



UZBEK NAMING TRADITIONS

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Abstract: *This article explores traditional Uzbek naming practices from a linguacultural perspective. It examines the interaction between language and culture, and how sociocultural, religious, and historical factors have influenced anthroponyms. The analysis also touches on pre-Islamic and Islamic influences, as well as modern naming tendencies in Uzbek society.*

Key words: *linguistic and cultural studies, Uzbek naming traditions, anthroponyms, personal names, identity.*

УЗБЕКСКИЕ ИМЕНОВАТЕЛЬНЫЕ ТРАДИЦИИ

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Аннотация: *В данной статье рассматриваются традиционные узбекские именовательные практики с лингвокультурологической точки зрения. Анализируется взаимодействие языка и культуры, а также влияние социокультурных, религиозных и исторических факторов на антропонимы. Особое внимание уделено дореигиозным (переисламским) и исламским влияниям, а также современным тенденциям в выборе имен в узбекском обществе.*



Ключевые слова: лингвокультурология, узбекские именовательные традиции, антропонимы, личные имена, идентичность.

O'ZBEK NOMLASH AN'ANALARI

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada o'zbek xalqining nomlash an'analari lingvomadaniy nuqtai nazardan tahlil qilinadi. Unda til va madaniyat o'zaro qanday aloqada bo'lishi hamda ijtimoiy-madaniy, diniy va tarixiy omillarning antroponimlarga qanday ta'sir ko'rsatgani yoritilgan. Shuningdek, islomgacha bo'lgan davr, islomiy ta'sirlar va zamonaviy nom tanlash tendensiyalariga ham e'tibor qaratilgan.

Asosiy so'zlar: lingvomadaniyatshunoslik, o'zbek nomlash an'analari, antroponimlar, shaxs ismlari, shaxsiylik.

Introduction

Linguacultural studies have gained momentum since the late 20th century as an interdisciplinary field that examines the close ties between language and culture. According to Maslova (2001, p. 5), its main aim is to uncover the national mentality and worldview of a people through the medium of language. In this context, anthroponymy, or the study of personal names, provides valuable insights into the cultural history and collective psychology of a nation.

Names serve not only as linguistic labels but also as cultural markers. As Superanskaya (1973) notes, a personal name is a special linguistic unit used to



distinguish one individual from another, while simultaneously reflecting social values, religious beliefs, and historical realities.

As for traditional Uzbek naming system, Uzbek anthroponymy, like that of other Turkic peoples, has evolved under the influence of **pre-Islamic, Islamic, and Soviet-era naming systems**. Prior to the Arab conquest and Islamization of Central Asia, Uzbeks used **names based on natural phenomena, physical features, animals, and warrior traits**. Examples include *Batur*, *Bo'ri*, *Qora*, *Kichkina*, *Oqsoy*, which were believed to confer strength or protection to the child. This aligns with Zinin's observation (1972, p. 51) about pre-Christian naming freedom in Slavic cultures, where parents chose names to reflect circumstances or to serve as talismans. With the **spread of Islam**, the naming system underwent a transformation. Arabic and Persian names such as *Muhammad*, *Ali*, *Fatima*, *Zaynab*, *Shirin*, *Rustam*, and *Iskandar* became widespread, often replacing or coexisting with native Turkic names. These names frequently reflected religious devotion, cultural prestige, or literary admiration. As in Russian culture (Nikonov, 1970, p. 58), **Islamic onomastica sakra** became dominant, and saints' names gained special importance, especially those of the Prophet's family and companions.

Method of research

This study adopts a **qualitative, comparative linguacultural approach** to investigate the evolution and structure of Uzbek naming practices. The methodology is grounded in interdisciplinary analysis, combining tools from **linguistics, cultural studies, and historical anthropology** to reveal the deep-rooted sociocultural dimensions of Uzbek anthroponyms. The research focuses on describing and interpreting linguistic and cultural phenomena rather than quantifying them.



Four key sources of data were used:

Historical name samples were gathered from literary texts, oral traditions, birth records, and naming archives, representing four major timeframes: *pre-Islamic*, *Islamic*, *Soviet*, and *post-independence* Uzbekistan. These provide insight into diachronic naming trends.

A **comparative framework** was developed using Russian naming traditions as a point of reference, due to their strong influence during the Soviet era and the availability of rich academic literature (notably by Superanskaya and Nikonov). Structural and cultural parallels were drawn between the two naming systems.

Academic literature formed the theoretical foundation of the study. Core sources include: A.V. Superanskaya's *General Theory of Proper Names*, V.A. Nikonov's works on name structure and Soviet onomastics, S.I. Zinin's studies on early Slavic naming and protective names, V.A. Maslova's *Lingvoculturology*, which provided conceptual grounding on language-culture interactions.

Field observations were conducted in Uzbek-speaking communities through informal interviews, surveys of naming preferences, and analysis of real-life name usage in schools, families, and official documents. These observations helped identify modern naming trends and their sociocultural motivations.

This methodology is designed to address the following central research questions:

- ✓ **What cultural, historical, and religious factors have influenced Uzbek naming traditions throughout different periods?**
- ✓ **In what ways do naming conventions reflect broader ideological or societal shifts in Uzbekistan (e.g., Islamization, Soviet secularism, national revival)?**



✓ Which linguistic features (e.g., morphology, etymology, semantic connotation) are most prominent in Uzbek anthroponyms, and how do these distinguish them from other naming systems, such as the Russian model?

Results

Regarding the structure and types of Uzbek Personal Names, Modern Uzbek full names typically consist of three components:

1. **First name** (ism)
2. **Patronymic** (otasining ismi + -ovich/-ovna, -qizi/-o‘g‘li)
3. **Surname** (family name or inherited clan name)

This structure mirrors the **Russian naming model**, especially under Soviet influence. For example: *Azizbek Akromovich Karimov* (in official Soviet style) or *Nodira Ziyod qizi Yuldasheva* (in current Uzbek national form). According to Bondaletov (1983, p. 86), anthroponyms can be divided into personal names, surnames, nicknames, pseudonyms, and cryptonyms — a classification that also applies to Uzbek anthroponymy.

Before Islam, names in Uzbek society were closely tied to **nature, animals, and traits of strength**. These names were believed to **protect** the bearer and define their destiny. Examples include: *Qoravoy* (dark-skinned boy), *Bo‘ri* (wolf), *Botir* (brave), *Oqsoy* (white stream), etc. Such names served both as **identity markers and spiritual talismans**, much like the "protective names" discussed in Zinin (1972). With the spread of Islam in Central Asia, Arabic and Persian names became dominant. Examples include: *Muhammad*, *Fatima*, *Iskandar*, *Zaynab*, *Rustam*. This marked a cultural-religious shift where **sacred names (onomastica sacra)** replaced or merged with local ones. The influence mirrors Russian adoption of **Christian saints’ names** post-baptism (Nikonov, 1970). During the Soviet era,



naming was used as a tool of ideology. Religious names declined, while **Soviet-invented names** such as *Kimyo* (chemistry), *Leninbek*, *Oktabr* (October) emerged, mirroring Russian examples like *Revo*, *Marlen* (cf. Russian *Revd*, *Martin*). After independence, a return to **national and Islamic identity** became evident. Names like *Barno*, *Imron*, *Temur*, *Dilnoza* gained popularity.

Discussions

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of national identity, **Uzbek naming practices have shifted once more**. There is a revival of **Turkic and national-historical names** (e.g. *Amir Temur*, *Shiroq*, *Barno*), alongside Islamic and globally recognized names (*Imran*, *Sabrina*, *Malika*, *Daniel*).

As in post-revolutionary Russia (cf. Nikonov, 1974), **ideological factors** once dictated naming policies in Soviet Uzbekistan. For example, names such as *Kommunar*, *Kimyo*, *Leninbek* appeared during the 20th century, reflecting ideological loyalty. In contemporary Uzbekistan, parents tend to consider **euphony, modernity, originality**, and **cultural prestige**. Names are often chosen to **honor ancestors**, reflect family history, or carry desirable meanings (*Shirin* – *sweet*, *Dilshod* – *joyful heart*, *Umid* – *hope*).

Conclusion

Uzbek naming traditions reflect a rich tapestry of **historical, religious, and cultural layers**. From **animistic and shamanistic origins** to **Islamic devotion and Soviet ideology**, and finally to **modern national identity**, Uzbek personal names embody the country's linguistic and cultural evolution. Like their Russian counterparts, Uzbeks pay great attention to **symbolism, heritage, and values** when naming a child. This practice not only serves as a **linguistic identifier** but also reinforces cultural continuity and collective memory. Understanding naming



traditions offers deep insight into the **mentality of the Uzbek people** and provides a reliable key to decoding broader cultural patterns.

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