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THE ETYMOLOGICAL, SEMANTIC, AND LINGUOCULTUROLOGICAL FEATURES OF HEALING PLANT NAMES IN THE UZBEK LANGUAGE

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Annotation: This article explores the etymological, semantic, and linguoculturological features of healing plant names (phytonyms) in the Uzbek language, analyzing their linguistic structure, cultural symbolism, cognitive motivation, and historical development. As essential carriers of ethnobotanical knowledge, Uzbek plant names embody centuries of human experience related to environment, traditional medicine, and folk beliefs. The study investigates lexical-semantic models, metaphorical motivation, symbolic associations, and the interaction between linguistic worldview and cultural identity. It further examines how ancient Turkic, Persian, and Arabic layers contributed to the formation of Uzbek phytonyms, as well as how semantic shifts occurred under the influence of folk taxonomy, healing practices, and cultural rituals. The linguistic interpretation of medicinal plant names demonstrates their multifunctionality: they operate not only as nominative units but also as cultural codes reflecting spiritual worldview, ecological behaviour, and collective memory. The article concludes that healing plant names in Uzbek are an indispensable component of the national linguistic picture of the world and represent an intellectual heritage that requires preservation and scientific study.

Keywords: phytonyms, Uzbek language, etymology, semantics, linguoculturology, folk medicine, cultural symbolism, linguistic worldview, ethnobotany.

Healing plant names in the Uzbek language represent a rich layer of lexical heritage that reflects the deep and multifaceted interaction between humans and nature. For centuries, Central Asian communities relied on wild and cultivated plants for healing, ritual practices, and daily life. This close relationship gave rise to a complex linguistic system in which each plant name carries information about its physical attributes, healing effects, symbolic associations, and cultural meanings. Uzbek phytonyms such as qizilmiya, isiriq, yalpiz, qoraqarag‘ay, zarcho‘p, chinnigul and many others serve not merely as labels but as cultural artifacts that preserve collective knowledge accumulated by generations. The linguistic features embedded in these names allow researchers to trace historical connections, cultural transformations, and cognitive mechanisms underlying folk categorization of plants.

From an etymological perspective, Uzbek plant names demonstrate multilayered origins that reflect the region’s long-standing linguistic contacts and cultural exchanges. A significant portion of medicinal phytonyms is rooted in Old Turkic, marking the earliest attempts of nomadic ancestors to classify flora based on observable characteristics. Terms such as yalpiz (mint) derive from ancient Turkic descriptive roots associated with freshness and aroma. Another group of names descends from Persian, a consequence of millennia-long cultural interaction, as seen in zarcho‘p, isiriq, or anjir. Arabic influence is also visible through religious and medical terminology introduced during the Islamic period, enriching semantic fields related to purification, healing, and spirituality. In more recent centuries, Russian and European scientific nomenclature contributed to the Uzbek lexicon, introducing new plant names or modifying existing ones. These etymological layers reveal how linguistic borrowing and

adaptation shaped a dynamic phytonymic system, illustrating the interplay between everyday practice, medicine, and scientific knowledge.

Semantically, healing plant names in Uzbek demonstrate a strong motivational foundation rooted in cultural observation and folk experience. Many names emerge from metaphorical extensions based on shape, color, taste, scent, or healing properties. For instance, qizilmiya ("red-root") reflects the characteristic color of the plant's underground part, while itog'iz ("dog's mouth") metaphorically describes the shape of the flower. Such semantic transparency facilitates intuitive categorization and helps community members quickly identify plants and their uses. Plants associated with purification, like isiriq, show semantic expansion where the name acquires connotations of spiritual cleansing, protection from evil, and ritualistic significance. Similarly, bitter plants used for digestive problems often contain lexical elements associated with "burning" or "sharpness," reflecting traditional medical beliefs about the relationship between taste and therapeutic effect. These semantic patterns indicate that Uzbek phytonyms function as cognitive tools that organize environmental knowledge and encode community-specific taxonomies.

Linguoculturologically, healing plant names shed light on spiritual imagination, mythological symbolism, and ritual practices that define Uzbek worldview. Many phytonyms reveal the animistic beliefs of ancient Turkic populations, for whom plants served as protectors or mediators between the human and spiritual worlds. The name isiriq, widely used in rituals to ward off evil spirits, exemplifies the connection between linguistic form and cultural practice. Burning this plant is not merely a medicinal act but a symbolic performance that conveys notions of purity, harmony, and spiritual safety. Another example is mushkuldon, whose name incorporates the semantic element "musk," indicating the plant's pleasant aroma and its association with luxury, beauty, and blessing. Such symbolic layering demonstrates how phytonyms embody both tangible and intangible cultural meanings.

Furthermore, healing plant names contribute to constructing the linguistic picture of the world in Uzbek culture. They reflect how people conceptualize nature, classify flora, understand healing processes, and perceive the relationship between body and environment. Through phytonyms, one can trace the evolution of ethnomedical practices: which plants were favored in traditional medicine, how knowledge was passed down through oral tradition, and how belief systems shaped treatment methods. For example, plants used to calm anxiety or bring rest often contain lexical elements associated with tranquility, sleep, or softness, pointing to the cultural understanding of psychological states. Conversely, strong-smelling or spicy plants carry names evoking heat, fire, or power, mirroring their perceived physiological effects. This demonstrates that phytonyms are created not through random naming but through structured conceptual models that reflect cultural logic and empirical observation.

In addition to cultural and symbolic considerations, healing plant names play a practical linguistic role. They facilitate communication within communities, especially in rural areas where scientific terminology is less prevalent. Folk names allow quick transmission of ethnomedical knowledge across generations, maintaining continuity between ancestral practices and modern healing traditions. These names often encode specific instructions for use—some indicating the part of the plant employed for treatment (root, leaf, flower), others hinting at seasonal timing or preparation method. Such linguistic encoding mirrors the educational function of phytonyms, demonstrating their contribution to cultural sustainability and resilience.

The study of Uzbek phytonyms also reveals the delicate balance between linguistic continuity and change. While many traditional names remain in use, globalizing influences introduce alternative nomenclature derived from Latin or Russian. This shift may potentially weaken the cultural significance of original terms, highlighting the need for linguistic preservation. Documentation and analysis of phytonyms therefore serve not only academic goals but also cultural and ecological ones: preserving linguistic diversity, safeguarding traditional medicine, and fostering environmental awareness. Linguoculturological research emphasizes that losing plant names may result in losing unique knowledge about their healing properties, ecological behavior, and symbolic meanings. Thus, the study of phytonyms becomes an important component of intangible cultural heritage protection.

Moreover, examining the etymological and semantic structures of healing plant names provides insights into the historical development of Uzbek vocabulary. Through phytonyms, one can trace migration patterns, trade routes, and intercultural contacts that influenced local medical knowledge. The introduction of exotic plants often resulted in hybrid names combining foreign lexical items with Uzbek morphological patterns, illustrating linguistic adaptation processes. Such hybridization also reflects the cultural openness of Central Asian societies, which historically integrated knowledge from Persia, India, China, and the Arab world. The linguistic traces of these interactions are preserved in plant names, forming a living archive of cross-cultural exchange.

Ultimately, healing plant names in the Uzbek language must be viewed as complex linguistic phenomena that integrate structural, semantic, historical, and cultural dimensions. Their multifunctionality lies in their ability to identify plants, convey therapeutic properties, express cultural values, and preserve ethnobotanical knowledge. They embody both scientific and spiritual worldviews, reflecting how traditional societies perceived health, nature, and the human body. The linguistic study of phytonyms highlights the profound interconnectedness between language and life experience, demonstrating how words become vessels for collective wisdom. As carriers of national identity, healing plant names hold tremendous significance for linguistics, anthropology, ethnobotany, and cultural studies.

Conclusion

The analysis of healing plant names in the Uzbek language demonstrates that phytonyms constitute a highly complex and culturally rich segment of the lexicon. Their etymological layers reflect centuries of interaction among Turkic, Persian, Arabic, and later European linguistic traditions, revealing historical patterns of migration, exchange, and cultural integration. Semantically, these names are grounded in observable botanical features, healing properties, symbolic associations, and practical medical knowledge, illustrating a deep connection between language and traditional ecological experience. The motivational mechanisms behind phytonyms—metaphor, metonymy, sensory perception, and functional categorization—show that the naming of plants is an intentional cognitive act shaped by cultural logic, not a random linguistic process.

From a linguoculturological perspective, healing plant names serve as repositories of collective memory, embodying spiritual beliefs, ritual practices, and the traditional worldview of the Uzbek people. They encode knowledge not only about physical healing but also about moral, emotional, and spiritual well-being, reflecting the holistic approach of folk medicine. Many

phytonyms preserve traces of ancient mythological thinking, beliefs about protection and purity, and culturally embedded interpretations of nature. Their continued use in household discourse, rituals, and herbal practices reinforces their role as carriers of cultural identity and linguistic heritage.

The study also highlights that phytonyms function as cognitive instruments that enable communities to categorize and interpret the natural environment in meaningful ways. Through plant names, one can reconstruct ethnobotanical systems of knowledge, understand how traditional healers perceived the human body, and trace cultural models of illness and recovery. These linguistic units bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and folk taxonomy, illustrating the coexistence of empirical observation and symbolic interpretation in traditional culture.

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