



“TURKIY XALQLAR ADABIYOTI TADQIQIDA INNOVATSION YONDASHUVLAR” mavzusidagi xalqaro ilmiy-amaliy konferensiya



COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TOPONYMIC LEGENDS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK FOLKLORE

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Abstract: *Toponymic legends, or folk narratives explaining the origins of place names, represent an essential element of intangible cultural heritage. This comparative study examines English and Uzbek toponymic legends, exploring similarities and differences in narrative structure, themes, cultural functions, and characters. Despite arising from distinct historical, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, both traditions use toponyms to convey collective memory, identity, and worldview. The analysis reveals that while English legends often draw from Christian and Norse mythology, Uzbek legends are shaped by Turkic, Islamic, and Persian influences. Both traditions, however, serve to sacralize landscape and transmit values across generations.*

Keywords: *toponymy, folklore, England, Uzbekistan, legends, cultural identity, oral tradition*

Annotatsiya: *Toponimik aʼnzlar yamasa jer atamalariniʼ kelip shiʼgiwi haqqidaʼgi xalq aʼnzlarini materialliq emes maʼdeniy miyrastini aʼhmietli elementi bolip esaplanadi. Bul salistirmali izertlewde ingliz ham oʻzbek toponimikalik aʼnzlarini uʼyrenilip, rawajlaniw strukturasi, tematikasi, maʼdeniy waziypalari ham obrazlarindaʼgi uqsasliq ham ayirmashiliqlar uʼyreniledi. Tariyxii, lingvistikaliq ham diniy oʻzgesheliklerden payda bolwina qaramastan, eki daʼsturde de toponimler jamaaʼtlik yad, oʻzlik ham duʼnyaʼga koʻzqarasti jetkeriw ushun qollaniladi. Analizler naʼtiyjesinde anglichan aʼnzlarini kobinese xristian ham skandinav mifologiyasidan kelip shiqqan bolsa, oʻzbek aʼnzlarini turkiy, islam ham parsii tilleriniʼni taʼsirinde qaliplesken. Biraq, har eki daʼstur de peyzajdi muqaddeslestiriw ham qadiriyatlardi awladlarga jetkeriwge xizmet etedi.*

Tayanish soʻzler: *toponimika, folklor, Angliya, Oʻzbekstan, aʼnzlar, maʼdeniy oʻzgeshelik, awizeki daʼstur.*

Аннотация: *Топонимические предания, или народные сказания, объясняющие происхождение географических названий, являются важнейшим элементом нематериального культурного наследия. Это сравнительное исследование исследует английские и узбекские топонимические предания, исследуя сходства и различия в повествовательной структуре, темах, культурных функциях и персонажах. Несмотря на разные исторические, языковые и религиозные корни, обе традиции используют топонимы для передачи коллективной памяти, идентичности и мировоззрения. Анализ показывает, что в то время как английские предания часто черпают вдохновение из христианской и норвежской мифологии, узбекские легенды формируются под влиянием тюркских, исламских и персидских влияний. Однако обе традиции служат для освящения ландшафта и передачи ценностей из поколения в поколение.*

Ключевые слова: *топонимика, фольклор, Англия, Узбекистан, предания, культурная идентичность, устная традиция*

Introduction. *Toponymic legends—folk narratives explaining the origins of place names—are integral to the intangible cultural heritage of many societies. They*



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serve not only as mnemonic devices but also as vessels of cultural memory, spiritual belief, historical narrative, and local identity. In both England and Uzbekistan, such legends encode a community’s worldview, values, and historical consciousness into the physical landscape, transforming geography into a storied and symbolic space.

Although English and Uzbek cultures arise from different linguistic families (Germanic and Turkic, respectively), and have been shaped by divergent historical trajectories—England by Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Norse influences; Uzbekistan by Turkic migrations, Persian culture, and Islamic civilization—their toponymic legends display striking parallels in function and form. This article undertakes a comparative study of these traditions, focusing on their **structure, themes, cultural symbols, and contemporary relevance**, while highlighting both shared patterns and culturally specific motifs.

1. Structure and Function of Toponymic Legends

In both traditions, toponymic legends exhibit a classic narrative structure—**setting, conflict, resolution, and moral closure**—but with culturally specific elements.

English legends often reflect a blend of Christian morality and pagan myth. They frequently incorporate royal or saintly figures (e.g., King Lud of London), supernatural beings (devils, fairies, giants), and mythic landscapes. These stories often serve didactic purposes, offering moral lessons through personified landscapes.

Uzbek legends, meanwhile, are shaped by Islamic moral philosophy, Sufi mysticism, and Turkic epic tradition. Narratives often include holy men (avliyo), wise dervishes, heroic ancestors, or miraculous natural events. The legends are frequently associated with sacred geography—mountains, springs, deserts—imbued with divine intervention or spiritual transformation.

Functions in Both Cultures:

- **Mnemonic Function:** Simplifying etymologies through memorable stories.
- **Moral Function:** Imparting ethical or religious teachings.
- **Cultural Identity Formation:** Reinforcing regional pride and historical continuity.
- **Mythical Geography:** Transforming physical spaces into symbolic realms.

2. Types of Toponymic Legends and Representative Examples

Hero-Based Legends

- **England:** *Grimsby* (Lincolnshire) – Grim, a Danish fisherman, saves Prince Havelok. This story preserves Viking identity and maritime heritage.



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- **Uzbekistan:** *Shahrisabz* (“Green City”) – Associated with Amir Temur’s birthplace, representing prosperity, historical legacy, and royal lineage.

Supernatural Legends

- **England:** *Devil’s Dyke* (Sussex) – A trench dug by the Devil to drown churches, halted by divine intervention. Emphasizes Christian-pagan conflict.

- **Uzbekistan:** *Chilustun Mountains* – Warriors turned into stone by a saint’s curse, reflecting divine judgment and spiritual discipline.

Event-Driven Legends

- **England:** *Slaughter* (Gloucestershire) – Misinterpreted as bloodshed, the legend replaces linguistic truth (Old English *slothre* = muddy place) with imagined battles.

- **Uzbekistan:** *Qarshi* – Said to derive from the Mongol word for “fort,” its legend recounts the resistance of locals against invaders, blending history with heroic resistance.

Etymological or Wordplay Legends

- **England:** *Penhill* (Yorkshire) – A tautology (pen = hill + hill), interpreted in folklore as the sleeping place of a giant.

- **Uzbekistan:** *Tashkent* (“Stone City”) – Though linguistically derived from *tash* (stone) and *kent* (city), stories link it to ancient sages who found enlightenment on its rocky hills.

3. Cultural and Symbolic Elements

Cosmological Worldviews:

- **English legends** are often grounded in a **dualist cosmology**—good vs evil, saints vs devils, order vs chaos. The landscape is moralized, with features like hills, caves, or valleys acting as sites of spiritual trial or divine presence.

- **Uzbek legends** emphasize **sacred geography** inspired by Islamic cosmology and Turkic animism. Mountains house spiritual beings, springs are sources of healing, and deserts are places of revelation and retreat.

Characters and Archetypes:

- **England:** Saints (e.g., St. Cuthbert), devils, fairies, legendary kings (e.g., King Arthur), giants.

- **Uzbekistan:** Avliyo (Islamic saints), dervishes, prophets, ancestral warriors, khans.

Nature and the Sacred:

Both traditions sacralize the natural environment:



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- **Springs and wells** (e.g., Grim’s Well in Grimsby; Chashma-i Ayub in Bukhara).

- **Stones and mountains** (e.g., Shap Stone Avenue in Cumbria; Chilustun, Nurata Mountains in Uzbekistan).

- **Trees and caves** with healing or divine properties.

4. Regional Variations and Influences

England:

- **South:** Christianized landscapes with legends involving churches, saints, or demonic foes.

- **North:** Norse and Anglo-Saxon mythology dominate; many toponyms ending in -by, -thwaite, and -ton.

- **Celtic Borderlands:** Emphasis on pre-Christian folklore, giants, druids, and Arthurian motifs.

Uzbekistan:

- **Fergana Valley and Tashkent:** Legends emphasize Sufi saints, fertility, and urban origins.

- **Khorezm and Karakalpakstan:** Legends focus on water scarcity, ancient empires, and tribal migrations.

- **Samarkand and Bukhara:** Strong Persian and Islamic influence—epics, saints, and cosmological myths.

5. Contemporary Use and Preservation

England:

- Folklore is preserved through written collections, educational programs, and heritage tourism.

- Sites like *Tintagel Castle* or *Avebury* integrate legend into tourism branding.

- Digital archives and folklore podcasts increasingly engage younger audiences.

Uzbekistan:

- Oral transmission remains vital, especially through *oqinlar* (poet-singers) and *mahalla* elders.

- Pilgrimage routes (*ziyosat*) to sacred sites like *Chashma Spring* or *Imam al-Bukhari’s shrine* preserve legends through spiritual practices.

- Folklore is increasingly featured in textbooks and cultural festivals, reflecting government interest in heritage tourism.

Conclusion

Toponymic legends in both England and Uzbekistan function as powerful cultural expressions that transform the physical environment into a moral and



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mythological landscape. Despite differing historical contexts and religious frameworks, both traditions:

- Embed cultural memory in place names.
- Sacralize and personify the land.
- Preserve and transmit collective values across generations.

Through a comparative lens, these legends reveal a universal human impulse to narrate and sanctify the spaces we inhabit. As oral traditions adapt to modern media and tourism, the toponymic legend endures as a vibrant link between past and present, story and soil, name and nation.

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