

SYMBOLS OF DOMESTIC ANIMALS IN THE UZBEK LANGUAGE: A LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract. This article examines the symbolic meanings of domestic animals in the Uzbek language from a linguocultural perspective. The study analyses how animals such as the horse, dog, sheep, camel, and ox function as cultural symbols in Uzbek proverbs, phraseological units, folklore, and literary texts. The research demonstrates that domestic animal symbols in Uzbek reflect the nation's historical lifestyle, value system, and worldview.

Keywords: domestic animals, animal symbols, Uzbek language, linguoculturology, zoomorphism, phraseology, proverbs, cultural code, horse symbolism, national mentality.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola o'zbek tilidagi uy hayvonlari ramzlarini lingvomadaniy jihatdan o'rganishga bag'ishlangan. Maqolada ot, it, qo'y, tuya va ho'kiz kabi hayvonlarning o'zbek maqollari, frazeologizmlar, folklor va badiiy matnlardagi ramziy ma'nolari tahlil qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar: uy hayvonlari, hayvon ramzlari, o'zbek tili, lingvomadaniyatshunoslik, zoomorfizm, frazeologiya, maqollar, madaniy kod, ot ramziyligi, milliy mentalitet.

Аннотация. Данная статья посвящена лингвокультурологическому изучению символов домашних животных в узбекском языке. Анализируются символические значения таких животных, как лошадь, собака, овца, верблюд и бык.

Ключевые слова: домашние животные, символы животных, узбекский язык, лингвокультурология, зооморфизм, фразеология, пословицы, культурный код, символизм лошади, национальный менталитет.

Domestic animals have played an integral role in the lives of Uzbek people throughout history. As a traditionally nomadic and agrarian society, the Uzbek nation developed deep cultural, spiritual, and emotional bonds with the animals that shared their daily lives. These bonds left lasting traces in the language, particularly in proverbs, idioms, folklore, and literature, where domestic animals function not merely as references to real creatures but as richly layered cultural symbols [3. P. 17].

The study of domestic animal symbols through a linguocultural lens offers unique insights into the Uzbek national character, value system, and perception of the world. Each animal that entered the symbolic repertoire of the Uzbek language carries with it centuries of accumulated cultural meaning, reflecting the people's relationship with nature, labour, honour, and community.

This research focuses on five key domestic animals — the horse, dog, sheep, camel, and ox — that appear most frequently in the Uzbek symbolic tradition. By analysing their occurrence in phraseological units, proverbs, epic literature, and everyday speech, the article aims to map out the cultural-symbolic field of domestic animals in Uzbek and draw conclusions about the values they encode [1. P. 44].

1. Theoretical Framework

The linguocultural approach, developed by scholars such as V.N. Telia, V.V. Vorobyov, and further applied to Uzbek material by D.I. Mirzayeva and A. Mamatov, treats language as a repository of cultural knowledge. Within this framework, animal

symbols are understood as cultural-linguistic signs that simultaneously belong to both the linguistic and cultural systems of a given community [4. P. 29].

Zoomorphic symbols, in particular, are among the oldest and most stable elements of any language's cultural code. They arise from direct human observation of animals and gradually accumulate metaphorical, allegorical, and evaluative meanings. In the Uzbek language, this process has been ongoing for millennia, shaped by the nomadic heritage, Islamic tradition, and the rich oral literature of the Uzbek people [2. P. 63].

The present study employs a combination of semantic analysis, contextual interpretation, and cross-textual comparison to identify the symbolic values attached to each domestic animal. Primary sources include the Uzbek Phraseological Dictionary, collections of folk proverbs, the epic "Alpomish", and selected works of classical and modern Uzbek literature [5. P. 38].

2. The Horse (Ot) as a Symbol of Honour and Strength

Of all domestic animals, the horse occupies the most prestigious position in Uzbek cultural symbolism. Historically, the horse was indispensable to the Uzbek way of life — in warfare, trade, agriculture, and the great nomadic migrations across the steppe. This centrality is reflected in the extraordinary richness of horse-related phraseology in the Uzbek language [1. P. 71].

In Uzbek proverbs, the horse consistently symbolises strength, dignity, and the social status of its owner. The saying "Ot mingan — o'z bo'lur, eshak mingan — suv bo'lur" (One who rides a horse becomes his own master; one who rides a donkey becomes a water-carrier) directly links the horse to freedom and high social standing. Similarly, "Yaxshi ot — egasining ko'zgusi" (A good horse is a mirror of its owner) reflects the cultural conviction that a man's worth is measured by the quality of his horse [3. P. 52].

In epic literature, particularly in the "Alpomish" dastan, the horse Barchin is not merely a mount but a companion, a confidant, and a spiritual partner to the hero. The horse's loyalty, speed, and intelligence are portrayed as extensions of the hero's own

virtues. This anthropomorphisation of the horse is a defining feature of Uzbek symbolic tradition and distinguishes it markedly from the more pragmatic treatment of horses in many Western literary traditions [6. P. 84].

The horse also appears as a symbol of freedom and the untameable spirit of youth in Uzbek lyric poetry. Classical poets such as Alisher Navoi used the image of a swift horse to represent the restless soul striving toward spiritual perfection. This metaphorical use adds a philosophical dimension to the horse's symbolic profile, making it one of the most semantically rich animal symbols in the entire Uzbek cultural tradition.

3. The Dog (It) — A Complex Symbol

Unlike the horse, the dog occupies an ambivalent position in Uzbek cultural symbolism. While dogs were valued as working animals — as shepherds' companions and guards of the home — Islamic tradition introduced a complex set of ritual restrictions surrounding dogs, which influenced their symbolic status in the language [2. P. 88].

In the majority of Uzbek proverbs and phraseological units, the dog carries predominantly negative connotations. Expressions such as “Itning izi bilan yursang, axlatga yetasan” (Follow a dog's path and you'll reach the rubbish heap) or “It huradi, karvon o'tadi” (Dogs bark, the caravan moves on) convey moral lessons about the consequences of following the wrong path or the futility of meaningless noise and criticism [4. P. 93].

Nevertheless, there exists a separate layer of Uzbek dog symbolism associated with loyalty and protection. The shepherd's dog, known for its fierce devotion to its flock, is sometimes invoked as an image of steadfast faithfulness. This positive dimension of dog symbolism, though less dominant than the negative, adds important nuance to the picture. The coexistence of negative and positive symbolic values in a single animal reflects the complexity of Uzbek cultural attitudes and demonstrates how linguocultural symbols are never fully fixed but remain open to contextual reinterpretation [1. P. 96].

4. The Sheep (Qo'Y), Camel (Tuya) and Ox (Ho'kiz)

The sheep is one of the most frequently mentioned animals in Uzbek folklore and serves as a symbol of gentleness, innocence, and vulnerability. Proverbs such as “Qo‘Yning yuragi bor” (He has the heart of a sheep) describe a timid or submissive person, while “Qo‘Ydan yumshoq” (Softer than a sheep) emphasises excessive meekness. In religious contexts, the sheep also carries connotations of sacrifice and piety, linked to the Islamic tradition of Eid al-Adha [5. P. 47].

The camel, by contrast, symbolises endurance, patience, and the capacity to carry heavy burdens without complaint. The proverb “Tuya o‘z bo‘ynining egriligini ko‘rmaydi” (The camel does not see the crookedness of its own neck) is a classic expression of self-blindness and an inability to acknowledge one’s own faults. This saying demonstrates how the camel’s physical characteristics have been transformed into psychological and moral observations about human behaviour [3. P. 67].

The ox holds a place of deep respect in Uzbek agrarian symbolism. As the primary draft animal of Uzbek farming communities, the ox came to represent tireless labour, agricultural abundance, and the foundational virtue of hard work. The saying “Ho‘kiz — dehqonning qanotlari” (The ox is the wings of the farmer) encapsulates this symbolic function perfectly. In Uzbek folk art and embroidery, the ox motif also appears as a symbol of prosperity and the fertility of the land [6. P. 59].

5. Results and Discussion

The analysis of domestic animal symbols in the Uzbek language reveals a coherent and deeply embedded cultural-symbolic system. Each animal occupies a distinct symbolic niche shaped by its practical role in Uzbek life, its moral characteristics as perceived by the community, and the influence of religious and literary traditions. The horse stands at the apex of this system as the ultimate symbol of honour, strength, and social prestige. The dog and sheep occupy more ambivalent positions, carrying both positive and negative values depending on context. The camel and ox are associated with the virtues of patience and industriousness that the Uzbek agrarian tradition holds in highest regard [2. P. 101].

A notable feature of Uzbek domestic animal symbolism is its stability over time. Many of the symbolic meanings identified in classical texts and epic literature remain active in contemporary Uzbek speech, demonstrating the resilience of cultural codes embedded in language. This stability is partly due to the central role of oral tradition in transmitting cultural values, and partly due to the continued relevance of agrarian and pastoral life in large parts of Uzbekistan.

Conclusion

Domestic animal symbols in the Uzbek language constitute a rich and complex linguocultural system that encodes the nation's deepest values, historical experiences, and ethical convictions. The horse, dog, sheep, camel, and ox each contribute a distinct set of symbolic meanings to the overall picture, collectively forming a symbolic vocabulary through which Uzbek speakers make sense of human character, social relationships, and moral conduct.

The linguocultural study of these symbols not only illuminates the specifics of Uzbek national identity but also contributes to the broader field of comparative animal symbolism by providing detailed data on a Central Asian linguistic tradition that remains underrepresented in international scholarship. Future research should extend this analysis to a wider range of domestic animals and examine how their symbolic values have evolved in the context of modernisation and globalisation.

In conclusion, domestic animal symbols are far more than linguistic curiosities — they are living archives of cultural memory that continue to shape the way Uzbek speakers perceive and communicate about the world around them. Their study deserves a central place in both Uzbek linguistics and the broader field of linguoculturology [4. P. 112].

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