gova.

The place names in the text can be categorized according to their naming principles as follows: Names derived from personal names: Aliobod, Bobo Husayn Abdal, Khoja Hasan, Khoja Shihab, Behzodiya, Skandarobod, Bibimohroy, Mehi Yakub, Dehi Gulomon, Muhammad Agha Kenti, Nematobod, Raboti Sultanbegim, Khoja Didar, Khoja Rustam, Khoja Shams, Shahrukhiya;

Names connected to ethnonyms (ethnic group names): Dehi Afghan, Ashporiyon, Raboti Sog‘d, Toruqshoron, Chakrak, Qahat (these names are linked to the tribes Ashpar, Toruqshor, Qah) [5;179-180];

Names related to occupations: Suzangaron (embroiderers), Ohangaron (blacksmiths), Charmgaron (tanners);

Names reflecting plant life: Chinoron, Kandibodom, Archakent, Jiydalik, Olmaliq, Olmotu;

Names based on numerical attributes of the area: Beshkent, Yettikent, Dahkat;

Names indicating the relief features, origin time, location, soil composition, or color of the area: Yorkand, Yor Yayloq, Navkand, Sarideh, Saripul, Miyon Duob, Lower Poyon, Toshrobot, Toshkurgan, Surkhrabot, and Olakurgan.

As we read “Baburnama”, we observe numerous scientifically grounded etymological reflections on geographic names. Indeed, when Babur mentions place names, he occasionally notes their meanings and why they were given such names, sharing his thoughts with readers. For instance, Babur’s thoughts on the meaning of the city name Kandibodom are noteworthy. Today, Konibodom is part of the Republic of Tajikistan and is pronounced and written as Konibodom. According to local residents, the toponym Konibodom consists of two parts: *kon* and *bodom*, meaning “almond mine”. However, from “Baburnama”, we learn that the first part of this name has nothing to do with the meaning “abundant”; rather, it derives from the word “kand”, meaning “city”. Therefore, Kandibodom translates to “almond city” or “city of almonds”.

In “Baburnama”, the name of the city Shahrizabz in present-day Kashkadaryo region is explained as follows: “*Since its deserts, cities, roofs, and buildings are lush and green in spring, they call it Shahrizabz...*” [Baburnama, 61] This implies that Shahrizabz means “green city” or “a city rich in greenery and gardens” [6;217].

Regarding Kashmir, a place in India, “Baburnama” provides the following explanation: “...the people of this mountain are called Kas. It is recalled that Indians pronounce “shin” (ش) as “sin” (س). Since the most notable city in this region is Kashmir, it may be that they named it Kashmir because of this” [“Baburnama, 197]. As geographer Hamidulla Hasanov also notes, “kas” actually becomes “kash” and Kashmir is thus considered an ethnonym linked to the tribe



residing in this mountain region. Similarly, Babur mentions the region of Lamghan (plural form – Lomghanot) in Afghanistan, describing it as consisting of five districts and two sub-districts. He offers the following thought about the origin of the name: *“The grave of Noah's father, Mihtar Lom, is in the Alishang district. According to some histories, they call Mehtar Lom as Lomak, Lamkon. Observing this people for some time, one can see that sometimes they pronounce “kaf” as “ghayn”, hence this region might have been named “Lamghan”. According to Babur, the name Lamkon evolved into Lamghan due to the pronunciation of the letter “k” as “gh” [“Baburname”, 110].*

Babur Mirza also discusses mountain names such as Koh-i Jud, Savalak Parbat in India, and Shah-e Kabul in Afghanistan, focusing on their meanings. For example, he explains that the Indians call this mountain Savalak Parbat, where “sava” means a quarter, “lak” means a hundred thousand, and “parbat” means mountain — collectively meaning “a quarter of a hundred thousand mountains” or 125,000 mountains, referring to the mountain’s vast expanse. He notes that snow never melts in these mountains. The Koh-i Jud mountain, according to Babur, was named after the Jud tribe that once lived there, making it an ethno-toponym: *“This mountain is called Koh-i Jud because it belongs to the Jud tribe” [“Baburname”, 197].* He explains that Shah-e Kabul, an ethno-oronym, was named after the king of Kabul: *“A small mountain lies to the southwest of the fortress. The mountain is named Shah-e Kabul because a building was constructed by the king of Kabul at its base”.*

Sometimes, Babur provides explanations based on popular legends and myths — folk etymology. For example, the explanation of the toponym Hodarwish is a classic example of folk etymology: *“A plain lies between Hujand and Kandibodom, called Hodarwish. A strong wind always blows across this plain... It is said that several dervishes once encountered a fierce windstorm in this desert, and calling out “Ho, dervish” to one another, they perished. Since then, this desert has been called “Hodarwish” [“Baburname”, 36].* Today, the Hodarwish desert corresponds to the Kayrakkum desert in Tajikistan.

Many of the place names in “Baburname” contain Persian-Tajik or Arabic elements, indicating the influence of these languages. These toponyms are formed from lexemes with various meanings. Examples include Garmchashma, Baghi Kalon, Botsafid, Dugoba, Darbandi Ohanin, Kohiston, Sangzor, Chorsu, Childukhtaron, Surxob, Regiravon, Obdara, Charmgaron, Suzangaron, Panjob, Miyoni Duob, Kohak, Obi Rahmat, Puli Ravon, Zarafshon, Ohangaron, Kohpoya, Dahkat, Obburdon, Pulikoh, Puli Mirzo, Puli Ravon, Raboti Sarxang, Raboti Xoja, Sangi Buriyda, Saripul, Sarideh Siyahsang, Surkhob, Surkh Rabot, Tangob, Chilsutun, Chorsu, Shokhidon, Hisor and Hisor Firuza.

“Baburnama” also mentions certain settlements that are known by two or three different names:

Toshkand – Shosh – Choch

Akhsi – Akhsikat

Uratepa – Ustrushna – Ustrush

Kesh – Shahrisabz

Karshi – Nasaf – Nakhshab

Rabotak urchini – Between Two Rivers

Qalai Zafar – Shoftevar

Kahlug – Darbandi Ohanin

For instance, the following quotes from “Baburname” explain these names: *“Tashkand region... is written as Shash in books, and sometimes as Chach...” (“Baburname”, 36); “...*



Karshi region is also known as Nasaf and Nakhshab (“*Baburname*”, 61); “*Qalai Zafar was formerly famous as Shoftevar*” (“*Baburname*”, 122); “... *Rabotak region is also called Between Two Rivers*” (“*Baburname*”, 52), and so forth.

Conclusion

“*Baburname*” is an invaluable work for studying place names not only within our country but also in regions such as Afghanistan and India. The origins, meanings, naming principles, structure, formation, and transformations of these place names offer highly valuable insights. Babur’s “*Baburname*” is not only a historical source but also a treasure of ethnographic and toponymic information. Through his travels and military campaigns, Babur recounts the historical realities of his time through the places and people he encountered. These names not only provide information but also reflect Babur Mirza’s worldview, spirituality, and cultural heritage. Thus, “*Baburname*” gives a comprehensive depiction of the geography and socio-political life of that era.

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