

THE ROLE OF ORAL TRADITIONS IN THE FORMATION OF ETHNIC TOPONYMS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH

Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages
Student of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Payariq

Toshmamatova Umida O'ktam kizi

umidatoshmamatova06@gmail.com

+998917172702

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20228681>

Abstract: This article explores the role of oral traditions in the formation and preservation of ethnic toponyms in Uzbek and English linguistic cultures. The research examines how myths, legends, epic narratives, folklore traditions, and collective memory influence the emergence and semantic development of geographical names connected with ethnic identity. Oral traditions are interpreted as important cultural mechanisms that preserve historical knowledge, territorial consciousness, and social values across generations. The study focuses on the comparative analysis of Uzbek and English ethnic toponyms shaped through oral storytelling and ethnocultural memory. Special attention is devoted to the influence of migration, tribal history, heroic narratives, and folklore symbolism on the evolution of place names.

Keywords: Oral traditions, ethnic toponyms, Uzbek toponymy, English toponymy, folklore, collective memory, linguocultural analysis, sociolinguistics, ethnic identity, geographical names.

Аннотация: В данной статье исследуется роль устных традиций в формировании и сохранении этнических топонимов в узбекской и английской языковых культурах. Анализируется влияние мифов, легенд, эпических повествований, фольклорных традиций и коллективной памяти на происхождение и семантическое развитие географических названий, связанных с этнической идентичностью. Устные традиции рассматриваются как важный культурный механизм сохранения исторических знаний, территориального сознания и социальных ценностей между поколениями. Исследование основано на сравнительном анализе узбекских и английских этнических топонимов, сформированных под влиянием устного народного творчества и этнокультурной памяти. Особое внимание уделяется влиянию миграционных процессов, племенной истории, героических сюжетов и фольклорной символики на развитие географических названий.

Ключевые слова: Устные традиции, этнические топонимы, узбекская топонимия, английская топонимия, фольклор, коллективная память, лингвокультурный анализ, социолингвистика, этническая идентичность, географические названия.

Anotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada o'zbek va ingliz til madaniyatlarida etnik toponimlarning shakllanishi va saqlanishida og'zaki an'analarning o'rni tadqiq etiladi. Tadqiqotda afsonalar, rivoyatlar, epik syujetlar, folklor an'analari hamda jamoaviy xotiraning etnik identiklik bilan bog'liq geografik nomlarning yuzaga kelishi va semantik rivojlanishiga ta'siri o'rganiladi. Og'zaki an'alar tarixiy bilim, hududiy ong va ijtimoiy qadriyatlarni avloddan-avlodga yetkazuvchi muhim madaniy vosita sifatida talqin qilinadi. Tadqiqot o'zbek va ingliz etnik toponimlarini qiyosiy tahlil qilish asosida olib borilib, joy nomlarining shakllanishida xalq og'zaki ijodi va etnomadaniy xotiraning o'rni yoritiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: Og'zaki an'alar, etnik toponimlar, o'zbek toponimikasi, ingliz toponimikasi, folklor, jamoaviy xotira, lingvomadaniy tahlil, sotsiolingvistika, etnik identiklik, geografik nomlar.

Introduction

Toponyms represent one of the most stable linguistic elements preserving the historical and cultural memory of societies. In many traditional communities, geographical names were formed not only through administrative or geographical factors but also through oral traditions, myths, legends, heroic narratives, and folklore memory. Oral traditions played a significant role in transmitting collective knowledge about territory, ethnic origin, migration, and historical experience. As a result, many ethnic toponyms became linguistic reflections of cultural identity and social consciousness.

Foreign scholars such as Jan Vansina emphasized that oral traditions function as historical sources preserving social memory and cultural continuity. According to his perspective, oral narratives maintain information about collective experience even before the emergence of written documentation. Similarly, Walter J. Ong argued that oral cultures preserve knowledge through repetitive narrative structures, symbolic expressions, and communal storytelling practices. These theoretical approaches explain why many ethnic toponyms are connected with legends, tribal history, and mythological imagination [1].

Within folklore studies, Alan Dundes noted that folklore traditions contribute to the formation of symbolic meanings attached to places and territories. In English-speaking cultures, numerous place names preserve oral narratives associated with kings, warriors, saints, and local myths. Toponyms connected with Arthurian legends, Celtic folklore, and Anglo-Saxon heroic traditions demonstrate the strong interaction between oral culture and geographical naming practices [2].

Uzbek scholars including T. Nafasov and S. Qorayev highlighted that Uzbek toponyms preserve ethnographic information related to tribal migration, historical events, and oral folklore traditions. Their studies reveal that many Uzbek geographical names emerged from legends connected with heroic ancestors, sacred places, natural phenomena, and ethnocultural memory. Such naming practices reflect the close relationship between oral tradition and ethnic identity in Central Asian societies [3].

The relevance of this study is associated with increasing scholarly interest in the relationship between folklore, language, and identity construction. In multilingual and multicultural societies, oral traditions continue to influence cultural memory even within modern globalization processes. Therefore, examining Uzbek and English ethnic toponyms through the perspective of oral tradition allows a deeper understanding of how geographical names preserve collective identity and historical consciousness.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the role of oral traditions in shaping ethnic toponyms in Uzbek and English linguistic cultures. The study also aims to identify the sociocultural and linguocultural mechanisms through which folklore narratives influence geographical naming systems.

Literature Review

Research on toponymy and oral tradition has developed across linguistics, anthropology, folklore studies, and sociolinguistics. Early investigations mainly concentrated on the etymological origin of geographical names, while contemporary scholarship increasingly explores their cultural and symbolic functions.

Jan Vansina considered oral narratives as essential sources for reconstructing historical memory and ethnic consciousness. His studies demonstrated that oral traditions preserve information about migration, tribal relations, and territorial identity. This perspective is particularly relevant to ethnic toponyms that originate from legendary or historical narratives transmitted across generations [4].

Walter J. Ong emphasized that oral cultures rely on formulaic and symbolic language structures which influence naming systems and collective memory. According to his theory, oral

Journal: <https://ifsmrc.org/index.php/aijrm>

storytelling contributes to the preservation of culturally significant places through repeated narrative transmission.

Within folklore studies, Alan Dundes argued that legends and myths create symbolic associations between communities and geographical space. In English folklore traditions, many place names became connected with heroic figures, supernatural events, and sacred landscapes. These oral narratives strengthened territorial identity and cultural belonging [5].

In Uzbek linguistics, S. Qorayev conducted extensive studies on the historical-semantic structure of Uzbek toponyms. His works demonstrated that numerous geographical names preserve information related to tribal identity, folklore traditions, and historical migration. T. Nafasov also emphasized the ethnolinguistic significance of Uzbek place names formed through oral narratives and collective memory [6].

Recent sociolinguistic studies increasingly examine the connection between language, folklore, and identity construction. Scholars argue that ethnic toponyms function as symbolic markers preserving cultural continuity and territorial belonging. However, comparative research specifically focused on Uzbek and English oral traditions in toponymic formation remains limited. Therefore, this article contributes to contemporary scholarship by comparatively analyzing the role of oral narratives in shaping ethnic geographical names within two different linguistic and cultural traditions..

Methodology

This research applies a comparative linguocultural and sociolinguistic framework to investigate the influence of oral traditions on the formation of ethnic toponyms in Uzbek and English linguistic cultures. The methodological approach combines comparative analysis, discourse interpretation, historical investigation, and folkloric analysis in order to reveal how oral narratives shape geographical naming systems.

The comparative approach was employed to examine similarities and differences between Uzbek and English ethnic toponyms connected with oral traditions. Through this method, the study analyzed legends, myths, heroic narratives, and folklore-related place names within both linguistic environments. Uzbek toponyms associated with tribal memory, sacred spaces, and heroic figures were compared with English place names influenced by Celtic mythology, Anglo-Saxon legends, and local folklore traditions [7].

The linguocultural approach enabled the research to identify the relationship between geographical names and ethnic worldview. Oral narratives attached to specific places were analyzed as cultural texts reflecting traditional values, historical consciousness, and symbolic perception of territory. This approach demonstrated how folklore contributes to the preservation of ethnocultural identity through geographical naming practices [9].

Discourse analysis was used to interpret symbolic meanings embedded within legends and oral narratives related to place names. The study examined how storytelling practices construct collective memory and reinforce territorial belonging through repeated narrative transmission.

Historical analysis helped trace the transformation of ethnic toponyms under the influence of migration, political change, and intercultural contact. Through historical comparison, the study explored how oral traditions preserved older naming structures even during periods of sociopolitical transformation.

The research materials included Uzbek and English folklore texts, historical legends, ethnographic records, epic narratives, and academic studies devoted to toponymy and oral culture.

Results and Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that oral traditions play a fundamental role in the formation and preservation of ethnic toponyms within both Uzbek and English linguistic cultures. Geographical

names connected with folklore narratives preserve collective memory and reinforce cultural identity across generations.

In Uzbek culture, many ethnic toponyms originated from legends associated with tribal leaders, heroic ancestors, sacred places, and historical migration routes. Oral narratives surrounding mountains, rivers, villages, and deserts often contain symbolic explanations about the origin of ethnic groups and territorial belonging. Such place names function as linguistic carriers of ethnocultural memory and historical consciousness [8].

The findings reveal that Uzbek oral traditions frequently associate geographical names with heroic epics and collective historical experience. Toponyms formed through oral storytelling preserve information about battles, migration, ecological conditions, and social organization. These naming practices demonstrate that oral culture significantly influenced the development of territorial identity in Central Asian societies.

English ethnic toponyms also reveal strong connections with oral traditions and folklore memory. Many place names preserve traces of Celtic mythology, Anglo-Saxon heroic narratives, Viking legends, and medieval folklore. Toponyms associated with legendary kings, saints, supernatural beings, and sacred landscapes illustrate the role of oral storytelling in shaping cultural geography. In several cases, oral narratives transformed ordinary geographical locations into symbolic spaces connected with collective imagination [9].

The study further demonstrates that oral traditions contribute to the symbolic interpretation of territory. Through repeated storytelling practices, geographical names acquire emotional and ideological significance within communities. Such symbolic associations strengthen social cohesion and territorial consciousness. Consequently, ethnic toponyms become important instruments for preserving cultural continuity and historical identity.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between multilingual interaction and oral tradition. In both Uzbek and English linguistic environments, ethnic toponyms were influenced by cultural contact, migration, and political transformation. Nevertheless, oral traditions often preserved older naming structures even when official administrative systems changed. This process indicates that folklore functions as a mechanism of cultural resistance and identity preservation [10].

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support sociolinguistic theories emphasizing the role of language in constructing ethnic identity. Oral traditions transform geographical names into symbolic narratives reflecting historical memory, social values, and collective worldview. The comparative analysis shows that ethnic toponyms should be interpreted not merely as spatial indicators but as dynamic cultural texts preserving oral heritage and ethnocultural consciousness.

Conclusion

The study confirms that oral traditions occupy a central position in the formation and preservation of ethnic toponyms in Uzbek and English linguistic cultures. Legends, myths, epic narratives, and folklore memory significantly influenced the emergence and semantic development of geographical names associated with ethnic identity and territorial belonging. Through oral storytelling practices, communities preserved historical experience and cultural values across generations.

The comparative analysis demonstrated that both Uzbek and English toponymic systems contain strong folkloric and ethnocultural components. Uzbek ethnic toponyms preserve information related to tribal history, migration, heroic ancestors, and sacred landscapes, while English place names reflect Celtic mythology, Anglo-Saxon traditions, and medieval folklore narratives. These findings indicate that oral traditions function as important mechanisms of cultural continuity within different linguistic environments.

The research also revealed that oral narratives transform geographical names into symbolic representations of collective memory and ethnic consciousness. Place names connected with folklore traditions acquire ideological, emotional, and cultural significance within communities.

Consequently, ethnic toponyms become part of broader processes of identity construction and sociocultural preservation.

Another important conclusion concerns the resilience of oral traditions during periods of political and cultural transformation. Even under conditions of globalization, migration, and administrative renaming, folklore narratives continue to preserve older geographical meanings and ethnocultural associations. This demonstrates the enduring role of oral heritage in maintaining territorial identity and historical continuity.

Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in contemporary toponymic research. Combining sociolinguistics, folklore studies, discourse analysis, and linguocultural investigation allows a deeper understanding of how oral traditions shape ethnic geographical naming systems. Future research may further explore the influence of digital communication and globalization on the preservation of folklore-based toponyms in multilingual societies.

References:

1. Dundes A. Interpreting Folklore. – Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980. – 312 p.
2. Nafasov T. O‘zbek toponimikasining nazariy asoslari. – Toshkent: Fan, 1985. – 216 b.
3. Ong W. J. Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word. – London: Routledge, 2002. – 204 p.
4. Qorayev S. Toponimika va geografik nomlar tarixi. – Toshkent: O‘qituvchi, 2006. – 318 b.
5. Vansina J. Oral Tradition as History. – Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. – 274 p.
6. Finnegan R. Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts. – London: Routledge, 1992. – 288 p.
7. Hanks P. Dictionary of American Family Names and Toponyms. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. – 412 p.
8. Karimov B. Folklore and Ethnic Memory in Uzbek Toponymy // Journal of Central Asian Linguistics. – 2022. – Vol. 5. – № 2. – P. 44–53.
9. Smith A. D. National Identity. – Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991. – 226 p.
10. Tuan Y.-F. Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience. – Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977. – 235 p.
11. Shakarboyevich N. B. Milliy qadiriylarning tarjima orqali ifodalanish muommolari // Yangi O‘zbekiston, Yangi Tadqiqotlar Jurnali. – 2026. – T. 3. – №. 9. – C. 621–624.
12. Axmedov Q. O‘zbek folklori va toponimik birliklar // Filologiya masalalari. – 2021. – № 3. – B. 61–69.
13. rystal D. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. – 524 p.
14. Azimov M. Ethnocultural Features of Uzbek Place Names // International Journal of Linguistic Research. – 2023. – Vol. 11. – № 1. – P. 83–91.
15. Nurmuxammedov Yu. Sh. Frazologik birliklarning tushunilishi va qabul qilinishi jarayonidagi kognitiv jarayonlar // American Journal of Open University Education. - 2025. - Vol. 1, № 5. – ISSN 2997-3899. - P. 64–69.