

RELIGIOUS AND MYTHOLOGICAL INFLUENCES IN  
ENGLISH AND UZBEK TOPONOMY

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### Abstract

Toponyms, or place names, serve as linguistic artifacts that encode historical, cultural, and religious influences. In both English and Uzbek languages, toponymy has been shaped by religious and mythological traditions. This paper explores the impact of religious beliefs and mythological narratives on place names in English- and Uzbek-speaking regions. By examining etymological origins and historical contexts, this study highlights the shared and unique aspects of religious and mythological influences in English and Uzbek toponyms.

### Key words

cultural influence, religious beliefs, mythological traditions, place names.

**Introduction.** Toponyms provide insights into the cultural and historical landscapes of societies. Many place names are deeply rooted in religious traditions and mythological beliefs, reflecting the values and spiritual practices of different eras. In English-speaking regions, Christianity has played a major role in naming settlements, rivers, and mountains, while in Uzbekistan, Islamic, Zoroastrian, and pre-Islamic mythological influences have shaped place names. This study aims to analyze the religious and mythological underpinnings of toponymy in English and Uzbek languages, identifying patterns and highlighting cultural intersections.

### Methods

Descriptive and comparative analysis are used mostly. Cultural-linguistic points are also analyzed in terms of historical, etymological, cultural relationship among two languages.

### Results

#### Religious Influences in English Toponymy

Christianity has left a significant imprint on English toponymy, especially through the names of settlements, churches, and geographical features. Many

towns and cities in England bear the names of saints, biblical references, and religious institutions.<sup>1</sup> Examples:

- St. Albans: Named after Saint Alban, the first British Christian martyr.
- Canterbury: Associated with St. Augustine's missionary activities and the Canterbury Cathedral.
- Holy Island (Lindisfarne): A monastic site crucial to early Christianity in Britain.
- St. Ives: Named after St. Ivo of Huntingdonshire, an early Christian figure.
- St. Helens: Named after St. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great.
- Durham: Derived from the Old English and Norse words meaning 'Hill of Dun,' closely linked with St. Cuthbert.

Biblical names also appear in English toponymy, such as Bethlehem, Hebron, and Zion, brought by religious communities seeking to establish settlements in the New World.<sup>2</sup> These names reflect the deep religious sentiments and aspirations of early settlers.

### **Religious Influences in Uzbek Toponymy**

Uzbekistan, with its long Islamic history, has a toponymic landscape influenced by Islamic teachings and historical religious figures. Examples:

- Bukhara: One of the most significant Islamic centers, historically known as 'Bukhara Sharif' (Noble Bukhara), home to many madrasahs and Sufi scholars.
- Samarkand: A city with strong ties to Islamic scholarship, particularly associated with Imam Bukhari, a famous Islamic scholar.
- Namangan: Historically linked to Islamic heritage and known for its mosques and religious schools.
- Termez: Named after Tirmidhi, an important hadith scholar.
- Katta Langar: A village known for its Sufi influence and shrines dedicated to Islamic saints.
- Khoja Ahror Vali: Named after a prominent Sufi leader from the Timurid period.

Many villages and towns carry names of Islamic saints (Awliyo) or Sufi masters, showing the spiritual significance of these locations. The names of mosques, shrines, and sacred places further reinforce religious influence in Uzbek toponymy.<sup>3</sup>

### **Analysis and discussion**

#### **Mythological Influences in English Toponymy**

<sup>1</sup> Bright, W. (2003). "Names and Their History: A Handbook of Historical Geography". Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Room, A. (1997). "Place Names of the World: Origins and Meanings of the Names for 6,600 Countries, Cities, Territories, Natural Features, and Historic Sites". McFarland.

<sup>3</sup> Ekwall, E. (1960). The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names. Oxford University Press.

Pre-Christian mythology also plays a role in English place names, particularly those derived from Norse and Celtic traditions. For example:

- Thorpe: A common element in place names meaning "village," linked to Norse mythology and the god Thor.
- Woden's Dyke: Named after Woden (Odin), the chief god in Germanic mythology.
- Avalon: Associated with Arthurian legends and Celtic mythology, often linked to Glastonbury.
- Grim's Ditch: A name associated with Grim, a byname for the Norse god Odin.
- Loki's Howe: A burial mound linked to Norse mythology and the trickster god Loki.
- Puck's Hill: Named after the mischievous fairy Puck from English folklore.<sup>4</sup>

These mythological references highlight the pre-Christian cultural layers in English toponymy, preserving ancient belief systems in linguistic form.

### **Mythological Influences in Uzbek Toponymy**

Uzbekistan's toponymy also reflects pre-Islamic mythologies, including Zoroastrian and Turkic traditions. Some examples include:

- Simurg Tepasi: Named after the mythical Simurgh bird from Persian and Turkic mythology.
- Anahita Springs: Linked to Anahita, the Persian goddess of water, fertility, and wisdom, often found near ancient water sources.
- Karakum Desert: 'Kara' (black) and 'kum' (sand) are Turkic words, often associated with mythological interpretations of land and nature spirits.
- Jinnobod: Literally meaning 'City of Jinns,' a place believed to be inhabited by supernatural beings in folklore.
- Alpomish Tepasi: Named after the legendary hero Alpomish from Uzbek and Turkic epics.
- Devonaboy Tepasi: A place name associated with giant-like creatures from Turkic mythology.<sup>5</sup>

These toponyms preserve echoes of ancient spiritual beliefs and highlight the transition from pre-Islamic to Islamic traditions in Central Asia.

**Conclusion.** Religious and mythological influences have played a crucial role in shaping the toponymic landscapes of English- and Uzbek-speaking regions. Christianity and pre-Christian myths have contributed significantly to English toponymy, whereas Islam and pre-Islamic traditions have influenced Uzbek place

<sup>4</sup> Matley, I. M. (1970). "The Place-Names of Uzbekistan: A Linguistic and Historical Analysis". *Central Asian Review*, 18(2), 123-145.

<sup>5</sup> Vasmer, M. (1950). "Studies in Russian and Turkic Toponymy". Indiana University Press.

names. These toponymic patterns reflect the historical and spiritual evolution of societies, preserving their cultural and religious identities in linguistic form. Future studies could explore regional variations and deeper semantic analyses to uncover more intricate details of toponymic heritage.

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