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Research article

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## THE STRUCTURAL SYSTEM AND LEXICAL-SEMANTIC FEATURES OF OIKONYMS OF THE KARATAU REGION

**Abstract.** This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the structural characteristics and semantic content of oikonyms in the Qaratau region. The study aims to identify the structural system and lexical-semantic features of Qaratau oikonyms by examining their formation methods and semantic properties to reveal patterns in regional toponym development. Oikonyms are linguistic units used to name geographical objects, reflecting local worldview, historical events, attitudes toward nature, and cultural experience. The study identifies synthetic (affixal), analytical (compounding and word combinations), and lexical-semantic word-formation methods in the creation of oikonyms. Semantic analysis further classifies them into names with physical-geographical, historical-ethnographic, historical-cultural, and socio-social significance. A combination of research methods was employed, including systematization and classification, structural-semantic analysis, descriptive, and statistical approaches. The research analyzed 188 oikonyms in the region, divided into the following categories: anthropo-oikonyms (based on personal names) – 26; color-based oikonyms – 49; hydrographic – 21; phytonymic – 27; orographic (mountains, hills, ridges, etc.) – 23; and names with socio-economic and social significance – 42. The findings provide a theoretical basis for Kazakh onomastic studies, enrich regional linguistic cartography and linguocultural analysis, and reveal the historical, cultural, and social value of Qaratau oikonyms.

**Keywords:** Karatau region, onomastics, oikonym, structural analysis, semantic content, lexical feature, linguoculture.

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## Introduction

Geographical names are one of the most important linguistic units that reflect the worldview, spiritual essence, and historical and cultural experience of the nation. They not only describe a certain area, but also provide valuable information about the way of life, the system of values, and the national identity of the people living in this region. The formation of toponyms is based on certain features. In the geographical naming of each people, it is important to observe certain linguistic patterns that correspond to the language system. The naming nation convey their view of the world through its toponymic names. The content of toponyms arises in close connection with historical, social, geographical, and other extralinguistic factors. Toponyms, as units that define the national symbolic character of a language, include geographical and spiritual-cultural names that have long been fixed in the linguistic consciousness of the population and keep with them both geographical objects and historical and spiritual-cultural information related to these places.

Toponyms of the South Kazakhstan region are formed with the preservation of historical, cultural and geographical features. They can serve as the basis for an important information source in the study of centuries-old history, culture, ethnography and worldview of the Kazakh people, as well as traditions and customs. The part of the South Kazakhstan region that is ethnographically rich with toponymic names is the Karatau region. The names of this region are inextricably linked with the historical memory of the people, their way of life, and cultural and religious traditions. The toponyms found here reflect the ethnographic features of the Kazakh people, their connection with nature and historical events.

Karatau region is one of the most unique landscape regions in terms of nature and history, located in the southern part of Kazakhstan. The geographical names of this region form an important object of study as linguistic units that reflect the historical experience and cultural values of the people, their social structure, life and ritual characteristics, as well as their attitude to nature. Oikonyms of the Karatau region were chosen as the object of study. Oikonym is a type of toponym, that is, a proper name characteristic of a particular settlement. In the course of the study, the names of settlements were grouped according to natural-geographical, historical-ethnographic, cultural-historical and socio-social motives.

- The names of settlements, depending on the physical and geographical features, are formed depending on the terrain, natural objects, water sources, climatic conditions, flora and fauna.

- The names of settlements, depending on historical and ethnographic factors, are formed based on the names of tribes, population migration, traditional economic and ethnic characteristics.

- The names of settlements, depending on cultural and historical conditions, are formed in connection with historical figures, religious and spiritual values, sacred places and cultural monuments.

- The names of settlements formed in accordance with socio-economic conditions are formed in connection with historical-social and administrative-political changes, as well as important social events in the life of society.

Oikonyms in the Karatau region are structurally and semantically different in nature. In the course of the study, they are divided into such main groups as anthropooikonyms (based on human names), oikonyms based on species and color names, hydrographic and orographic names, phytonymic oikonyms, as well as names that have social and household and social significance. The structure and semantics of each group reflect regional characteristics, the traditional worldview of the people, historical memory, and social relations. In addition, the

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morphemic composition of oikonyms, the relationship of roots and suffixes, and phonetic and spelling features determine their linguistic stability and variability.

The study of oikonyms of the Karatau region is important not only in the field of onomastics, but also for ethnolinguistics, cultural studies, language history and linguocultural studies. The geographical names of this region are of particular importance as a linguistic phenomenon, reflecting the connection of the population with nature, society, and history; therefore, their structural and semantic analysis allows us to deeply understand the onomastic system of the Kazakh language, identify regional features and fully study the linguocultural context.

In contemporary linguistics, onomastic research is widely developed within the framework of the anthropocentric and cognitive paradigm. From this point of view, the consideration of oikonyms not only as a linguistic unit, but also as an important linguocultural phenomenon that preserves the historical memory, national worldview and cultural code of the people is an urgent scientific problem.

Despite the fact that the Karatau region is one of the most important historically and culturally significant regions of Kazakhstan, the structural nature and semantic content of the oikonyms in this region have not been sufficiently studied as an object of special comprehensive research. Therefore, the systematic analysis of regional oikonyms, the determination of the ways of their creation, semantic groups and ethno-cultural content is important from the point of view of complementing onomastic studies in the Kazakh language. In addition, the structural and semantic study of regional oiconyms provides valuable information about the relationship of the population with nature, social life and historical experience. The results of this study contribute to the description of the regional onomastic system of the Kazakh language, the development of national linguistic cartography and the improvement of the methodology of linguocultural analysis. For this reason, the study of oikonyms of the Karatau region is one of the most relevant and important scientific directions in modern Kazakh linguistics.

### **Research Methods**

As the research material, we used the names of common oikonyms of the Karatau region. The theoretical and methodological basis of this study has been formed by the works of leading domestic and foreign scientists. In particular, the studies of scholars such as T. Zhanuzak, E. Kerimbayev, and B. Tleuberdiev were used as the main theoretical basis for defining the scientific approaches in the fields of onomastics, linguoconceptology, and cognitive linguistics. In addition, in defining the cognitive and conceptual orientation of the research and in studying the interrelationship between language and national culture, the theoretical conclusions and scientific viewpoints proposed in the works of Zh. Mankeyeva, K. Rysbergen, and B. Tleuberdiev served as an important methodological foundation. From an ethnolinguistic perspective, A. Kaidar's ethnolinguistic dictionary titled *Kazakhs in the World of the Mother Tongue* [Kazaktar ana tili aleminde], was used to reveal the ethnocultural nature of certain toponyms during the research. The aforementioned scientific works made it possible to systematize the research direction and to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the toponyms of the Karatau region from a linguocultural and cognitive perspective. The names of the vast Kazakh land, in their centuries-long formation, alongside the people's past historical and cultural life, also reflect their natural environment and unique regional characteristics. The study of regional toponyms is of great importance for examining and understanding the data necessary to recognize the unique characteristics specific to each region. Overall, the specific characteristics of individual regional toponym studies have many advantages and are more precise than general toponym research. These primarily include natural, historical, and social features» (Kaidar, 2013).

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The study of toponyms in the Kazakh language has always been a pressing issue that attracts the attention of scholars. The main reason is that geographical names serve as an important cultural and linguistic source preserving a people's historical memory, ethnic identity, worldview, and linguistic consciousness. Through toponyms, the natural features of a particular region, traces of ancient settlements, kinship and tribal structures, historical events, and socio-cultural processes are revealed. Moreover, Kazakh toponymy reflects the various stages of language development, interactions with other languages, and the formation of lexical layers. From this perspective, the study of toponyms is considered an interdisciplinary issue with not only linguistic but also historical, ethnographic, and cultural significance. The study of regional toponyms is an important scientific field that allows for a comprehensive understanding of a specific region's historical, linguistic, and cultural development. Regional geographical names reveal ethnic processes, interlingual connections, migration movements, and social changes. Zh.K. Adilova & Sh.B. Seytova examine the role of interlingual connections in the formation of the East Kazakhstan toponymic system in the article titled *The History and Linguistic Interaction of East Kazakhstan Toponyms* (Adilova & Seytova, 2024). The development of the region's toponymy is shown to have historically formed through the interplay of the main Turkic (Kazakh) and Slavic strata. In addition, the influence of Old Turkic, Mongolian, and later Russian linguistic elements on the toponymic system is analyzed. The authors attribute the formation of the region's toponymy as a multifaceted yet unified system to extensive interlingual contacts.

G. Akhetova, in her article, *The Etymological Features of Toponyms in the Abai Region* (Akhetova, 2022), studies the origin of the toponyms in the Abai region from an etymological perspective. In the article, the author examines the Abai region's toponyms from a morphemic, typological structures, lexical-semantic features, and development dynamics. The toponymic system of the Abai region is characterized by a high frequency of ethnonyms, clan and tribe names, names of historical figures, and names of legendary characters, and the region's toponymy is studied from a historical perspective.

During the research, a comprehensive set of methods was applied to oikonyms: systematization, classification, structural-semantic analysis, descriptive, and statistical methods. These methodological approaches made it possible to determine the structural features of the oikonyms of the Karatau region, to reveal their semantic basis, and to scientifically study the laws of their formation.

As research material, 188 oikonyms used in the Karatau region were analyzed, including anthropo-oikonyms (based on personal names), oikonyms based on color and form names, hydrographic toponyms, phytonymic toponyms, orographic toponyms (mountain, hill, ridge, etc.), and names of public-domestic and social significance were grouped.

The research findings provide a comprehensive description of the oikonyms of the Karatau region and make it possible to systematize their structural and semantic characteristics. The findings contribute to a deeper theoretical and practical understanding and systematization of key issues in toponymy, cognitive linguistics, onomastic semiotics, ethnolinguistics, and linguoculturology. Determining the structural characteristics and lexical-semantic features of the oikonyms of the Karatau region serves to systematize the region's toponymic system and to analyze the meanings and usage patterns of the oikonyms.

## **Results and Discussion**

The Karatau Range is a mountain system located in the south of Kazakhstan and is considered a region that has played an important role in Kazakh history. Its historical, cultural,

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and economic significance has been clearly reflected in the lives of the people. In the Karatau region, a historically rich system of names for mountains, ridges, plateaus, hills, passes, and watersheds, as well as for rivers, springs, and fountains, has been preserved. In addition, place names—oikonyms—occupy a significant place in the region's toponymic space. The etymology and semantic meaning of this wealth of place names reveal which clans and tribes inhabited this territory from ancient times, as well as serving as a valuable linguistic-historical source for determining when and from which period Kazakh clans and tribes inhabited this region. Therefore, the study of the toponymy in the Karatau region is relevant not only for the science of onomastics but also for examining the region's history, ethnic composition, and cultural continuity. "The cumulative function of any onomastic name and onomastic concept ultimately contributes to the worldview and values of the Kazakh people, ensuring the continuity of tradition" (Tleuberdiev, 2012). The toponymic system of each region has been formed over centuries and vividly reflects the natural features of that area. Moreover, it embodies the ancient and modern history of the people who inhabited the land, forming a complex of geographical names that reflects the nation's culture and its material and spiritual essence.

The regional (provincial) toponymic system is considered an integral part of the national toponymic system. Moreover, provincial place names constitute a systematic toponymic structure with its own regional distinctiveness. Looking at the toponymy of Karatau, the physical-geographical features, climatic conditions, and natural resources of the region play an important role as prerequisites that shape the distinctive character of the regional toponymic system. Moreover, the influence and place of the country's history and the history of the land in this region are also considered immense and significant. Scholar K. Rysbergen notes that toponymic names contain not only locational (address) information, but also linguistic, ethnocultural, scientific, historical-documentary, and sociolinguistic information. "We classify the types of toponymic information as linguistic, objective scientific information, ethnocultural information, social information, and historical-documentary information" (Rysbergen, 2011).

By conducting a comprehensive study of the toponymic system of geographical names, it is possible to identify the distinctive features characteristic of a particular people's historical memory, worldview, cultural values, and national identity. Toponyms serve as an important source of information, providing abundant data on a people's way of life, economic activities, migration processes, and relationship with the natural environment, and they function as a significant linguistic means of conveying a nation's spiritual and cultural experience. The Karatau region has been inhabited since ancient times. Archaeological excavations reveal that numerous historical monuments and ancient settlements have been preserved in the Karatau region. Moreover, the Karatau region served as a hub for trade and cultural connections as an important part of the Great Silk Road. "The origin, emergence, and development of the thousands of names on our land are not unique to a single era; they are a testament to many centuries and turbulent periods, a rich treasure and precious heritage that has come down to our time" (Zhanuzak, 2011). According to the scholar, the origins of toponyms in the Kazakh language date back to the eras of the Saka, Huns, Uyğur, and Kangly. Many Kazakh toponyms belong to the Ural-Altai language family, another group to the Old Turkic language, and some have been borrowed from other languages, including Arabic, Persian, and Russian (Zhanuzhak, 2011). In the formation of place names, each nation's worldview, cognition, and unique way of perceiving the world play a decisive role. Therefore, the origin and naming motivations of geographical names (toponyms) are considered one of the most pressing issues that have consistently been the focus of researchers in the field.

The origin and history of toponyms are primarily determined by the richness of the people's language, the changes taking place in public life during each historical era, the people's socio-economic situation, and their professional occupations, cultural and spiritual values, the development of the state, and the gradual increase in the number of settlements over time.

In onomastics, there are many names that clearly depict the connection between ethnicity and nature. The main reason for this is that toponyms are closely tied to the Kazakh's way of life, ethnocultural traditions, lifestyle, and the distinctive features of their economic activities. Summarizing his conclusions in the field of onomastics, scholar T. Zhanuzakov notes about toponyms: «In the millions of place names across our vast, boundless land, one finds the imprint of the nation's history, its worldview, its way of life, the reflections of the people's history, culture, worldview, way of life, and customs are clearly reflected» (Zhanuzhak, 2007). According to scholar T. Zhanuzak, toponyms are not only geographical names but also an important source of information reflecting a people's history, culture, worldview, and social life. In other words, through place names, the people's way of life, customs, economic activities, and historical experience are clearly reflected. The study of these toponyms allows for a comprehensive understanding of their semantic, historical, and cultural significance.

**Table 1.** Lexical-semantic groups and specific names of oikonims in the Karatau region

№	Group of Oikonims	Names
1	Anthropological oikonims (26)	Нысанбек (Nyssanbek), Сеңгірбай (Sengirbay), Айдана (Aidana), Мырзатай (Myrzatai), Базарбай (Bazarbai), Амангелді (Amangeldi), Абай (Abai), Жамбыл (Zhambyl), Қашарбай (Kasharbai), Атабек (Atabek), М. Горький (M. Gorky), Карл Маркс (Karl Marx), Киров (Kirov), Сыпатай (Sypatai), Сауранбай (Sauranbai), Әл-Фараби (Al-Farabi), Темір (Temir), Мырзахмет (Myrzakhmet), Ағыбет (Agybet), Қойлыбай (Koilybai), Бектай (Bektai), Амансай (Amansai), Жүніс (Zhunis), Көшербай (Kosherbai), Бекбау (Bekbau), Абайбұлақ (Abaibulak) (26)
2	Oikonims based on color names (49)	Аққолтық (Akkolytyk), Қарақұм (Karakum), Қаратау (Karatau), Ақсүмбе (Aksumbe), Сарыжаз (Saryzhaz), Қызылкөл (Kyzylkol), Қызылқант (Kyzylkant), Қарабастау (Karabastau), Қызылбастау (Kyzylbastau), Қызылқыстақ (Kyzyltastak), Аққала (Akkala), Қарасу (Karasu), Ақсу (Aksu), Қызылсу (Kyzylsu), Тайқоңыр (Taikonyr), Көктөбе (Koktobe), Ақкөл (Akkol), Қызыләуіт (Kyzylदैuit), Қызылту (Kyzyltu), Көкмардан (Kokmardan), Қарақұдық (Karakudyk), Қызылжар (Kyzylzhar), Ақтас (Aktas), Ақтоғай (Aktogai), Қызыларық (Kyzylaryk), Қаратас (Karatas), Ақшағала (Akshagala), Қарабұлақ (Karabulak), Ақтоған (Aktogan), Қызылқайың (Kyzylkayin), Ақбұлақ (Akbulak), Ақтөбе (Aktobe), Қызылдала (Kyzyldala), Көкбұлақ (Kokbulak), Қарашық (Karashyk), Қызыләскер (Kyzylasker), Қызылмол (Kyzymol), Қызылқайнар (Kyzylkainar), Баласары (Balasary), Қараарша (Karaarsha), Көкбастау (Kokbastau), Қызылтаракты (Kyzyltarakty), Қызылжұлдыз (Kyzylzhuldyz), Көксәйек (Koksaiek), Қызылжалау (Kyzylzhalau), Қасқасу (Kaskasu), Қаракемер (Karakemer), Шұбарсу (Shubarsu), Қоңыратарық (Kongyrataryk)
3	Hydrografic oikonims (21)	Шу (Shu), Қайнар (Kainar), Сарқырама (Sarkyrama), Балдысу (Baldysu), Кемербұлақ (Kemberbulak), Қайнарбұлақ (Kainarbulak), Мыңбұлақ (Mynghbulak), Босбұлақ (Bosbulak), Арал (Aral), Балықшы (Balykshy), Көлтоған (Koltagan), Шұқырбұлақ (Shukyrbulak), Кемербастау (Kemberbastau), Диханкөл (Dikhankol), Кеңесарық (Kenesaryk), Майбұлақ (Maibulak), Терісбұлақ (Terisbulak), Қосбұлақ (Kosbulak), Атбұлақ (Atbulak), Тоғанбұлақ (Toganbulak), Шұқыркөл (Shukyrkol)

4	Phytonymic oikonoms (27)	Бүрген (Bürgen), Шиелі (Shieli), Жиделі (Zhidel), Жүзімдік (Zhuzimdik), Мақталы (Maqtaly), Жусансай (Zhusanai), Раң (Ran), Доланалы (Dolanaly), Ырғайлы (Yrgaily), Бесағаш (Besagash), Бүлдірген (Buldirgen), Жыңғылсай (Zhyngilsai), Шеңгелді (Shengeldy), Құмшағал (Kumsaghal), Мойынтоғай (Moyontogay), Тортоғай (Tortogay), Қостоғай (Kostogay), Қостерек (Kosterek), Бестоғай (Bestogay), Жыңғылдыөзек (Zhingyldyozek), Сексеуілтөбе (Sekseuiltobe), Жантақсор (Zhantaksor), Алмалы (Almaly), Шиөзек (Shiozek), Күйгенқопа (Kuugenkora), Тобылғы (Tobylyg), Арпаөзен (Arpaozhen)
5	Orographic oikonoms (23)	Қаратау (Karatau), Таукент (Taukent), Хантағы (Khantagy), Жаңатас (Zhanatas), Шаштөбе (Shashtobe), Сұлутөбе (Sulutobe), Жалпақтөбе (Zhalpaktobe), Кеңестөбе (Kenestobe), Боралдай (Boralday), Алтынтөбе (Altynrobe), Үсіктас (Usiktas), Суындықтөбе (Suindyktobe), Жартытөбе (Zhartytobe), Жуантөбе (Zhuantobe), Ақжал (Akzhal), Көксарай (Koksaragay), Мұзбел (Muzbel), Жамантас (Zhamantas), Жіңішкежал (Zhingishkezhal), Артықтыжон (Artyktyzhon), Айыртас (Ayirtas), Керегетас (Keregetas), Шаңырақтас (Shanyraktas)
6	Socio-domestic, socially significant oikonoms (42)	Шолаққорған (Sholakkorgan), Созақ (Sozak), Құмкент (Kumkent), Бабата (Babata), Жыныс (Zhynys), Ақсүмбе (Aksumbe), Шаға (Shaga), Сызған (Syzgan), Қарабұлақ (Karabulak), Тама асуы (Tama Asuy), Бадам (Badam), Бейнеткеш (Beinetkesh), Жаңаталап (Zhanatalap), Ұялыжар (Uyalzhar), Ықыластемір (Ykylastemir), Ордабасы (Ordabassy), Түйетас (Tuyetas), Оймауыт (Oimauyt), Теспе (Tespe), Қақпансор (Kakpansor), Қызмолдақ (Kuzmoldak), Тасты (Tasty), Таскешу (Taskeshu), Жайлма (Zhailma), Жыланды (Zhylandy), Боралдай (Boralday), Желтимес (Zhelimes), Жеткіншек (Zhetkinshek), Теріскей (Teriskei), Сұлу маймақ (Sulu (Maimak), Талас (Talas), Құлан (Kulan), Ұранғай (Urangai), Бабайқорған (Babaikorgan), Құмайлықос (Kumailykos), Жұбанак (Zhubanak), Шорнақ (Shornak), Қосқорған (Koskorgan), Маяқұм (Mayakum), Тоғыскен (Togysken), Үйік (Uik), Ташанақ (Tashanak)

As part of the study, 188 oikonoms used in the Karatau region were systematically collected. The collected materials were divided into six main groups according to their structural and semantic characteristics. They are: anthroponyms, oikonoms based on color and type designations, hydrographic oikonoms, phytonymic oikonoms, orographic oikonoms, as well as names of public-domestic and social significance. This classification made it possible to accurately reflect the cognitive-semantic and structural characteristics of the Karatau region's oikonoms.

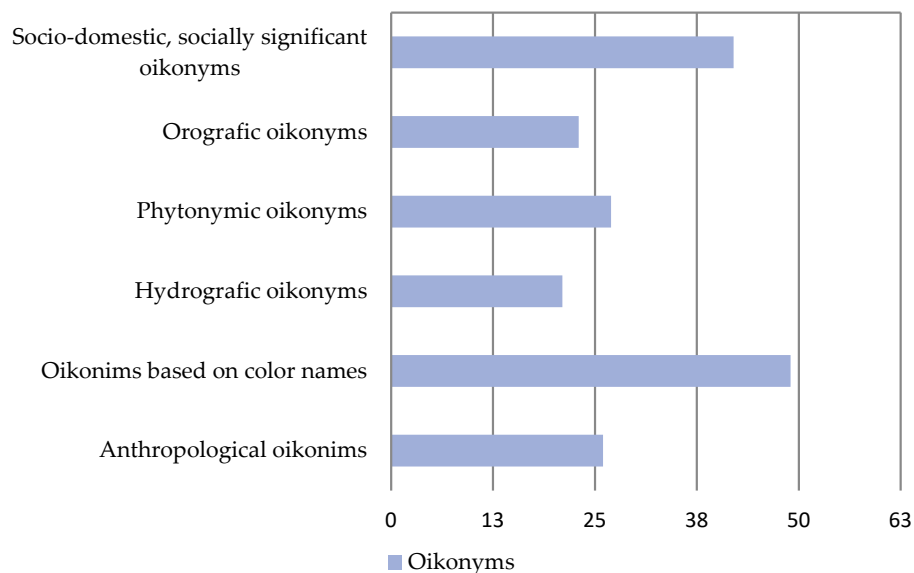
The Karatau region is a place that also holds a special place in Kazakh culture. Legends, fairy tales, folklore, and traditions have developed and taken shape here. The rich culture and traditions of the mountain region have been preserved to this day. Thus, Karatau is considered an integral part of the history, culture, and economy of the Kazakh people.

During the study of the oikonoms of the Karatau region, a total of 188 names were collected. Based on the collected data, we classified the oikonoms into six lexical-semantic groups. Anthroponyms in the Karatau region clearly reflect the area's historical, social, and cultural identity. Such toponyms include Nyssanbek, Sengirbai, Aidana, Bazarbai, Amangeldy, Myrzatai, Abai, Zhambyl, Kasharbai, Atabek, M. Gorky, Karl Marx, Kirov, Sypatai, Sauranbai, Al-Farabi, Temir, Myrzakhmet, Agybet, Koilybai, Bektai, Amansai, Abaibulak, Zhunis, Kosherbai, and Bekbau. As morphological analysis shows, most anthroponyms and oikonoms are formed with suffixes such as «-bai/-bay», «-bek», «-tai/-tay». Among Turkic-speaking peoples, personal names formed with the “-bay” and “-bek” components are widespread. The origin of these anthroponymic elements is linked to the Turkic words бай [bai] (“wealthy, prosperous”) and

бек [bek] (“ruler, commander, powerful, respected person”). These components in personal names convey notions of social status and public prestige. Meanwhile, proper names such as Abai, Zhambyl, and Temir in oikonyms reinforce the historical significance of the figure. Names that emerged during the Soviet era, such as M. Gorky, Karl Marx, and Kirov, reflect the results of political and ideological influence. Anthropopoi-oikonyms of this nature began to appear in large numbers on the territory of Kazakhstan after the October Revolution. It is well known that during the Soviet era, geographical names unfamiliar to the local population frequently appeared in Kazakhstan. “Colonial toponyms are a manifestation of political-social, invasive, and violent life, emerging as the antithesis to the people’s own place names” (Tleuberdiev, 2024).

**Diagram 1.** Classification of the oikonyms of the Karatau region

### Oikonyms of the Karatau region



During the study of oikonyms in the Karatau region, 26 anthroponyms were identified, which constitute approximately 13.8% of the total oikonyms. Anthropological oikonyms in place names are formed on the basis of personal names, well-known historical figures, and anthroponyms, reflecting the region’s historical and ethnic development and social memory. They demonstrate the significant role of local clans, historical figures, and personal names in the toponymic tradition.

Analysis of the oikonyms of the Karatau region revealed that the most common oikonyms are based on color names. The authors have identified 49 oikonyms associated with color names, which accounted for approximately 25.9% of the total oikonyms. In general, Turkic languages place names formed by combining adjectives denoting color are common. For example, Ak-Sumbe, Karatau, Saryzhas, Kyzlkol, Taikonyr, Kok-Tobe, Balasary, Shubarsu, Konyrataryk, etc. Toponyms associated with color names in the Kazakh language can be viewed as manifestations of the ancient, pan-Turkic cosmogonic and geo-symbolic tradition. This tradition serves to symbolically depict the significance of natural phenomena, the topography of the land, and water features through place names, and to shape cultural perception. In Kazakh toponymy, place names—such as those for land, water, mountains, cities, settlements, steppes,

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and others—containing color components like “ak” [white], “kara” [black], “kok” [blue], “sary” [yellow] “konyr” [brown] and “kyzyl” [red] are widespread. However, these color names not only denote the actual color of an object but also convey symbolic or other semantic meanings in the people’s perception.

Hydrographic oikonyms make up 21 names, accounting for approximately 11.1% of the total oikonyms. This group includes names related to water bodies such as rivers, springs, lakes, canals, and ponds. For example, Kainar, Sarkyrama, Baldysu, Kemberbulak, Kainarbulak, Mynbulak, Bosbulak, Aral, Balykshy, Koltogan, Shukyrbulak, Kemberbastau, Dikhankol, Kenesaryk, Maibulak, Terisbulak, Kosbulak, Atbulak, Toganbulak, Shukyrkol. In this group, morphemes such as “bulak” [spring], “kol” [lake] “su” [water] and “bastau” [source/beginning] are frequently encountered. The semantic analysis conducted during the study reveals the historical, economic, and cultural significance of these names in relation to water resources.

During the study of oikonyms in the Karatau region, 27 phytonymic oikonyms were identified, which constitutes approximately 14.3% of the oikonyms found in this region. The main characteristic of phytonymic oikonyms is their close connection to plant names prevalent in a particular region. Such names arose from the local population’s distinctive way of recognizing the natural environment. The phytonymic oikonyms in the Karatau region originated from the region’s flora. During the study, oikonyms such as Burgen, Shieli, Zhideli, Zhuzimdik, Maktaly, Zhussansai, Rang, Shaga, Dolanaly, Yrgaily, Besagash, Buldirgen, Zhyngylsai, Shengeldy, Kumshagal, Moiyntogai, Tortogai, Kostogai, Kosterek, Bestogai, Zhyngyldyozek, Sekseuiltobe, Zhantaksor, Almaly, Shiozek, Kuigenkopa, Tobylgy, and Arpaozhen were identified. Phytonymic oikonyms reflect the connection to nature and cultural traditions by illustrating the local ecosystem and agricultural practices.

In the Karatau region, toponyms make up 23 units, accounting for approximately 12.2% of the total number of oikonyms. The orographic oikonyms in the Karatau region provide information about mountains, mounds, ridges, and plateaus. The orographic oikonyms include Karatau, Taukent, Khantagy, Zhanatas, Shashtobe, Sulutobe, Zhalpaktobe, Kenestobe, Boraldai, Altyntobe, Ussiktas, Suindyktobe, Zhartytobe, Zhuantobe, Akzhal, Koksarai, Muzbel, Zhamantas, Zhinishkezhai, Artyktyzhon, Ayirtas, Keregetas, Shanyraktas. Such names depict the distinct characteristics of the terrain and prove the important role of the natural environment in the oikonymic system.

The 42 socio-domestic and socially significant oikonyms in the Karatau region (22.2%) demonstrate the influence of the population’s way of life, agricultural sectors, and historical-social phenomena on the region’s place names. The socio-domestic and socially significant oikonyms of the Karatau region include Akkoltyk, Sholakkorgan, Sozak, Kumkent, Babata, Zhynys, Aksumbe, Shaga, Syzgan, Karabulak, Baldysu, Tama Asu, Badam, Beynetkesh, Zhanatalap, Ulyzhar, Ykylastemir, Ordabasy, Tuyetas, Oimauyt, Tespe, Kakpansor, Kyzmoldak, Tasty, Taskeshu, Zhaylma, Zhylandy, Boraldai, Zhelimes, Zhetkinshek, Teriskei, Sulu Maimaq, Talas, Kulan, Urangai, Babaikorgan, Kumailykos, Zhubanak, Shornak, Koskorgan, Mayakum, Togysken, Uik, Tashanak, Kyzylzhar. This group reflects the people’s lifestyle, social structure, and historical events. Semantic analysis proves that they reflect the regional cultural context and the social aspects of people’s lives.

The toponyms of the Karatau region are divided into various groups from a structural and semantic standpoint. Anthroponyms reflect historical figures and social prestige, while color-based and phytonymic toponyms convey the image of nature. Hydrographic and orographic names describe the region’s geographical features, while socio-domestic oikonyms depict the

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social and cultural aspects of people's lives. This analysis makes it possible to create an onomastic map of the Karatau region, study its sociocultural context, and provide a comprehensive description of the system of regional names in the Kazakh language. The research results are suitable for use as scientific data in the fields of onomastics, ethnolinguistics, and cultural studies.

As the described data show, the distribution of place names in the Karatau region reflects the combined influence of natural, ethnographic, and socio-cultural factors. Color and variety names and socio-domestic place names are the most widespread groups, accurately reflecting the region's cultural and social characteristics, while hydrographic and/or orographic names based on natural factors, though relatively few in number, have significant geographical importance.

For centuries, the Kazakh people have lived in harmony with nature, carefully observing and studying its multifaceted signs. Toponymic names demonstrate the richness of the Kazakh language, as they contain historical, cultural, social, and natural information. Each name not only denotes a place or body of water but also provides information about the region's natural landscape, the people's traditions, historical events, and the histories of individuals and clans. Toponymic names vary in their structure, lexical-semantic content, and morphological formation. They are formed through roots, affixes, phrases, or compound words, reflecting the region's linguistic features, historical development stages, and cultural context. In Kazakh onomastics, these features clearly demonstrate the laws governing the formation of toponyms and their functional and semantic roles. «The structure of general toponymic categories, its lexical stock, and its morphological makeup are themselves diverse within the Kazakh language. Even the materials of Kazakh onomastics and their structures are diverse in terms of their distribution across the region» (Tleuberdiev, 2024). From this perspective, the oikonyms of the Karatau region exhibit diverse lexical and morphological structures, and it can be observed that their formation was influenced by natural-geographic conditions, historical figures, cultural-social factors, and the traditions of the local population. This demonstrates the value of these toponyms not only as linguistic objects but also as cultural and historical records.

It is known that toponyms are formed through various morphological methods. In the course of studying the toponyms of the Karatau region, we classified the morphologically formed oikonyms as follows:

- Oikonims derived from root words. For example, Sozak, Abai, Zhambyl, Shaga, Rang, Badam, Temir, etc.
- Oikonims are formed from word combinations. For example, Tama Asuy, Sulu Maymak.
- Oikonims formed from the merger of roots. For example, Akkoltyk, Abaibulak, Arpaozen, Karakum, Karatau, Aksumbe, Saryzhaz, Kyzylkol, Altyntobe, Ussiktas, Suindyktobe, Zhartytobe, Zhuantobe, etc.
- Oronyms formed with suffixes. For example, Shieli, Zhideli, Zhuzimdik, Maktaly, Tespe, Tasty, Zhaylma, Almaly, etc.

During the study, it was determined that the majority of the oikonyms of the Karatau region are compound names consisting of multiple words. For example, Nyssanbek, Sengirbai, Abaibulak, Karasu, Kokbastau, Baldysu, Kemberbulak, Karatau, Sholakkorgan, Tuyetas, Kyzylzhar, etc.

In the Karatau region, place names with obscured meanings are common. The main reason for this is the region's deep-rooted history. For example, oikonyms such as Shornak and Tashanak were formed using the “-nak” suffix. In the Turkestan region, there are settlement

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names such as Karnak, Sunak (Syganak), Tashnak, Shobanak, Shornak, and Zhuinak, which were formed with the “-nak” suffix. To look into the history of the formation of this suffix, we can see that it originated much earlier. If we trace the root of this word, we find that it connects to the word “нақ” (nak) in the Aryan-Turkic vocabulary of the third to second millennia BC. In Turkic languages, this ancient word is preserved in the Kazakh concepts of нақ (nak), нақты (nakty) with the meaning “exact,” and in the Khwarezmi Turks in a political sense under the title “inak.” The word inaq means “close,” that is, “the khan’s close associate, confidant, or advisor” (Artykbaeva, 2018), thereby linking the ancient meaning of the word ‘нақ’ (nak) to the notion of proximity. For example, Ташнақ (Tashnak) means “close to stone,” etc. N. Garcia-Quera (2025), a scholar who studies the etymology of opaque toponyms, proposes a methodology for researching opaque toponyms in the work titled *The Etymology of Opaque Place Names Based on a Cognitive and Interdisciplinary Method*. As N. Garcia-Quera’s research shows, a cognitive and interdisciplinary approach is considered effective for studying opaque toponyms. As Garcia-Cuera’s research shows, a cognitive and interdisciplinary approach is considered effective for studying toponyms whose meanings have become obscure. In the historically rich Karatau region, obscure place names are common. One of these is the village of Шаға (Shaga). A folk legend about the village of Shaga in the Turkestan region tells of a khan who had several wives. He raised his children by his chief wife – Baibishe – in the palace, while the children of his concubines, Tokal – were brought up in the village of Shaga. From this, the words “bala” and ‘shaga’ originated, later forming the phrase “bala-shaga.” This name indicated that the children were from the same father and that everyone knew their lineage (Shalkar, 2019).

The place names and toponyms of the Karatau region reflect the people’s centuries-old history, their relationship with nature, and their social life. They not only denote geographical features but also serve as repositories of historical and cultural information. In contemporary linguistics, examining units of the toponymic system in close connection with human cognition and socio-spiritual activity is one of the key areas of research. In this context, the anthropocentric approach enables the study of toponymic vocabulary from a cognitive perspective. When viewed as a product of human consciousness and cognitive activity, the system of toponyms – intertwined with national history, culture, and spiritual heritage – offers valuable insights into the worldview of an ethnic group» (Smotova, Tleuberdiev & Omarov, 2025). Toponyms are not just geographical names; they are considered a manifestation of human cognitive activity and cultural-spiritual experience. The place names and toponyms of the Karatau region preserve and reflect national history, cultural heritage, and the worldview of an ethnic group.

Regional toponymy is the branch of science that studies place names (toponyms) characteristic of a specific geographical region. The scholar B. Taspolatov, who studied regional toponymy, in his monograph titled *The Toponyms of Kazygurt* (Taspolatov, 2016), identifies the physical, geographical, ethnocultural, historical and chronological, as well as extralinguistic factors that form the basis of the regional toponymic system, offering a new, innovative direction for the study of Kazakh toponymy. The physical-geographical, historical-chronological, and ethnocultural conditions are identified as the factors that form the basis of and constitute the regional toponymy as a linguistic (toponymic) system. As the scholar notes, regional toponyms and microtoponyms that reflect local natural features, as well as geographical names that emerged as a result of ethnogenetic, historical, social, and economic processes taking place in the region, form several ethnocultural stratigraphic layers. The factors that constitute regional toponymy as a linguistic (toponymic) system and form its foundation are cited as physico-geographic, historical-chronological, and ethnocultural conditions. As the

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scholar points out, regional toponyms and microtoponyms that reflect local natural features, as well as geographical names that emerged as a result of ethnogenetic, historical, social, and economic processes taking place in the region, form several ethnocultural stratigraphic layers. According to scholar A. Zhartybaev: «...an ethnic toponymic region is one that has its own physical-geographic territory (boundaries), its own economic, political, ethnological, ethnogenetic, linguistic, etc. characteristics. A regional toponymic system is an integral part of the national toponymic system, as well as a systemic toponymic structure with its own regional peculiarities» (Zhartybaev, 2006). An ethnic toponymic region is one with a specific physical-geographic framework and economic, political, ethnological, a regional toponymic system with a specific physico-geographic framework and characterized by economic, political, ethnological, and ethnogenetic, and linguistic features, which retains its own distinctiveness and systemic structure as a component of the national toponymic system.

Based on the collected data and the analyses conducted, the following significant results were obtained.

- Based on the research results, 188 oikonyms used in the Karatau region were collected and divided into six main groups according to their lexical-semantic characteristics. These are: anthroponyms, oikonyms based on color-form terms, hydronymic, phytonymic, orographic, and socio-domestic names.

- Quantitative analysis shows that the most productive group is oikonyms based on color names (49 names, 29.5%), which play a leading role in describing natural imagery, landforms, and water bodies. Oikonyms with socio-cultural and social significance (42 names, 22.2%) stand out as linguistic units that preserve the people's historical, social, and cultural experience. Phytonymic oikonyms make up 27 names (14.3%), reflecting the region's vegetation and ecological features.

- Anthroponyms were represented by 26 names (13.8%), indicating the preservation of the tradition of naming local settlements after historical figures and individuals. Orographic (23 names, 12.2%) and hydrographic (21 names, 11.1%) toponyms demonstrated the importance of the region's relief and water bodies in spatial naming.

During the study, the structural characteristics of the oikonyms in the Karatau region were determined. It was observed that many toponyms are formed from root words, word combinations, the fusion of roots, or through suffixes. It was determined that the majority of toponyms in the Karatau region consist of compound words. As the study shows, place names with obscured meanings are common in the Karatau region, indicating that they were formed in close connection with the region's deep history.

Overall, the structural and semantic diversity of oikonyms in the Karatau region highlights the primary role of natural environment and ethnocultural factors. The abundance of color, topographical, hydronymic, and domestic names indicates that the region's toponymy was formed in close connection with the lives of the people and the national worldview.

## **Conclusion**

During the study of the oikonyms of the Karatau region, their structural and semantic characteristics were thoroughly analyzed, and 189 names were divided into six main groups: anthroponyms, oikonyms based on color names, hydronymic, phytonymic, orographic, and socio-domestic names. Each of these groups reveals the structural and semantic characteristics specific to the regional onomastic system.

The results of the analysis showed that the oikonymy of the Karatau region is dominated by the combined influence of natural and ethnocultural factors. Color and shade names, as

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well as orographic and hydrographic oikonyms, depict the natural landscape, water sources, and topographical features, while phytonyms describe the local flora, reflecting the ecological conditions and humanity's relationship with nature. Additionally, the groups of socio-domestic and anthroponymic toponyms preserve the region's historical and social development and the cultural traditions of its people, conveying information about the social structure and historical figures. These names are an important source of data that reflects the ethnocultural and social characteristics of the Karatau region at the linguistic level.

The oikonyms of the Karatau region are closely connected with the people's way of life, traditions, and worldview. The results of quantitative and semantic analysis demonstrate that these names were formed under the influence of historical, social, and natural factors, and that they are also consistent with the current cultural and geographical context. The data obtained during the study have provided a scientific basis for creating an onomastics map of the Karatau region, systematizing the system of geographical names, and deepening regional cultural-historical research.

In conclusion, the oikonyms of the Karatau region reflect a holistic harmony of the natural and social environment, ethnocultural practices, and historical and cultural values. This study lays a solid foundation for the scientific analysis of regional onomastics, the system of geographical names in the Kazakh language, and national cultural traditions.

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There is no conflict of interest regarding the article.

**Contribution of the authors. Agabekov Olzhas Musabekuly** – collected the data needed for the article, conducted analyses, developed the study's main concept, and wrote the main part of the article.

**Tleuberdiev Bolatbek Makulbekuly** – established the theoretical foundation of the research topic, verified the data, contributed to the analysis of issues related to the research object, and edited the article.

**Ermetova Rakhnama Erkenovna** – performed statistical analysis of the data in the article, drafted the research results, and verified the originality and authenticity of the study's conclusions.

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### **Қаратау өңірі ойконимдерінің құрылымдық жүйесі мен лексика-семантикалық ерекшеліктері**

**Аңдатпа.** Мақалада Қаратау өңірінің ойконимдерінің құрылымдық сипаты мен семантикалық мазмұны жан-жақты зерттеледі. Зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты – Қаратау өңірі ойконимдерінің құрылымдық жүйесі мен лексика-семантикалық ерекшеліктерін айқындау, олардың жасалу жолдары мен мағыналық сипатын талдау арқылы өңір топонимдерінің қалыптасу ерекшеліктерін көрсету. Ойконимдер – бұл географиялық нысандарды атауға арналған тілдік бірліктер, олар халықтың дүниетанымы, тарихи оқиғалары, табиғатқа көзқарасы мен мәдени тәжірибесін бейнелейді. Зерттеу барысында Қаратау өңірі ойконимдерінің жасалу тәсілдері анықталып, олардың синтетикалық (жұрнақ арқылы), аналитикалық (біріктіру, тіркестіру) және лексика-семантикалық тәсілдер негізінде қалыптасқаны айқындалды. Зерттеу барысында жүйелеу және классификациялау, құрылымдық-семантикалық талдау, сипаттау (дескриптивтік) әдісі және статистикалық әдістер кешенді түрде қолданылды. Аталған әдістер Қаратау өңірі ойконимдерінің құрылымдық ерекшеліктерін айқындауға, мағыналық уәждерін ашуға, сондай-ақ олардың қалыптасу заңдылықтарын ғылыми тұрғыдан саралауға мүмкіндік берді.

Зерттеу материалдары ретінде Қаратау өңірінде қолданылатын 188 ойконим талданып, олар келесі топтарға бөлінді: антропоойконимдер (кісі есімдері негізінде) – 26 атау, түр-түс атауларына негізделген ойконимдер – 49, гидрографиялық ойконимдер – 21, фитонимдік ойконимдер – 27, орографиялық ойконимдер (тау, төбе, жота және т.б.) – 23, сондай-ақ қоғамдық-тұрмыстық және әлеуметтік мәнге ие атаулар – 42.

Зерттеу нәтижелері қазақ тіліндегі ономастикалық зерттеулерге теориялық негіз береді. Қаратау өңірінің ойконимдеріне жүргізілген құрылымдық және семантикалық талдау олардың тарихи, мәдени және әлеуметтік мәнін аша отырып, қазақ тілінің ономастикалық жүйесінің ерекшеліктерін анықтауға мүмкіндік береді.

**Түйін сөздер:** Қаратау өңірі, ономастика, ойконим, құрылымдық талдау, семантикалық мазмұн, лексикалық ерекшелік, лингвомәдениет.

**Структурная система и лексико-семантические особенности  
ойконимов Каратауского региона**

**Аннотация.** В статье всесторонне исследуются структурные характеристики и семантическое содержание ойконимов Каратауского региона. Основной целью исследования является выявление структурной системы и лексико-семантических особенностей ойконимов Каратауского региона, анализ способов их образования и смысловой природы с целью определения закономерностей формирования региональных топонимов. Ойконимы представляют собой языковые единицы, предназначенные для наименования географических объектов, отражающие мировоззрение народа, исторические события, отношение к природе и культурный опыт. В ходе исследования были определены способы образования ойконимов Каратауского региона и установлено, что они сформированы на основе синтетического (аффиксального), аналитического (сложение, словосочетание) и лексико-семантического способов словообразования. В исследовании комплексно применялись методы систематизации и классификации, структурно-семантического анализа, описательный (дескриптивный) и статистический методы.

В качестве исследовательского материала проанализированы 188 ойконимов, функционирующих в Каратауском регионе, которые были распределены по следующим группам: антропоойконимы (образованные от личных имён) – 26 наименований, ойконимы, основанные на названиях цветов – 49, гидрографические ойконимы – 21, фитонимические ойконимы – 27, орографические ойконимы (горы, холмы, хребты и др.) – 23, а также названия с общественно-бытовым и социальным значением – 42.

Результаты исследования создают теоретическую основу для ономастических исследований в казахском языке, дополняют методологию региональной языковой картографии и лингвокультурного анализа. Структурно-семантический анализ ойконимов Каратауского региона раскрывает их историческое, культурное и социальное значение и позволяет определить особенности ономастической системы казахского языка.

**Ключевые слова:** Каратауский регион, ономастика, ойконим, структурный анализ, семантическое содержание, лексическая особенность, лингвокультура.

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