

Linguoculturological Analysis of Regional Symbols and Images in Uzbek Folk Epics

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Abstract: *This article analyzes regional symbols and images in the dastans «Oshiq Qumri» and «Sayod va Hamro» from the «Oshiq» cycle from a linguocultural perspective. The study reveals the cultural content of geographical, ethnographic, romantic, spiritual-religious, and social symbols characteristic of the Khorezm region, expressed through language units. The connections among symbols, images, national mentality, folk worldview, and regional identity are demonstrated. The article opens new possibilities for the study of Uzbek epic poetry using the methods of linguoculturology.*

Keywords: *Linguoculturology, Regional Symbol, Image, «Oshiq» Cycle Dastans, Khorezm Folklore, Phraseological Unit, Cultural Semantics, National Mentality*

1. Introduction

Uzbek oral folklore, particularly its epic storytelling traditions (*dostonchilik*), serves as a crucial spiritual heritage that reflects our national culture, historical memory, and the artistic thinking of our people. Within these folk epics, the people's worldview, customs, values, social life, mentality, and aesthetic views find their artistic expression through various symbols and images. In recent years, linguoculturology has emerged at the crossroads of linguistics and literary studies, offering a robust framework to investigate literary texts in direct connection with national culture, traditions, mentality, and values. This approach facilitates a deeper comprehension of the symbols and images in folk epics, uncovers their regional characteristics, and decodes the cultural meanings embedded within linguistic units.[1] The epics of the "Oshiq" (Romantic/Lovers) cycle embody core concepts such as love, devotion, loyalty, and courage. The symbols and images within them vividly illustrate the cultural mindset and regional worldview of the people. Belonging to the Khorezm epic school, the epics "Oshiq Qumri" and "Sayod va Hamro" hold a distinguished place among these cultural masterpieces. The relevance of this research stems from the fact that the regional characteristics of the symbols and images found within the "Oshiq" cycle epics have not yet been sufficiently investigated in a systematic and comprehensive manner. This article is significant as it aims to bridge this academic gap.[2] The primary objective of this paper is to conduct a linguoculturological analysis of the regional symbols and images within the epics "Oshiq Qumri" and "Sayod va Hamro", thereby unveiling their aesthetic value and national-cultural substance. The research methodology employs descriptive-analytical, comparative, contextual, semantic, and linguoculturological analysis methods.

Literature Review

Linguoculturology is an interdisciplinary field that emerged at the intersection of linguistics and cultural studies, dedicated to investigating the cultural meanings embedded and preserved within linguistic units. Prominent scholars in this field, such as V. N. Teliya, V. V. Vorobev, V. A. Maslova, and G. G. Slyshkin, define linguoculturology as "the science of the harmony between language and

culture." A nation's culture is encoded within its linguistic units—including words, idioms, phraseological units, and symbols—and is transmitted from generation to generation.[3] Folk epics serve as primary sources that reflect this cultural memory in its most comprehensive and artistic form. The symbols and images utilized in these epics are not merely tools of literary artistry; rather, they function as linguacultural signs that reflect a specific nation's mode of perceiving the world, its historical experience, and its value system. Consequently, linguoculturological analysis involves identifying culturemes—linguistic units that carry specific cultural weight—within the text, interpreting their symbolic semantics, and unmasking their profound connection to the national mentality.[4]

2. Methodology

A symbol is a linguistic sign that carries a dual layer of meaning within a literary text; alongside its denotative surface meaning, it embodies profound cultural and spiritual connotations. The defining features of a symbol are its polysemy, multi-layered meaning, heavy spiritual resonance, and its intrinsic connection to a specific cultural tradition. An image, conversely, represents the holistic aesthetic manifestation of a specific person, phenomenon, or concept within a literary text. The images in these epics—encompassing the hero, their character traits, motivations, and emotions—personify the nation's ideal conception of humanity along with its socio-ethical benchmarks.[5] In Uzbek folk epics, symbols and images function in close interdependence. The character image frequently shoulders a symbolic burden. For instance, in the epic "*Oshiq Qumri*", the character of Qumri operates not merely as an individual protagonist, but as a cultural embodiment of devotion, love, and the regional folk singing tradition.

The Khorezm Epic School and the "Oshiq" Cycle

The epics of the "*Oshiq*" cycle are unique products of the localized epic storytelling tradition rooted in the Khorezm region.[6] Their plots center on the hero transforming into a singer/musician through divine inspiration, enduring arduous trials for the sake of love, and ultimately achieving union with the beloved. These works are compiled and published by Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor S. Ro'zimboyev, in the multi-volume collection *Xorazm Oshiqnomasi*. In the epic "*Oshiq Qumri*", the protagonist Qumri attains the status of an *oshiq* (devoted lover/bard) after witnessing a divine dream. Similarly, in the epic "*Sayod va Hamro*", the themes of self-sacrifice, fidelity, and the agonizing grief of separation *hijron* between the lover Sayod and his beloved Hamro are vividly articulated through symbols native to the Khorezm region.[7]

Regionality *mintaqaviylik* refers to the manifestation of specific geographic, historical, and cultural characteristics native to a particular territory within its language, texts, and arts. The Khorezm region occupies a distinct niche in Uzbek folklore due to its natural environment (the Amu Darya river, sands, deserts, and oases), its ethnographic traditions, and its unique history.[8] In the epics "*Oshiq Qumri*" and "*Sayod va Hamro*", imagery specific to the Khorezmian natural landscape carries significant symbolic weight:

The Amu Darya Symbol: The Amu Darya river functions not merely as a geographical marker, but as a symbol of the source of life, the passage of time, painful separation, and yearning. Expressions such as "*Daryo kabi oqar umrim...*" "My life flows away like a river..." harmonizes with the lover's deep anguish during separation.

The Desert and Sand Symbol: The Khorezm desert typically symbolizes trials, a path wrought with suffering, loneliness, and spiritual striving. The hero's wandering in the desert runs parallel to their psychological state—reflecting inner turmoil and a restless quest.[9]

The Tulip and Flower Symbol: The tulip, native to the Khorezm valleys, is a distinctive marker widely utilized in traditional regional attire and decorative arts. In these epics, it symbolizes beauty,

love, and the transience of life.

Symbols tied to the lifestyle, traditional garments, and rituals of the Khorezmian people occupy a prominent place in the texts:

The Skullcap *Do'ppi* and Atlas Silk: As symbols of Khorezmian national attire, these elements play a vital role in character identification. Embroidering a skullcap for the beloved is interpreted as an expression of affection and fidelity, while the vibrant, multi-colored nature of *Atlas* silk signifies the fullness of life and happiness. Ritualistic Elements: Wedding ceremonies, gatherings featuring *Maqom* musical performances, and the *mehmonxona* guest room/guest house as a space for honoring guests acquire deep symbolic resonance. Welcoming guests is viewed by Khorezmians not just as a customary etiquette, but as a core symbol of humanity and high moral virtue.[10]

Symbols of Love and Their Linguacultural Features

Because the epics of the "*Oshiq*" cycle are systematically constructed around the theme of *ishq*, love symbols form a highly structured semiotic system: The Nightingale *Bulbul* and Turtledove *Qumri* Symbol: The word *qumri* in the title of the epic "*Oshiq Qumri*" is inherently symbolic. The *qumri* represents faithful love and mournful longing, whereas the *bulbul* represents the lover himself—an anguished soul unable to reach his *gul*, the rose/the beloved. While these symbols are ubiquitous in classical Oriental literature, they assume a distinct local color within Khorezmian epics. The Candle and the Moth Symbol: The *sham* and *parvona* matrix is utilized to denote both mystical Sufi devotion and secular, earthly love. The moth consuming itself in the candle's flame symbolizes the lover's absolute readiness to sacrifice his life for the beloved.[11] The Eye Symbol: The eye is treated not merely as an anatomical organ, but as an expressive mirror of spirituality, the soul, and love. Expressions like "*Ko'z ko'r di, ko'ngil sevdi*" "The eye witnessed, the heart loved" have attained the status of cultural stereotypes in the Khorezm epic storytelling tradition. In the "*Oshiq*" cycle epics, the central character of the lover *Oshiq* serves as a direct reflection of the Khorezmian cultural mentality. This character paradigm is synthesized from three core components:

The Motif of the Divine Dream and Inspiration: The protagonist beholds a spiritual guide or a divine entity in a dream, who bestows upon him a musical instrument such as a *ko'sa-nay* or a *tor*. From that exact moment, his calling as an *oshiq* begins. This motif reflects a seamless synthesis of Sufi traditions and Khorezmian folk beliefs.

The Motif of Trial and Patience: The lover must navigate numerous obstacles, trials, and tribulations to attain union with the beloved. The linguacultural essence of this image is deeply rooted in the foundational life philosophy of the Khorezmian people: "*Sabr — zafar kaliti*". Maqom and the Musical Tradition: The *oshiq* protagonists are frequently depicted as *maqomchi* performers of classical Maqom music, *hofiz*, or *baxshi* traditional bards. This musical art holds a sacred status in Khorezmian culture. Consequently, the image of the *oshiq* embodies the core cultural and musical code of the Khorezmian artistic heritage.[12]

3. Results and Discussion

The characters of *Qumri* in the epic "*Oshiq Qumri*" and *Hamro* in "*Sayod va Hamro*" personify the ideal archetype of womanhood within the Khorezmian artistic consciousness. The following linguacultural traits are predominantly highlighted within these female characters. Geographic and Ethnographic Elements in Aesthetic Descriptions: Portrayals such as "*Qorachashm, qora zulfi mushkbar, / Yuzida qizg'ish, Xorazm lolasi*" "Black-eyed, with tresses fragrant as musk, Her face carries the blushing red of the Khorezmian tulip" manifest a distinct regional color by drawing direct aesthetic analogies between female beauty and the indigenous natural landscape of Khorezm. Fidelity and Devotion: In the character of *Hamro*, the act of waiting for her beloved and enduring intense spiritual suffering becomes a symbolic manifestation of fidelity. This reflects the broader socio-

cultural profile of the traditional Khorezmian woman, characterized by profound patience, *sabr-toqat*, and immense inner fortitude.[13] In addition to the primary protagonists, several auxiliary characters carry vital linguacultural and structural weight within the epics: The Spiritual Guide *Pir / Murshid*: Formed under the distinct influence of the Sufi mystic tradition, the *Pir* serves as a pathfinder, divine inspirer, and spiritual mentor within Khorezmian epics. Structurally, this character symbolizes sacred knowledge, wisdom, and divine grace *karomat*. The Rival / Antagonist *Raqib*: The antagonist frequently embodies institutional, political, or social hegemony represented by figures like a *Bek* or a *Khan*. Through this adversarial archetype, the collective mindset of the people—specifically their opposition to social injustice and their absolute valuation of freedom and true love—is artistically articulated. The Community. The concepts of *El*, the folk/community, and *Yurt* homeland transcend mere geographic boundary markers. Instead, they function as vital symbols of the hero's cultural identity, core values, and ethical obligations to his society.[14] The table 1. below provides a comprehensive linguoculturological classification of the regional symbols identified within the "Oshiq" cycle epics:

Symbol Category	Linguoculturological Features	Textual Examples from the Epics
Natural Symbols	Intrinsically tied to the geographic environment and regional landscape.	The Amu Darya River, sand, desert, and tulip
Ethnographic Symbols	Reflective of Khorezmian customs, traditional attire, and lifestyle.	Skullcap <i>do'ppi</i> , <i>Atlas</i> silk, watermelon, soldier <i>sarboz</i>
Symbols of Love	Expressive of romantic/divine love, devotion, separation <i>hijron</i> , and fidelity.	Nightingale, turtledove, rose, candle.
Religious-Spiritual Symbols	Shaped by Islamic theology and the mystical traditions of Sufism.	God, spiritual guide, miracle, divine secret
Socio-Cultural Symbols	Reflective of the societal structure and the regional culture of heroism.	Hero/Wrestler, chieftain, the folk, homeland.

As illustrated by the classification matrix, the symbols embedded within these epics construct a multi-layered semantic system that is structurally interdependent with the geographic environment, material culture, historical trajectory, and unique psychological mentality of the Khorezm region.[15]

4. Conclusion

The linguoculturological analysis of the "Oshiq" cycle epics, specifically "Oshiq Qumri" and "Sayod va Hamro", allows for the formulation of the following comprehensive conclusions: First, within these epics, symbols unique to the Khorezm region—spanning geographic elements the Amu Darya river, desert, oasis, ethnographic components the *do'ppi* skullcap, *Atlas* silk, wedding rituals, and spiritual-religious dimensions *pir* spiritual guide, *karomat* miracles, Sufi mysticism—coalesce to form a distinct, highly organized linguacultural system. Second, the central character paradigm of the *oshiq* serves as a direct reflection of the cultural-cognitive model and ideal human archetype envisioned by the Khorezmian people. This paradigm is systematically constructed through the components of divine inspiration, arduous trials, absolute patience, and the classical art of *Maqom*. Third, the symbols and images embedded in these texts do not merely serve as superficial literary embellishments; rather, they function as dynamic cultural codes that preserve and transmit the nation's worldview, historical memory, and fundamental value system. Fourth, the regional specificity of the "Oshiq" cycle epics confirms their status as a unique cultural and artistic phenomenon belonging to

the Khorezm epic storytelling school within the broader framework of the pan-Uzbek epic tradition. The findings and outcomes of this article can be practically implemented in developing specialized courses, university seminars, and academic textbooks for Uzbek folklore, structural linguistics, and linguoculturology. In future research, conducting a comparative linguoculturological analysis across other less-studied epics of the "Oshiq" cycle will pave the way for even more extensive, cross-cultural scholarly insights.

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