



ZOONYMS AS CULTURAL CODES: ETHNOLINGUISTIC AND LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF ANIMAL NAMES IN UZBEK FOLK RIDDLES

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Abstract. This article examines the ethnolinguistic and linguocultural characteristics of zoonyms (animal names) in Uzbek folk riddles. The study reveals the semantic-functional nature of zoonyms, their role in personifying objects and phenomena, and the creation of generalized images through metaphor. The connection between zoonyms and the onomastic system, particularly their anthroponymic and social-status modeling, is analyzed. From an ethnolinguistic perspective, the research explores the people's attitude toward the animal world, while from a linguocultural standpoint, it investigates the role of language-culture interaction. The function of proper nouns as concealment devices in riddle texts and the "concept-to-name" transition mechanisms are scientifically substantiated. This research contributes to defining the position of zoonyms in the Uzbek linguistic worldview.

Keywords: *onomastics, ethnolinguistics, linguoculturology, folklore, riddle, zoonym, anthroponym, linguistic worldview, cultural code, metaphor, personification.*

Introduction. Uzbek oral folk literature represents one of the oldest and richest layers of national culture, embodying the worldview, life experiences, moral values, and linguistic wealth accumulated over centuries. Folklore genres such as riddles and proverbs serve not only as intellectual and moral educational tools but also as important sources revealing the language's internal capabilities and its figurative and metaphorical power. Onomastic units occupy a special place in these genres: they function not merely as naming devices but actively participate in shaping the people's linguistic worldview, preserving cultural codes, and creating artistic images.

Research context and objectives. In contemporary linguistics, the development of onomastics, particularly in connection with the formation of ethnolinguistic and linguocultural approaches, has increasingly necessitated comprehensive research of onomastic units in folklore texts. Uzbek onomastics has developed rapidly since the second half of the 20th century, achieving significant scientific advances through fundamental research by scholars such as E. Begmatov, T. Nafasov, Z. Dosimov, S. Korayev, and H. Hasanov. However, existing studies have mainly focused on general onomastic issues or regional toponymic units, while the role and function of onyms in the artistic-aesthetic system of folklore texts remain insufficiently studied.

This research comprehensively examines the ethnolinguistic and linguocultural characteristics of onomastic units based on materials from Uzbek folk riddles. Specifically, the organic connection of onyms with the people's worldview, customs, and national mentality is analyzed from an ethnolinguistic perspective, while their role as cultural codes and their function in creating generalized images through metaphor and personification are analyzed from a linguocultural perspective. Additionally, the functional-semantic nature of onomastic

units in animating objects and phenomena and enhancing aesthetic impact in artistic texts is illuminated.

Theoretical framework. In analyzing the ethnolinguistic nature of zoonyms in Uzbek folk riddles, this study draws upon fundamental perspectives from onomasiological, cognitive, and semiotic approaches in linguistics. The following conceptual approaches are of particular importance in scientifically grounding this process:

First, Academician E. Begmatov, founder of the Uzbek onomastic school, characterizes the linguistic nature of proper nouns and their relationship with common nouns as follows: "Proper nouns grow out of appellative lexicon and transfer to it, undergoing semantic and functional transformations... They actively participate in shaping the language's worldview" [1: 4-5]. This methodological view serves fundamentally in explaining why anthroponymic units in riddles (such as Azamat Khoja, Sul-tonboy-vachcha) are directed toward expressing specific zoonymic concepts and in interpreting the dynamics of onyms in linguistic editing.

Second, renowned folklorist Archer Taylor, evaluating the generic characteristics of riddles from the perspective of linguistic nomination, calls them a system of "metaphorical equivalents." According to the scholar, riddle texts deliberately avoid directly naming the object, instead encouraging the listener to cognitive activity through encrypted alternative names (quasi-names) [2: 3]. This allows us to evaluate linguistic structures in zoonymic riddles not as mere wordplay but as complex cognitive-aesthetic phenomena.

Third, Dan Ben-Amos, who studied riddles as a semiotic system, classifies them as "oral metaphors" [3: 250]. According to this approach, each onomastic unit in a riddle functions as a symbol denoting a specific denotatum. The zoonymic images analyzed in our research are precisely components of this semiotic system, revealing the associative connection between linguistic sign and concept.

Fourth, according to the theory of contemporary cognitive linguistics representatives G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, metaphor and personification are not merely artistic depiction devices but fundamental cognitive mechanisms of human thought [4: 35]. When riddle creators name an object (for example, an ant) with human qualities and mythic-social onyms (for example, gray horse), this process occurs based on the onomasiological principle directed from "concept to name."

The main objective of the research is to reveal the national-cultural and linguistic characteristics of onomastic units in Uzbek oral folk literature samples and determine their role in language-culture interaction. Through this, along with deeper understanding of the linguistic nature of folklore language, the study aims to contribute to developing new directions in linguocultural research in Uzbek linguistics.

Methodological foundations: onomasiology and onomastics. Studying folk riddles at the intersection of onomasiology and onomastics holds significant methodological importance in achieving the stated objective. At this intersection of disciplines, riddle texts manifest as unique linguistic phenomena: traditional naming devices of language (standard zoonyms – horse, donkey, ant, rooster, bee, etc.) are deliberately concealed, and in their place, new cognitive-figurative metaphorical quasi-names emerge. This process practically demonstrates the language's nominative power – the ability to rename a specific concept through various creative strategies.



As E. Begmatov, founder of Uzbek onomastics, notes, "proper nouns are distinguished as a special layer in the vocabulary of language" and they are in constant connection with appellative lexicon, undergoing semantic and functional transformations [1: 4]. The folklore text, specifically the riddle genre, implements this process in its own unique way: the standard zoonym (answer) is deliberately placed in a "hidden" state, and in its place, quasi-names created through metaphor, personification, and synecdoche are activated.

5. Zoonymic analysis: from domestic to wild animals.

5.1. Domestic animals in riddles horse (ot)

Quasi-names (nominative variations): (1) *"Four-legged, iron-hoofed"*; (2) *"Runs like water, reaches destination."* In these riddles, the nomination process is based on the principle of renaming. In synecdochic nomination, the first quasi-name ("four-legged, iron-hoofed") expresses the animal's entire body through its functional support points – legs and hooves. The second example's "runs like water" combination expresses the dynamic characteristic of movement through a hydronymic image. The continuity and intensity of water cognitively strengthens the "speed" seme of the zoonym. As Academician E. Begmatov notes, such linguistic transformations "expand the word's nominative and functional capabilities, activating cultural layers in its core" [1: 4].

Donkey (Eshak). Quasi-names: *"Not a rabbit, long ears. Not a horse, four hooves" and "Tapir-tupir four-footed, brays alone."* These riddles employ negation (not a rabbit / not a horse) and onomatopoeic personification (tapir-tupir, braying) methods. The contrast of differential features (long ears, hooves) with other animals clarifies the object's linguistic portrait. In the folk linguistic worldview, the donkey embodies not only a working animal but also the cultural code of "extreme patience" and "contentment." The "solitary braying" is its socio-biological individual identifier.

Camel (Tuya). Quasi-names: *"Padded feet, foamy mouth" and "Gurgling mouth, long legs and short tail."* Here, exterior nomination (external appearance description) is given through metonymy. Units like "padded feet" and "gurgling mouth" transfer the camel's morphological characteristics to onomastic connotation. The concealment of the standard name and its replacement with visual-acoustic images manifests the language's nominative potential.

Goat (Echki). Quasi-names: *"Has a beard, no mustache" and "Has a beard, no mind."* In the second example, ironic personification occupies a leading position. The "no mind" seme is an ethnolinguistic code indicating the animal's stubbornness and difficulty in control. In folk mentality, the goat is often linguistically shaped as a symbol of "instability" or "devilish cleverness" (as seen in the Taka – Sultonmurod example).

5.2. Wild animals: cultural archetypes.

Tiger (Yo'lbars). *"Striped coat, everyone fears its appearance."* This quasi-name models the animal's skin as a social status marker (coat) through textile metaphor. As Academician E. Begmatov notes, proper nouns and their substitutes embody cultural load [3: 6]. From an ethnolinguistic perspective, the tiger image brings out the contrast of "respect and fear," confirming its archetypal status as "king of nature" in Uzbek mentality.

Bear (Ayiq). *"Comes on four legs, leaves on two legs."* This nominative model is built on anthropomorphic personification. By bringing the bear's movement closer to human appearance, its folkloric "Polvon Bobo" (Grandfather Champion) image is visualized. According to Archer Taylor's approach, such metaphorical equivalents activate cognitive association in

the listener [2: 3]. From a linguocultural perspective, the bear is a cultural code between danger and humor.

Wolf (Bo'ri). *"Searches field after field, sheep and goats cry out."* Here, through hyperbolic locative (field after field) and acoustic onomatopoeia (cry out), an archetype of enmity is created. From an ethnolinguistic perspective, the wolf enters cognitive discourse as a symbol of "predation and greed," stemming from the real-life experience of pastoral people.

Fox (Tulki). *"Rode the wolf, saddled the donkey, herded the goat, led the camel."* The quasi-name is created based on hierarchical irony. The fox's physical "control" of stronger animals is a cultural code signifying its intellectual superiority. This reflects the mentality's idea of "weak but victorious through intelligence" and enriches the tradition of humor.

Mouse (Sichqon): Anthroponymic modeling. *"Shelf after shelf, Azamat Khoja."* This riddle represents the brightest example of anthroponymic nomination. The onym "Azamat Khoja" applied to the mouse personalizes its cleverness and mastery characteristics in the field of social relations. This cognitive mechanism creates linguistic contrast by naming a small object with high social status (khoja).

Conclusion. The renomination process in riddles is accomplished by replacing traditional zoonyms with quasi-names created through metaphor, synecdoche, and personification. This process manifests the language's nominative potential. Each zoonym embodies the people's centuries-old experience in animal husbandry, hunting, and observation. Onyms such as "Sultan," "Khoja," "Polvon," and "Azamat" applied to animals represent the transfer of social-cultural models from folk mentality to nature.

Zoonyms perform the function of complex cultural codes in the Uzbek linguistic worldview. They activate the mechanism of perceiving nature as a living and social subject in the consciousness of children and listeners. Riddle texts serve not merely as linguistic games but as important cognitive tools for transmitting national mentality and values from generation to generation

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