

ANALYSIS OF THE ETYMOLOGICAL ROOTS OF THE TERM DARBAND AND RELATED PLACE NAMES"

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Annotation: The toponyms of Darband, Akqotal and Iron gate are comprehensively analyzed in the article. During the analysis, their interrelationship is determined. It is theoretically based on the fact that the word Akqotal has undergone a number of sound changes and has acquired this appearance today. Alisher Navoi's thoughts about the "Iron Gate" used in the epic "Saddi Iskandari" are similar to the above toponyms.

Key words: Toponymy, historical geography, Kushan era, Darband, Akqotal, Iron Gate, Alisher Navoi.

Body of the Article (Translated – Unchanged)

Toponyms are a type of onomastics; some have existed since ancient times, while a number of toponyms are names formed in our recent past. It is known that some toponyms are still emerging today. Therefore, they embody the lifestyle, living conditions, traditions, customs, religious and secular worldviews of the people of the time they arose. In this respect, they develop in parallel with the evolution of the Uzbek language lexicon. Some serve as harbingers of past eras [1].

While the meaning of some toponyms can be easily understood, the semantic content of others and their true essence can only be grasped through a number of studies. This is because some of them originated in past eras and later underwent sound changes due to various reasons, making it difficult to understand their meaning directly. From this point of view, the toponym **Akqotal**, located in the famous Iron Gate (Temir Darvoza) region of Baysun district in our province, is considered one such place name.

After crossing the bridge over the Shurob River on the Termez–Tashkent highway and traveling a short distance, the road coming from Baysun joins the Termez–Tashkent road about two kilometers past the Darband village and immediately turns west. Here, the steep cliffs of two mountains that have approached each other are visible: the Sarimas Mountain on the right and the Suvsiz Mountain on the left. In the middle, the Akqotal ridge stretches out between the two mountains. Naturally, it looks like a dam of an artificial reservoir connecting the two mountains. The natural structure of the Akqotal ridge may also have served as the basis for the origin of the word Darband. This is because the Suvsiz and Sarimas mountains, which started far away, approach the village of Darband, where the Suvsiz Mountain suddenly lowers and merges with the valley of the Shurob River. The Sarimas Mountain, upon reaching this area, shows off its towering cliffs and sharply turns west, changing its direction. The Akqotal ridge, stretching in the open space between the two mountains, appears in the 1.5 km gap between the two mountains and connects them like a belt. It resembles a barrier between the mountains. The Akqotal ridge is located at an altitude of 100-150 meters, and this natural ridge (small mountain) connects the open space in the middle like a manually created crest. This situation is especially evident from the south side of the ridge. The traveler reaching the even valley of the Shurob River through the mountains sees a flat ridge (**kotal**) between the two mountains. This Akqotal ridge, connecting the two mountains in the gap between them, is a unique miracle of nature, linking two gigantic mountains with a 100-150 meter high mountain ridge.

The word "**kotal**" is characteristic of Turkic and Mongol languages. In the Mongol language, "khutul" means a hill, a relatively small, sloping height [2]. [3] This word is often encountered in the neighboring territory of Afghanistan and is used to refer to a place where one crosses a smaller mountain or elevation. This lexeme is also common in oronyms in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The toponym **Akqotal** is a compound word formed compositionally by the joining of the words **ak** (white) and **kotal** (adjective + noun). A number of sound changes occurred during the process of joining the words. As a result of the word «kotal» being joined to the word «oq», the deep velar voiceless consonant «q» at the end of the word «oq» caused the shallow velar consonant «k» at the beginning of the word «kotal» to assimilate and change into the «q» sound. This phenomenon is called progressive assimilation in linguistics. Secondly, the soft front vowel «o'» in the word «kotal» changed into the hard back vowel «o'» under the influence of the adjacent hard «q» sound. Due to this, a partial ambiguity arose in the lexical meaning of the word Akqotal. Local people use this word in different forms, such as Oqqo'ton, Oqdavon, Oqtepa, for ease of pronunciation (Oqko'tal – Oqqo'tal). In reality, this word is used as «kotal». We observe that it is used exactly in the same way in a number of scientific books [4].

Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, describing the events that took place in Afghanistan in his work "Baburnama", frequently mentions the word "kotal". On page 188 of this work, many «kotals» such as Javak Kotal, Tul Kotal, Bazarrak Kotal, Shibartu Kotal, Qipchaq Kotal are encountered. "... Another one is the Parvon road, which is called Haftbacha because there are seven more kotals between the big kotal and Parvon. Two roads come from the Andarob side, join at the big kotal and reach Parvon through Haftbacha. It is a very difficult road" [5].

In some cases, the word "kotal" is also observed to be used for a height, barrier, dam, or a road that passes over a small pass. As a traveler moving from south to north approaches the Akqotal ridge, this ridge looks like a barrier, a dam, or an artificial ridge created by hand, especially as one approaches the old Darband checkpoint. Z. M. Babur's following thoughts in "Baburnama" are also important in this regard: "Another one is the province of Ghurband. They call the kotals in those provinces *band*. They go towards Ghor through that kotal, probably they called it Ghurband because of that... They say that there are silver mines and lapis lazuli mines in the Ghurband mountains [6]."

The adjective "oq" (white) in the toponym Akqotal indicates that the natural composition of this ridge consists of limestone [7]. The presence of a gypsum mining plant in the depths of the Akqotal ridge today is also proof of this. The word «kotal» in this compound word, combined with the word «oq», resembles a natural barrier between two towering mountains. The mountain ridge stretches far below the middle of the two large mountains. Travelers cannot easily pass through this ridge. Passing through it requires various difficulties. There is no other passage like Akqotal nearby. In ancient times, our ancestors turned this mountain ridge into a ridge that served for the security of their country. The rulers of the early Kushan state selected the highest points of this natural ridge and built a military fortification between the Suvsiz and Sarimas mountains to defend against enemies.

The remnants of the walls of this fortification are preserved in some places. They can be freely observed with the naked eye. Especially the northern part, which abuts the high cliffs of the Sarimas Mountain, is clearly visible. The section of this structure that stretches downwards towards the Shurob River valley along the eastern side of the ridge is also clearly visible to a person observing from the Sherkhoji fortress. For many years, people did not pay attention to this gigantic structure, viewing it only as a relic left by our ancient ancestors. Based on the research conducted by Academician E. V. Rtveladze in the 70s and 80s of the last century, this

monument was discovered as the "Bactrian Darband Defensive Wall" built in the northwest of the Kushan state [8].

Hafiz Alisher Navoi, in his epic "Saddi Iskandari", seems to have based the details of the first clash between Alexander's troops and the ruler of Kashmir, Mallu, on the military fortification built on the Akqotal ridge.

Bu yo'lkim anga tog' o'lub har sari,
Kelib arzi taxmin bila yuz qari.
Ani ahli Kashmir darband etib,
Iki tog'ni bir-biriga payvand etib.
Yuz ellik qari avji rif'at anga,
Yana muncha dag'i zaxomat anga.
Aningdek qo'yub gaj bila xoro tosh,
Ki yerdin bo'lib ko'kka yakpora tosh.
Temurdin yasab anda darvozaye.
Falak toqidin toqi andozaye. (SI 213)

Alexander, who faced fierce resistance in Sogdiana, turned his direction towards India. Like all warlords, he consulted with his scholars and commanders to determine the main routes to India. There were two major obstacles on this road: one was the Hisor mountain range surrounding the south of Samarkand, and the other was determining the crossing points over the great river like Jayhun (Amu Darya). Of course, moving hundreds of thousands of troops from one place to another country was carried out in several directions. The commander determined those directions. The main stream of this road passed through the Surkhan Oasis.

While writing the epic "Saddi Iskandari", Alisher Navoi first studied the trajectory of the military operations of a great commander like Alexander and, on that basis, organized the events of the epic. He described the initial clashes of the troops heading to the land of India that took place in the Temir Darvoza (Iron Gate) region. Alexander first clashed with the troops of the ruler of Kashmir, Mallu, in the Temir Darvoza region. The great thinker used details of witchcraft and magic of the Kashmiris in describing this event. He portrayed Alexander as the master of science, placing them in opposition to each other. He used the ancient "**Bactrian Darband Defensive Wall**" built on the borders of ancient Bactria and Sogdiana. Mallu, knowing that Alexander was coming with a large army, built a very large defensive wall and tried to destroy Alexander's troops with the power of magic and enchantment.

Demay kimsa darbandu boru ani,
Tasavvur qilib aql jodu ani.

Ichinda iki ming kishi chorasoz,
Bori hiylapardozu afsuntiroz. (SI 213)

Alexander's troops began to attack the wizard's defensive walls built by Mallu. As the vanguard of the army approached the wizard's fortress, they encountered a terrible event. When Alexander's vanguard was a thousand paces from the enemy's defensive line, they suddenly lost strength and fell to the ground. Even the horses became weak and lay flat on the ground. Alexander went with the sage Arastu to observe the place where this event occurred and held a council with his scholars. Two days later, Alexander completely occupied the enemy's military structure, destroying it with a powerful weapon made by his scholars. The military fortification described by A. Navoi in the epic "Saddi Iskandari" corresponds to the Temir Darvoza region, which appeared between the Suvsiz and Sarimas mountains [9].

The **Temir Darvoza** (Iron Gate) was operational and people passed through it even during the time A. Navoi lived. It was also mentioned in the literature of that time. The poet, who knew all

the sciences of his time at the level of a thinker, was aware that his revered teacher Sharafiddin Ali Yazdi had called the Temir Darvoza Qahalka in his work "Zafarnoma". (The description of the Bo'zgalakhona gorge, named Temir Darvoza in A. Navoi's epic "Saddi Iskandari", is expressed in clear verses). However, there were also the remnants of the defensive walls built on the Akqotal ridge, connecting the Suvsiz and Sarimas mountains, and the military structure now known in literature as the Sherkhoji fortress. Navoi, having seen all this, and realizing that such a strong fortress must have a gate, uses the term "**The Gate made of Iron**" and details its specifics. This is because, while writing the work, the poet focuses on the "**Bactrian Darband Defensive Wall**". This defensive structure was built on the crest of the Akqotal ridge.

The place names used in toponymy should mostly occur in surrounding settlements or other toponymic units, in oronyms. From this point of view, the word «kotal» must have been used somewhere in our region, and a place name corresponding to that name might have been repeated. When we observe carefully, the Kotali Panjob on the road from Sayrob to Panjob and Kotali Sharif in Darband are not far from the Akqotal ridge. Tura Nafasov, while emphasizing that there are many oronyms with the lexeme «kotal» in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, considers the Kütantogh toponym in Dehkonobod district to be a variant of the word «kotal» [10]. (p. 105). The 5th volume of the Uzbek National Encyclopedia states that many place names with the «kotal» component, such as Uzbekkotal and Tajikkotal, are found in Uzbekistan [9; p. 195]. Thus, the word «kotal», which originates from the Turkic languages, is widely spread in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan.

The word **Akqotal** and the toponym **Darband** appear to be related to some extent. As Z. M. Babur noted, the word «kotal» also has the meaning of "**band**" (dam/barrier). In our opinion, the word «band» and the word «kotal» are close to each other. They necessitate each other. Because every «kotal» is a «band» to some extent. The process of passing through every small «band» is a high point («kotal») that causes some difficulty.

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