

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Linguacultural Features of Onomastic Units in Uzbek Folk Riddles

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Abstract

This article analyzes the linguacultural and cognitive characteristics of onomastic units within Uzbek folklore, specifically focusing on riddles. The role of anthroponyms, toponyms, and mythonyms used in riddles in expressing the national mentality, cultural codes, and the worldview of the people is highlighted through specific examples.

KEY WORDS

Onomastics, linguaculturology, riddle, anthroponym, toponym, mythonym, cultural code, national mentality.

INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a tool for communication, but a unique treasure that preserves the cultural memory and worldview of a nation. Folklore genres, especially riddles, are considered micro-texts that demonstrate the centuries-old experience, metaphorical thinking, and linguistic mastery of the people. Proper nouns (onomastic units) used in the texts of riddles do not simply function as a means of naming. They embody a deep national-cultural connotation, historical memory, and linguacultural codes. In modern linguistics, the stage of studying linguistic units solely from structural and grammatical perspectives has passed, and approaching language through the lenses of linguaculturology and cognitive linguistics—the leading directions of the anthropocentric paradigm—has become a priority task. Today, language is interpreted not only as an instrument for transmitting and receiving information, but also as a unique universal treasure that preserves and transmits from generation to generation the cultural memory, social experience, and national-artistic thinking of a specific ethos. As each nation models the world it inhabits through language, the people's past, beliefs, mythological concepts, and value systems are reflected in the linguistic picture of this world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Among the linguistic means that shape the linguistic picture of the world and most vividly manifest the characteristics of the national mentality, onomastic units, namely proper nouns, occupy a special place. While onomastics was for many years studied primarily within the scope of its naming (nominative) function, today their connotative, symbolic, aesthetic, and pragmatic loads within the text stand at the center of linguists' attention. As Academician E. Begmatov emphasizes, the centuries-old ethnography, socio-political life, and spiritual views of a nation are sealed within the core of onomastic lexicon.

The use of proper nouns in the text of riddles never bears an accidental character. While the personal names (anthroponyms) used in them serve to personify the object and bestow a national character, place names (toponyms) activate historical perceptions of space, and legendary images (mythonyms) reveal the archetypal and mythological worldview of the people.

As V.A. Maslova emphasizes, 'Cultural codes are the anchor points that shape the linguistic picture of the world and manifest the intellect of a nation'. Toponyms such as 'Bukhara' and 'Egypt' in riddles are also spatial cultural codes of the Uzbek people. Personal names like 'Fotima xonim' or

'Ahmad' serve as explicit examples of this symbolism.

According to D. Khudoyberganova's Explanatory Dictionary of Modern Linguistic Terms, a linguistic (speech) unit in which a word (or words, word combinations) denoting a person or human-related actions and characteristics from a national-cultural perspective serves as a core component in verbally coding specific cultural information is defined as an anthropomorphic linguacultural code". As the scholar rightly points out, onomastic codes (proper nouns) are not merely linguistic units, but elements that serve as a secondary semiotic system, carrying ethno-cultural information within themselves."

On the other hand, Z. Mukimova, in her research, emphasizes that anthropomorphic linguacultural codes are one of the core tools providing the imagery of stable units, and presents the following views: "It is well known that proper nouns designate individuals or places. In language, they cannot typically generate figurative meanings. However, the formation of figurative meaning by a proper noun, that is, onomastic metaphor, is also characteristic of riddles (this is also observed in certain proverbs: Gap desang, qop-qop, Ish desang, Ashtarxondan top; Aql – Hasan, odob – Husan). Despite being grammatically classified as proper nouns, the onomastic units used in riddles function semantically as common nouns. Such a relationship is observed not only in anthroponyms but also in other onomastic units, including toponyms. For instance, in examples such as: Og'zim ochdim, uchdi-ketdi, Samarqand-u Buxor borib etdi (Word, speech); Hindistondan kelgan lo'k, Bo'yni ola, ko'zi ko'k (Stork).

Fotima – Zuhra urishadi,

Merosini bo'lishadi (Scissors);

Within stable units, onomastic units, including anthroponyms, are not used randomly; they serve a specific purpose. In this regard, personal names and nouns used for a designated purpose, acting as a baseline in Uzbek stable units, were studied as anthropomorphic linguacultural codes. Although the words Fotima-Zuhra, Sariboy, Esonboy in these examples denote personal names, they function semantically as common nouns. The anthropomorphic linguacultural code Fotima-Zuhra refers to the scissors and its two blades, the anthropomorphic linguacultural code Sariboy aka points to a yellow-colored object, namely a carrot, and the anthropomorphic linguacultural code Esonboy indicates the earth as common nouns. At this point, it is worth mentioning

that within the structure of riddles, linguacultural codes denoting personal status/nouns were observed more frequently than those denoting specific personal names".

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

In the structure of riddles, anthroponyms (personal names) often serve to conceal the subject, create rhyme, or evoke an association with a characteristic feature of the object. In the riddle "Kichkina Ahmad, kiyimi qat-qat" (Answer: Onion), the name "Ahmad" evokes a traditional, folk, and warm association within Uzbek ethno-culture. Here, this anthroponym points to the compact shape of the onion, which is an unpretentious blessing, affordable in daily life, and present in every household. The multi-layered nature of the onion skin is allegorized as human "clothing." Beyond providing harmony (Ahmad – qat-qat) and rhythm within the micro-text, the name personifies the plant world based on a biomorphic code.

In the riddle "Uzun tonli Fotima xonim, tilla pichoq so'ydi jonim" (Answer: Melon), the anthroponym "Fotima xonim" is a symbol of feminine grace, purity, and respect in Uzbek family and religious values. In the riddle, the melon is presented not as an ordinary object, but with the status of "xonim" (lady) due to its high esteem as a revered blessing. The elongated shape of the melon is described as a "long robe" (uzun ton), and its slicing is portrayed with aesthetic charm as "tilla pichoq so'ydi jonim" (my soul was sliced by a golden knife). This anthropocentric approach linguistically seals the people's love and reverence for the exquisite fruits of their land.

In the riddle "Baland tog'da Boymat bobo, chakmonlari qat-qat bobo" (Answer: Cabbage), the name "Boymat bobo" expresses the stereotype of prosperity, wealth, and abundance in the Uzbek mentality. The lexeme "bobo" (grandfather), along with age and seniority, also carries the semantic component of largeness in size; that is, here the quality of being multi-layered is distanced from the concepts of books and onions. The abundance and layered arrangement of cabbage leaves are likened in the folk imagination to the "multi-layered robe (chakmon) of a wealthy man." Here, the anthroponym creates a visual association in the listener's mind regarding the external appearance (plumpness and fullness) of the object.

Toponyms (place names) used in riddles are instruments that shape the historical-geographic memory, trade relations, and spatial picture of the world of the Uzbek people. In the riddle

"Misrdan kelgan miroyi, to'ni baxmal, ko'k choyi" (Answer: Eggplant), the toponym "Misr" (Egypt) is considered a symbol of a distant, mysterious, and wealthy land in Eastern folklore. The color and unique dark purple ("velvet") nature of the eggplant prompted the people to perceive it as a rare product brought from a far-off country. Additionally, the alliteration (phonetic harmony) between the words "miroyi" and "Misr" in the text enhances its poetic quality. The toponym here functions as a linguistic hyperbole that elevates the value and quality of the object.

In the riddle "Buxorodan kelgan buqa, quloqlari tilla xalqa" (Answer: Lock and key), the toponym "Buxoro" (Bukhara) was historically a center of metallurgy, blacksmithing, and jewelry in the history of Uzbek statehood and craftsmanship. When

the creator of the riddle compares a sturdy iron lock to a "bull" (buqa), establishing its origin as "Bukhara" is based on historical reality. The "golden ring" (tilla xalqa) refers to the bow of the key. It is well known that anyone visualizing the old streets of Bukhara immediately pictures the round rings hanging on the doors; the metaphorical image of the bull is also not accidental. In ancient times, a ring was attached to the nose of bulls that pulled plows—one of the main agricultural tools—to make them easier to manage. The name Bukhara in the text does not merely indicate a location, but activates cultural senses such as ancient quality, the labor of master craftsmen, and a guarantee of sturdiness.

The linguacultural functions of proper nouns in riddles can be summarized through the following table:

Onomastic Type	Unit	Expression in the Riddle	Linguacultural Function
Anthroponyms		Ahmad, Fotima, Oysha	Personifying the object and bestowing a national character
Toponyms		Buxoro, Misr, Makka	Shaping the historical spatial code, creating hyperbole
Mythonyms		Dev, Pari, Ajdaho	Showing the mystical and mythological nature of natural forces

CONCLUSION

Indeed, onomastic units in riddles are not merely poetic rhymes or linguistic decorations. They are cultural codes that carry the ethno-cultural worldview, cognitive perspective, and artistic thinking of a nation. Such active metaphorical use of proper nouns in riddles testifies to the rich internal connotative capabilities of the Uzbek language. In general, studying the linguacultural characteristics of onomastic units used in riddles possesses immense scientific value in revealing the linguistic models of the nation's logical thinking and the anthropocentric nature of folklore texts. Research in this direction will serve as a theoretical foundation for creating comprehensive linguaculturological dictionaries of Uzbek folklore onomastics in the future.

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