Epic Toponyms as Carriers of a Linguocultural Code

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Abstract
This study examines the cultural meaning of names denoting places such as mountains, water objects, and settlements. The study drew evidence from a famous Kazakh epos, *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu,* to provide insight into how epic toponyms contribute to the explication of culture. The study addressed the motives and methods of the linguistic and anthropological interpretation of toponyms, paying special attention to explicitly encoded cultural values. The study adopted a qualitative research approach based on a combination of secondary approaches – linguoculturological, intensive topology and holistic etymology involving linguistic etymology, folk etymology, and perceptual etymology. The data was collected in the form of connotations and denotations which each epic toponym represented in the poem. The findings show that, based on their etymological origin, epic toponyms belonged to two major groups: one, toponyms named after certain features of the landscape; and second, toponyms named after certain events in the epos. The former toponyms are transparent and reveal the perception and attitude of the Turkic peoples to the location through denotation, while the latter are based on legends and reflect the household and everyday routine specific to the Turkic peoples through connotation. As a result of complex etymological analysis, some toponyms are shown in both the denotative and connotative aspects. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that epic toponyms serve as an essential source of cognition of the worldview and national culture. Through the use of the complex methodology of analysis, the study contributes to the development of anthropological studies in toponymy and helps to establish links between Turkic languages and cultures.

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Introduction

Kazakhstan is located in the north of Central Asia, known for its diversity and a wide array of "geomorphic zones and geo-ecosystems" from vast open steppes to high mountain ranges, many of which natural monuments being part of the UNESCO World Natural and Cultural Heritage (Chlachula, 2020). Each place in Kazakhstan, such as a mountain, river, hill, winter and summer camp of the Kazakhs, has its own legend, tradition, history, and the names of these places are an integral part of the spiritual culture of Kazakhs (Tektigul, Karabaev, Duzmagambetov, Bayadilova-Altybayeva, & Zhubanov, 2021). Being "persistent" linguistic symbols, place names, or toponyms, reveal much information about a location in the time when it was settled and named (Penko Seidl, 2019). In epic literature and folklore, there are various works that highlight names of place playing an essential role in portraying the linguistic worldview and reflecting the history and culture of the people (Kenbayeva, Bekmasheva, Umarova, Shakirova, & Tuimebekova, 2022).

Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu (Qosan, Qasqabasov, Elibekov, & Ekimova, 2009) is a classic example of a Kazakh lyric-epic poem, which is characterized by a rather high toponymic density (Koopman & Jenkins, 2016). The events and plots of the narrative, customs and traditions of the people, the actions of the characters are connected with the place names in the poem, many of which can still be found on the map of Kazakhstan. The epic poem has more than thirty versions in different Turkic languages. The literary work is believed to belong to the Oguz-Kipchak period (7th-12th centuries) and refer to one of the last epic poems that appeared on the expanses of the Kazakh land (Margulan, 1985). The epic poem is widely popular among Kazakh people and is considered the hallmark of epos representing Kazakh folklore (Azibayeva, 2017).

Several linguistic studies have been carried out on the lyric-epic poem *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu*. Koblanov and Kabilov (2013), for instance, characterized the style of a dramatic version of the poem to reveal its creativity and originality in portraying the characters and relating them to the "folklore ethics". In her literary analysis of the poem, Nauanova (2020) focused on the cultural constituent of the epic and stated that it is characteristic of the national code, offering traces to the nation's past and constructing its self-identity. Azibayeva (2017) provided a critical overview of literary studies addressing the history of recording and publication of the poem. In the end of the analysis, she emphasized the importance of examining local place names and legends and traditions related to them, which are "objects and facts of tangible and intangible culture" (p. 195). However, despite the popularity of *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu* and its acknowledged significance in Kazakh culture, few studies have examined the cultural meaning of place names in the poem, i.e. epic toponyms.

Toponyms may lead to various interpretations of the history of the names of a particular location. Framed by rich imagination of the local population, and having emerged in different historical conditions, geographic names serve the chronological evidence of historical events and reflect various elements of the material and spiritual culture of different peoples, including ceremonies, rituals, religious beliefs (Turaevich, 2021). In some recent studies, epic toponyms have also been investigated from the point of view of their geography, to trace the ethnic and migration processes in a particular location (Mengkai, 2019), their aesthetic and artistic function to add certain stylistic features to the description of the people's lifestyle (Hadieva & Akish, 2015), or their semantic potential to recreate the archaic picture of the world and to identify the epic consciousness of the people in the past (Sanzheeva, 2021).

Unlike the previous studies, the present paper explores epic toponymns used in the poem *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu* in terms of the linguoculturological approach as "a complex field of scientific knowledge about the interconnection and interplay of language and culture" (Karasik, 2002), being based on von Humboldt's understanding of language as a people's "spirit" and a people's "direct being" (Underhill, 2009). Within the framework of this approach, toponyms serve as "a folded linguocultural code" (Korolyova, 2015), which is a component of the linguistic picture of the world and contributes to the actualization of associative links of a cultural and historical nature in the minds of representatives of a certain culture (Fatkullina, 2015). Toponyms are acknowledged to carry historical and cultural values, and heritage (Hakala, Sjöblom, & Kantola, 2015).

In the analysis of epic toponyms used in *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu*, this study aimed to provide insight into how place names carry the linguocultural code and thus contribute to the explication of history and culture through the combination of three types of etymological explanation: linguistic etymology, folk etymology, and perceptual etymology (Stachowski, 2022). We also show that place names can reflect the creative potential of the national linguistic consciousness and the idea of native speakers about the formation of their toponymic space.

Literature Review

- *Toponyms in folklore as a reflection of culture*

As a branch of poetic onomastic, toponymy deals with geographical names, their origin and formation, as well as their role and function in works of literature. By making use of place names in literary works, authors can create and develop characters and certain features of their style. Toponyms used in epic poems and historical songs are of particular importance since they make it possible for readers to discover characteristic features of the national way of life of a certain nation, which is determined by a specific geographical position (Gritsenko & Aleshinskaya, 2015; Hadieva & Akish, 2015).

Place names are regarded as ethnocultural texts containing relevant information on a nation's historical past (Boribayeva, Madiyeva, Medetbekova, Mambetov, & Ingamova, 2018) and proxies of an ethnic culture (Zhu et al., 2018). The cultural life of a nation impacts the appearance, formation and development of place names, and there are no names that have no connection with this nation's culture (Bugybaykizi et al., 2015). The linguistic and cultural portrait of ethnicity provides information about the stereotypes of human's comprehension mastering these territories and the historical past of the people who lived here before (Perfilieva & Da Silva, 2017). Using the term "chronotope" coined by Bakhtin (1981) from "chronos" meaning "time" and "topos" denoting "place", it is possible to state that toponyms shape a chronotope of culture. The term "chronotope" was put forward to allow for the analysis of the spatio-temporal basis of all narratives and other linguistic acts. The initial idea of the chronotope is that time cannot be understood without a spatial dimension. In other words, in a chronotope, time and space are intertwined (Pedersen, 2009). In this way, toponyms act as indicators of time in the written culture (Simonova-Gudzenko, 2018).

Hedquist et al. (2014) claim that place names mark "sacred locations, landforms associated with deities and historical events, springs, trails, and 'footprints' of ancestral villages, petroglyphs, and other archeological sites" (p. 324). Hakala et al. (2015) add that place names have significant historical value, and "in carrying memories of the place's past, they represent its collective memory" (p. 272). Therefore, the exploration of the etymology of place names should comprise the study of social, political and economic conditions, accompanied by the analysis of their metaphorical structure (Shumsky, 2016).

The potential contribution of legends and folklore to the historical record has been widely recognized, especially in communities that lack such a record (MacDonald, 2014). Being "multi-layered, multi-leveled, multi-valued, and multi-faceted" (Mamayev, Boranbayev, Karabayeva, Issayeva, & Mamayeva, 2021), folklore is one of the major components of culture. It is based on people's national history, politics, and aesthetic, religious and moral views (Hadieva & Akish, 2015). Moreover, folklore in literary works is one of the main sources of cognition of the worldview and national identity (Zhanibekova & Beisenova, 2021). Legends as folklore texts purport to explain the origin and socio-psychological functions of place names and in this way add depth to the onomastic approach (Harte, 2019). Thus, the study of place names may reveal the personality, attitudes, culture of the people who use these names (Baker, 1972).

- *Linguocultural aspect in toponymy analysis*

From the standpoint of the anthropocentric paradigm, a person is placed in the first place, and language takes on the role of the main content characteristic of a person, being focused on events and facts, and the personality of a native speaker is considered in the center of the study (Karasik, 2002). Therefore, language acts not only as a communication tool, but also as a repository of the specifics of national culture and mentality. Language, on the one hand, is a means of penetration into the sphere of mentality, and on the other hand, it is a phenomenon and an expression of culture.

Linguo-culturological studies explore the linguistic expression of culture through cultural codes. Cultural codes are specific to a certain culture and hence a certain language. Therefore, a linguo-cultural code is formed on the basis of the interaction between a culture and a language code (Rakhimjonovich, 2020). The interaction of language and culture occurs on the basis of cultural connotation, which arises as a result of the interpretation of the associative and figurative basis of the toponym, by correlating it with cultural and national standards or stereotypes. For instance, as a result of their comparative study of phraseological units in Kazakh and Chinese, Daulet, Anuar, Orazakynkyzy, Kenzhebayeva, and Dossymbekova (2018) were able to account for the linguocultorological codes in these two languages through the universal character of human thinking, the common patterns in historical development, and the universality of consciousness. In their analysis of the linguocultural anatomical code in the Kazakh language, Alshynbaeva, Mazhitayeva, Kaliyev, Nygmetova, and Khamzina (2021) also compared concepts referring to body parts, bones, and internal organs based on the degree of sacredness as a reflection of people's spiritual and sacred culture.

When interpreting a toponym as a "folded" linguocultural text or linguocultural code (Korolyova, 2015) and with the appropriate decoding, a wide information field unfolds, reflecting the onomastic picture of the world (Kondrashova & Shustrova, 2021). Toponyms presented in epic literature acquire a symbolic, figurative and metaphorical meaning in culture, generalizing the results of human

consciousness.   Being carriers of such national-cultural information and background knowledge (Lanovaya, 2021), the analysis of toponyms makes it possible to describe the spiritual culture and worldview of the language speakers (Vasil'Eva Svetlana, 2021). Thus, in her linguoculturological analysis of British toponyms, Lutfullina (2021) identified the main toponymic layers, which are related to different historical epochs, peoples, and languages, and function as cultural, historical, and social formations that testify to the time of the territory development and the various peoples inhabiting this territory. The morphological analysis of toponyms in Bolivian Spanish revealed connections with such local indigenous languages as *quechua* and *aymara* (Radovich, 2016). In the analysis of the Turkic toponyms in the Crimean Region, place names are shown to be the cultural artifact of Crimean Tatars, being the reflection of the historical stages of their settlement, economic activity, ancient migrations, and interethnic contacts (Ganieva, Osmanova, & Mazinov, 2020). As a result of the linguoculturological analysis of place names in Irkutsk region, the value orientations of the local residents are identified in relation to ethnic unity, life, traditions, and religion (Chupanovskaya, Maklakova, & Nikitina, 2018).

Although considerable amount of research has been devoted to the linguoculturological study of toponyms in various geographic locations, few attempts have been made to investigate the linguocultural aspect of epic toponyms. Moreover, most studies of toponyms used in folklore are limited due to the application of a single approach, either linguoculturological or intensive topology. Therefore, a more complex investigation is needed to provide a more detailed picture of how toponyms in folklore can reveal the connection between language and culture. In our study, we combine the linguoculturological approach with the intensive topology and holistic approach involving various etymologies to unfold the cultural meaning behind place names in the famous Kazakh epos *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu*.

Specifically, this study focuses on such particular aspects of the Turkic culture that are revealed through various types of place names in the epos and takes a holistic view of etymology as a special method of attaching the epos to a particular location and strengthening its connection with culture. To understand this view, this paper aims to provide answers to the following two questions:

1.   What specific features of the Turkic culture are revealed through epic toponyms?
2.   How does complex etymological analysis help in the identification of the cultural denotations and connotations of toponyms?

Methodology

- *Research design*

This study used a qualitative research design having a focused sample drawn from the epic poem *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu*. The qualitative research was concerned with finding answers and explanations of the specific features of the place names used in the epos and their cultural connotations. This enabled us to gain in-depth knowledge of the cultural context of the place names used in the epos.

- *Research procedure*

The research procedure involved the examination of the selected place names in terms of their meaning and origin through complex etymological analysis with a special emphasis on their cultural meaning. The complex methodology combined the linguoculturological approach (Karasik, 2002), intensive topology approach (Tent, 2015), and holistic etymology approach involving linguistic etymology, folk etymology, and perceptual etymology (Stachowski, 2022). The intensive topology approach (Tent, 2015) was used to gather data on the meanings of the place names under consideration, the reasons for their nomination, as well as the location of the places named by these toponyms. The complex etymological approach (Stachowski, 2022) was used to explicate the mental and social underpinnings of place nomination. As a result, such complex analysis enabled us to obtain an in-depth understanding of the cultural meaning of the toponyms used in the epos *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu*.

- *Data collection*

The material for the present research was drawn from the Kazakh epos "Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu", a classic example of the Kazakh lyrical-epic poem, for which more than thirty different versions are currently available. Five of these versions (namely, those by Radlov, Valikhanov, Shozhe, Zhanak, and Zhusup) were the primary sources of data for this study. The main technique of data collection was to select such examples from the original text, *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu*, that contained names of different places such as water objects, types of surface relief, and types of settlements. This enabled us to generate a research corpus of linguistic units comprising 75 geographical names used in the epos under analysis, including 32 hydronyms, 22 oronyms, and 21 oeconyms. To supplement our textual analysis, we used articles and books by etymologists as secondary sources that helped us describe and interpret the data from the epos. The secondary sources included research studies, library archives and other published resources.

- *Data analysis*

In our etymological analysis, we followed Stachowski (2022) to take a holistic approach combining three types of etymological explanation: linguistic etymology, folk etymology, and perceptual etymology. While doing linguistic etymological analysis, we looked at the forms and types of toponyms, searched for their definitions and/or descriptions in works by etymologists, tried to identify the lexicological and phono-morphological patterns of transfer of ancient names of geographical objects to the modern Kazakh language (Meirbekov & Meiirbekov, 2021) and possible roots or connections with other Turkic languages. In addition, we made use of cultural-historical and comparative methods to reveal a close relation of the Kazakh and Turkic cultures.

In our study, folk etymology was also taken into account. Normally in historical and general linguistics, folk etymology is contrasted with scientific (linguistic) etymology, and for this reason it is often ignored by linguists (Malkiel, 1962). However, some scholars argue that each etymologic action, including folk etymology, helps explain the meaning of words and thus can be referred to as a scientific (linguistic) process (Brückner, 1996; Vennemann, 1999). Along with folk etymology, to add a social perspective to the etymological analysis, we used "perceptual etymology" (Stachowski, 2022). Taken together, folk etymology and perceptual etymology encompass "the mental and social status of words", "complete" their linguistic image (p. 66). Thus, our etymological analysis was extended to include folk and perceptual etymology.

As a result of our analysis, the data obtained were systematized in accordance with their types based on the objects of nomination: hydronyms as names of water objects, oronyms as names of objects of a surface relief, or oeconyms as names of settlements. To clarify the cultural meaning of the selected toponyms from *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu*, they were further divided into two major groups – those named in accordance with the characteristics of the landscape and those named after the events from the epos. During the analysis, a third group was identified combining toponyms that relate to both the features of the landscape and events in the poem. In such division, the main classifying principle was based on the etymological origin of the toponym.

Results and Discussion

1. Toponyms depicting specific features of landscape

The etymological analysis of place names used in the Kazakh epos *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu* shows that a considerable number of the toponyms are transparent and named according to the characteristics of the landscape. In terms of word building patterns, it is possible to identify several obvious linguistic patterns of toponym formation in the epos. Among them is a composition that enables forming a compound noun by adding the words *tau* ("mountain" in *Alatau, Karatau, Kyzyltau, Jauyrtau*), *su/si* ("water" in *Bassu, Jetisu, Sarysu, Lepsi*), *köl* ("lake" in *Qaraköl, Sabyndyköl, Aqköl*). The main types of toponyms belonging to this group represent oronyms and hydronyms.

Several names of types of surface relief (oronyms) depict the specific features of the Kazakh landscape, mainly mountains. Thus, *Alatau* means "great mountains", "motley mountains", "skewbald ridges". The name is derived from the words *ala* – "motley, piebald" and *tau* – "mountain". The mountains seem motley because of the snow on their top. *Karatau* means "black mountains" (from *kara* – "black"). Unlike Alatau, the Karatau mountains are considered low, and in summer they are not covered with snow. The toponym *Kyzyltau* stands for a red mountain (from *kyzyl* – "red"). The mountain has a red color due to the red rocks visible from afar.

Hydronymic names in the epic are represented by the names of rivers and lakes, which are found in the epic much more often than other geographical proper names. This can be explained by the fact that since ancient times, the Turkic tribes have settled in the Eurasian territories, which have been abundant in water sources (Mindibekova, 2020). Therefore, the Turkic peoples have always treated water with respect, and gave various names to water objects. Among hydronyms are mainly descriptions of the size, length, current, direction, quality of water and presence of animals and/or plants. Thus, *Ayagöz (Ayaköz)* is small water (presumably from the word *Ayuguz*, consisting of *ai* – "moon, good, small"; *uguz* – "river; water"); *Qaraköl* is a river from groundwater (from *qara* – "black, groundwater"; *köl* – "a lake"); *Sabyndyköl* is a river that, due to its fast current, has foam similar to soap foam; *Bassu* is water coming from the top, or the source of the river (from *bass* – "head", *su* – "water"); *Jetisu* is seven rivers (from *jeti* – "seven"; *su* – "water"); *Sarysu* is a wide river (from *sary* – "wide, extensive"; *su* – "water"); *Uzınbulaq* is a long spring; *Balqash* is an unsteady place, mud, bumps in the swamp; *Lepsi* is a windy river (from *lep* – "windy"; *si, sy, su* – "water"); *Urjar* is a river flowing from a high slope; *Baqaly* is a lake where frogs, toads live; *Toqyrauyn* is a stagnant river due to trees along the banks and vegetation at the bottom (from *toqyrau* – "stagnation").

Of great etymological interest is the toponym *Öleñt(d)i* that comes from the Turkic "sedge" after the name of the grass growing along the banks of the river. The topolexeme is formed by adding the derivative adjective suffix *ti* to the stem *öleñ* "sedge". In fact, a considerable number of toponyms are formed by adding the suffixes

-ly/-li/-dy/-di/-ty/-ti of Turkic-Mongolian origin that denotes the presence of some object. Specialists differentiate this suffix by variants. Of the six variants indicated, the first four *-ly/-li/-dy/-di* are for some reason considered regular and productive, whereas the last two *-ty/-ti* are archaic, relic (Abdirakhmanov, 2010). As an argument, they refer to a violation of the law of vowel harmony, which requires setting after vowels and sonorants at the end of the root or stem of exclusively voiced consonants. According to this law, the following corresponding pairs of toponyms are possible: *Moiyndy – Moiynty, Almaly – Almaty, Shiderli – Shiderti*. It must be assumed that these two variants of the affix indicate the inconsistency in observing the law of vowel harmony. However, on the modern map of Kazakhstan it is possible to find toponyms for all the indicated options: *Almaly, Shiderli, Karagandy, Zhezdi, Kayrakty, Ozekti*, along with the "ancient" options for -ty/-ti.

Savina (1971) argues that *öleñ* is borrowed from the Iranian *öleñ* – "green meadow", "steppe", "field", "bog overgrown with vegetation". At the same time, Koichubaev (1974) points to two different toponyms in Kazakhstan: the hydronym *Öleñdi* in the meaning of "a place where there are sedge meadows" and the oronym *Öleñti* in the meaning of "sedge mountains". On the map of Western Kazakhstan there is a plateau called *Olenti*, which is not flat, on the contrary the sedge growing on the surface of the plateau is associated with visual images that recreate the contours of the heights. Thus, this place name can be referred to either of the two types related to oronyms and hydronyms within this group of toponyms and is most likely to be associated with the properties of the landscape. Moreover, in the toponymic dictionary of the Trans-Baikal Territory, we found a river and a settlement called Olengui (Fedotova, 2017). Matveev (1976) believes that the existence of five toponyms within one region formed in one language on the basis of one appellative indicates a rather high level of toponymy of this appellative.

Having analyzed the toponyms characterizing the specific features of the landscape, we can draw a conclusion that through such place names the narrators draw the living space of the main characters of the epos and mark the most essential geographic objects for representatives of particular ethnic groups. Moreover, through toponyms the narrators convey the local residents' perception of these locations, by emphasizing what characteristics of these locations are most important for them. As the elements used to form these toponyms can be found in other Turkic languages, it is possible to conclude that the features highlighted in the names of these locations are of significance for the Turkic people in general. In this group of toponyms, the information of cultural value covers the denotative aspect of meaning in language through realities of material and social culture (Teliya, 1996).

2. Toponyms related to events in the poem

The toponyms belonging to this group contain elements referring to particular events in the epic poem *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu,* which reflect the specific features of the Turkic lifestyle. Cultural connotations are explicitly encoded in the roots of the place names such as *Shiderti* (*shider* denotes belt fetters for hobbled horses), *Dombyraly* (*dombyra* is a traditional musical instrument of Kazakhs), *Qarqaraly* (*qarqara* is a traditional women's headdress), *Monshaktı* (*monshak* denotes beads). These toponymic lexemes are symbols in the culture of the Turkic peoples referring to particular items unique to the Turkic lifestyle (household items, musical instruments, items of clothing, and jewelry) and at the same time are expressed in the language. In this way, they carry a linguocultural code.

Some names of water objects express relation to the characters and/or events from the epos. For instance, *Teliköl* is a name for a lake where a tribe of teleks was saddled; *Ai* stands for a lake named after Bayan Sulu's sister; *Tañsıq* is an artificial lake near the grave of Bayan Sulu's sister. *Aqköl* is a white lake (from *aq* – "white"; *köl* – "a lake"). On the other hand, the appellative *aq* means "flowing". Therefore, *Aqköl* also means "a flowing lake", as it has a direct connection with the catchment area. With the help of this hydronym, the epic poem describes the place where a container with koumiss (mare's milk) of Sarybai, the father of Bayan Sulu, broke when he left the camp. *Jayılma* literally means "spread out, scattered", mainly referring to the floodplains of the rivers. It is also the place where the container with koumiss was broken. In the epos, the hydronyms *Aqköl* and *Jayılma* are given as a dyad of hydronyms, consisting of two names, since the hydronyms are close to each other.

Most oronyms express a connection with the events described in the epic poem. Thus, *Altynsandyk* ("golden chest") names the place where Aibas lost gifts from Bayan Sulu, which Kozy Korpesh was supposed to give. The oronym *Dombyraly* names the place where the dombyra (traditional national musical instrument of the Kazakhs) of Kozy Korpesh and Bayan Sulu remained. *Bakaaygyr* denotes the place where Aybas's horse, nicknamed Bakaaygyr, stopped (from *bak* – "low"; *aigyr* – "horse, grass"). The name *Abyraly* denotes the mountains where Aibas lost Bayan Sulu's scarf. *Jorga* is the place where Aibas left his horse. *Meyizek* is the place where Aibas lost his raisins, which Bayan gave. *Kyzyl Belbeu* is the place where Aibas lost Bayan's red belt. *Qarqaraly* is the place where Bayan's headdress fell. *Monshakty* names the place where Aibas lost Bayan Sulu's beads. According to another version of the epic poem, the caravan of the beauty passed near Mount Monshakty, and at that time Bayan was weaving beads from precious stones. In other words, according to the second version, the mountain got its name because of small stones resembling beads (*monshak* – "beads").

Of interest is a legend explaining the origin of the name of the *Jauyrtau* hill, which is located in the north of modern Kazakhstan. The poem says that the long journey through the endless expanses of the steppe exhausted Aibas and his horse. A huge wound opened on the back of the horse under the saddle, forcing the rider to leave the horse. The place where the young man left his wounded horse was named *Jauyrtau* (from *jauyr* – "wound"; *tau* – "mountain"). In all these examples, toponyms symbolize particular phenomena of the Turkic culture being expressed through the language and carry information of cultural value in the connotative sense (Teliya, 1996).

3. Toponyms combining several meanings

Another category of the toponyms is related to either of the first two groups mentioned earlier – toponyms denoting characteristics of the landscape or toponyms linked to events in the epos. However, the complex etymological analysis allowed us to relate them to both these groups simultaneously, as they appear to have both the cultural denotation and the cultural connotation. It is therefore necessary to unfold the linguocultural code of such toponyms as *Shiderti*, *Dombyraly*, and *Qarqaraly*. For instance, the hydronym *Shiderti* is based on *shider* denoting belt fetters for hobbled horses, or strands, and on the face of it seems to belong to the place names related to events in the epic poem. In the epos, one of the main characters Aibas lost his *shider* in this place. However, according to the etymological analysis, the meaning of *Shiderti* should be understood in relation to the hydronym *Öleñdi*, which is another river situated nearby. The names of the nearby rivers *Öleñti* and *Shiderti* are mentioned in the legend about Asan Kaigy, a Kazakh author of philosophical songs of the 14th century. Asan Kaigy revealed his philosophical ideas about the life of the Kazakhs and described the richness of the natural landscape of the regions of their residence.

For example, *"<…> Öleñti özenin körgende, toqtap eşnärse aytpay, öleñdete bergen eken. 'Öleñtiniñ swı – may, Şidertiniñ şöbi – mol'."* // *"<…> seeing the river, Olenti he silently walked on. When they asked: "Why are you silent?" After waiting a bit, he began: "Olenti water is rich, and Shiderti grass is plentiful'."* (Kopeyev, 1992). In the text fragment, the toponymic picture reveals the durability of the existence of the hydronyms *Öleñti* and *Shiderti*, which have retained their names and characterized the features of the landscape: the nutritional value of water, the abundance of grass interspersed with sedge thickets, the features of the length of rivers merging at the mouth, the nature of the soil, signs in terms of suitability for use land as pasture. This confirms the further development of the plot, accompanied by the name of Shiderti located in the neighborhood of Öleñti.

Having studied two variants of the narrator Zhanak and a later version of the narrator Zhusup, attention is paid to the suffixes -ti and -li in the appellative of the hydronym Shiderti (Shiderli). In addition to the epic poem under analysis, this name appears in another work as well, in a legend, where the sage Asan Kaigy, in search of Eden, saw the Shiderti River and sang: *"Bos jılqı şilderlep qoyğanday toqtaytın, jılqınıñ qonısı eken"* // *"The pastures are such that the horses will graze here, as if they were put on the fetters of a shider on their feet."* (Kopeyev, 1992). It seems unlikely that such a river, the vegetation of which impresses with abundance and nutritional value, receives the name of a household item.

Koichubaev (1974) argues that the name *Shiderti* hints at the ancient and long-standing commonality of the Turkic-Mongolian nominal base, dating back to *shiver/chiber/shabar/shavar/chabar*, and they, in turn, are translated as "clay", "mud", "bog, viscous silt". Words denoting the nature of the soil with the appellative *shabar* are also found in the works of Murzaev (1984) who explains that *shabar/shavar/shiver* means "mud", "clay", "forest swamp". Despite the semantic diffuseness of the *shider* topobase, some researchers explain the word *string* as "having three sources", but the river has four sources. Versions regarding the designation of the nature of the soil and the presence of abundant vegetation along the banks seem more convincing. Therefore, despite the seemingly obvious transparent meaning related to the event in the epos, the hydronym *Shiderti* appears to express another meaning that is connected with the specific feature of the landscape. Thus, the hydronym appears to contain several cultural connotations, conveying the Turkic people's perception of the view of the geographical object and its relation to the events in the epic poem.

The folk etymology of the toponym *Dombyraly* is associated with the Kazakh national instrument *dombyra*. In one version of the epic poem, this is the place where Aibas lost the dombyra, and in another version, after the death of Koza Korpesh and Bayan Sulu, the dombyra remained lying in the endless steppe to the northeast of the village, which was named after her – Bayanauyl. As a sign of pure and young love, weathered by the steppe winds and washed by the tears of the tragically lost lovers, it turned into a hill, visible from all sides for many kilometers. In fact, the hill, clearly manifested in the relief, is a domed hill. In the Turkic languages, the morphemic roots of the words *dom/domb* mean "round". The Kazakh language has a number of lexemes with this stem, for example: *dom(alaq)* – "round"; *dom(bygu)* – "to swell". From the Kalmyk topolexeme *dom/tom/top* means "low hill" (Tomanov, 1988).

The toponym with the stem *dom/domb* exists in the Russian Federation – Mount Dombar. According to historical data, in the past the area was occupied by Kazakhs. Kazakhs associate the oronym with the male name *Dombar*. However, scientists do not agree, since the toponym *Dombar* is explained as a low, rounded peak with very gentle slopes, and the toponym *dom/domb* is based on the characteristic of this area, which

has small and rounded hills on top. These topographic bases turned out to be productive in the process of nominating orographic objects. On the other hand, another observation can be made regarding the origin of this toponym. In ancient times, Steppe Mongols used an unusual jug called *dombo*, it had an elongated neck and a round bottom. In appearance, it resembled a musical instrument similar to a dombyra. Thus, in our opinion, two versions of the origin of the toponym *Dombyraly* are possible. The first one is a geographical object related to the toponyms of metaphorical origin, arose as a result of real or supposed similarity with another object, and the second version refers to a group of geographical names that reflect specific features of the relief.

Of great interest is the toponym *Qarqaraly*, which is the name of a mountain range in the north of Kazakhstan. In the poem, the toponym Karkaraly is considered as the area where the traditional Kazakh female headdress *qarqara* accidentally fell. *Qarqara* is a high female headdress decorated with feathers of a white heron or demoiselle crane, resembling a hill in its external form. There is another version that the place where Mount Qarqaraly is located looks like a wooden chest with decorations, which is usually installed on a camel by nomads, and it looks like a heron. A woman's headdress and a chest with jewelry, in fact, have an indirect relationship with each other. The headdress was decorated with heron feather plumage to make it look much taller. The outer appearance of Mount Qarqaraly truly resembles a bird. According to Radlov (1885), the word *qarqara* in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz languages means the genus of the heron. Elsewhere he pointed out that "<...> the khan's crown was decorated with plumage, as well as a headdress with bird feathers, symbolizing luxury and a high position, was worn by men of high ranks" (Radlov, 1989). Perhaps, following this logic, the mountains of Qarqaraly received the status of the "Golden Crown of Saryarka". Hence it follows that *qarqara*, used in the sense of "female headdress with a high top, decorated with plumage" and "a tall chest on a camel, also decorated with heron feathers", is the result of a metonymic transfer, which is quite a characteristic phenomenon in linguistics. However, it is difficult to assume that the mountain, which looks like a wooden chest, gave the name to the whole mountain range. The Qarqaraly Mountains are not a separate isolated mountain, but, on the contrary, they consist of a series of rocky granite mountains covered with dense forest and high hills.

On the other hand, Koichubaev (1974) denied the connection of the name of the oronym with the headdress. He suggested that the formant *qara* may be related to a very old form of the topoelement *gar*, which means "high", for example, in such place names as Talgar, Kalkagar, etc. The meaning of Qarqaraly, in this case, will be "high mountain range". Besides, as the scholar noted, there is Mount Qarqira in Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, in the west of Mongolia there is a high mountain range of Kharkhira (Murzaev, 1984). However, according to Margulan (2004), in Chinese sources the name is associated with the Qarluk tribes (Kaz. *qarlyk*), who saddled the areas near the high mountains – Kent, Abyraly, Degelen and Myrzhyk, which are located to the east of Qarkaraly and in the west of Semey (Northern Kazakhstan). The evidence of this is the stone statues in the Tarbagatai, Chingiztau and Abraly mountains, which belong to the objects of Qarluk culture. The diversity of interpretations of the origin of the oronym *Qarqaraly* may be explained by the fact that among many Turkic tribes, the tradition was widespread to give the same names to the areas through which they passed or moved, as well as to winter and summer pastures, for most of the tribes were engaged in nomadic animal husbandry. Thus, *Qarqara* as the name of a hydronym and oronym is found in the south of Kazakhstan, and in eastern and northern Kazakhstan there are mountains and pastures having the same name.

In the epos *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu*, such toponyms appear to combine two meanings, being associated with their physical properties and their perception by the local residents, on the one hand, and with their function in certain events described in the poem referring to some specific features of the Turkic lifestyle. By highlighting aspects that seemed of significance to those who named these places (Jordan, 2014), place names used in the epos contribute to the construction of the nation's identity and knowledge (Gin & Cacciafoco, 2021) and reflect the worldview and culture of the Turkic peoples.

Conclusion

The present study was devoted to the identification of the cultural meanings of place names used in the lyric-epic poem *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu*. The motives and methods of the linguistic and anthropological interpretation of toponyms were addressed, and particular attention was paid to decoding the cultural meaning through complex etymological analysis. Moreover, links between Turkic languages and cultures were established. The findings show that some toponyms used in the epos reflect the characteristics of space, describing physical and natural landscapes and relate them to the Turkic culture through denotation. Other toponyms related to particular events in the poem are connected with items, phenomena or rituals of the Turkic household or everyday lifestyle and contain the cultural connotation. We were also able to identify several toponyms that combine cultural denotation and connotation through the reflection of the Turkic perception of the locations and the depiction of the items of the Turkic lifestyle. Thus, it is demonstrated that place names in the epic poem serve as an essential source of cognition of the worldview and national culture and carry a linguocultural code. The complex qualitative study of the relation between language and culture through place names used in the famous Kazakh epos contributes to the development of linguoculturological studies in toponymy.

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