JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
Volume 3, Issue 5, October 2025 Online ISSN: 3030-3508
https://spaceknowladge.com

NATIONAL SYMBOLS IN IDIOMS: WHAT UZBEK AND RUSSIAN SAYINGS REVEAL ABOUT CULTURE

Zoyitova Dinora
Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, English faculty
2nd year master's student
Scientific supervisor: **Shamurodova Naima**
Samarkand State Institute of Foreign languages
Associate professor

MAQOLA MALUMOTI

MAQOLA TARIXI:
Received:29.10.2025
Revised: 30.10.2025
Accepted:31.10.2025

KALIT SO'ZLAR:
symbols, tradition, national, culture, significance, idioms, social, geographical, value, language, function, phenomena.

ANNOTATSIYA:

Language serves as a mirror reflecting the soul of a nation, and nowhere is this more evident than in idiomatic expressions. Idioms, as crystallized units of cultural wisdom, encapsulate centuries of historical experience, geographical reality, and social values. The national symbols embedded within Uzbek and Russian sayings offer profound insights into how these two distinct cultures perceive the world, prioritize values, and transmit knowledge across generations. This article examines the symbolic significance of national elements in both linguistic traditions, revealing the deep cultural codes that continue to shape contemporary identity and worldview.

Introduction

National symbols in idioms function as compressed narratives of collective experience. They represent more than mere linguistic ornamentation; they are cognitive frameworks through which speakers interpret reality and make sense of their social environment. As Lakoff and Johnson argue in their seminal work on conceptual metaphors, human thought

processes are fundamentally metaphorical, and the symbols we choose reveal our underlying conceptual systems.

In both Uzbek and Russian traditions, idioms serve as vehicles for cultural transmission, preserving ancient wisdom while adapting to contemporary contexts. The symbols within these expressions - whether animals, plants, natural phenomena, or cultural artifacts - are never arbitrary. They emerge from the specific historical, geographical, and social conditions that have shaped each nation's development.

Central Asian culture, particularly Uzbek tradition, places extraordinary emphasis on hospitality, and this value permeates the language. The idiom "Non-tuz hakki" (literally "the right of bread and salt") expresses a sacred obligation between guest and host. Bread (non) in Uzbek culture is not merely food but a symbol of life itself, treated with reverence and never placed upside down or thrown away.[1] This reflects the agricultural challenges of Central Asia and the historical importance of grain cultivation along the Silk Road.

The expression "Nonning kadri faqat och bilib oladi" (Only the hungry know the value of bread) demonstrates how scarcity shapes cultural values. Unlike Russian culture, where bread also holds significance but is more abundant, the Uzbek emphasis on bread reflects the historical realities of desert life and the preciousness of sustenance.

In a region where water determines survival, Uzbek idioms frequently feature water symbolism. "Suv ichgan kudugingga tupurma" (Don't spit in the well from which you drank) teaches gratitude and respect for sources of sustenance. This saying reveals the Central Asian understanding of water as a communal resource requiring protection and respect. The metaphor extends beyond literal wells to encompass all relationships and sources of support, reflecting a collectivist worldview where individual success depends on community resources.[2]

The camel, perfectly adapted to desert conditions, appears in several Uzbek expressions. "Tuya ming yil o'ylaydi" (The camel thinks for a thousand years) characterizes thoughtful, deliberate decision-making, valued in a culture where impulsive actions in harsh environments could prove fatal. This contrasts with the Russian bear symbolism, which emphasizes strength and sometimes clumsiness rather than patient deliberation.

The bear dominates Russian symbolic thinking, appearing in numerous proverbs and sayings. "Медведь на ухо наступил" (A bear stepped on one's ear) describes tone-deafness, while "Делить шкуру неубитого медведя" (To divide the skin of an unkilled bear) warns

against premature celebration.[3] The bear represents Russian strength, resilience, and sometimes awkwardness - a self-aware acknowledgment of national character traits.

This symbol connects to Russia's vast forests and the historical importance of fur trading. The bear also embodies the Russian concept of endurance through harsh conditions, a theme that resonates throughout Russian literature and historical consciousness.[4]

Russian idioms frequently reference winter, reflecting both geographical reality and historical experience. "Мороз не велик, да стоять не велит" (The frost is not great, but it won't let you stand still) acknowledges the harsh climate while celebrating the industriousness it demands.[5] Winter in Russian symbolism represents testing, purification, and the revelation of true character.

The expression "Зима спросит, что припасено летом" (Winter will ask what was stored in summer) emphasizes foresight and preparation, values essential for survival in Russia's climate. These sayings reveal how environment shapes cultural psychology, creating a national character marked by patience, stoicism, and long-term thinking.

Like Uzbek culture, Russian tradition venerates bread, but with different nuances. "Хлеб-соль" (bread and salt) represents hospitality, but the Russian emphasis includes the earth's fertility. "Хлеб всему голова" (Bread is the head of everything) elevates bread to supreme importance, reflecting Russia's agricultural heritage and the devastating famines that scarred national memory.[6]

The Russian soul (душа) frequently appears in idioms, often connected to vast spaces and depth of feeling. "Широка душа русская" (Wide is the Russian soul) connects emotional capacity to the expansive Russian landscape, suggesting that geography shapes psychology.

Uzbek idioms more consistently emphasize community interdependence. The saying "Bir so'z aytish oson, o'sha so'zni amalga oshirish qiyin" (It's easy to say one word, difficult to fulfill that word) stresses collective accountability and the weight of promises within a tight-knit community.[7] Russian idioms, while valuing community, more frequently acknowledge individual struggle and solitary endurance, as in "На Бога надейся, а сам не плошай" (Trust in God, but don't be negligent yourself).

Russian sayings often reflect a complex relationship with authority and a fatalistic worldview shaped by centuries of autocratic rule. "Утро вечера мудренее" (Morning is wiser than evening) suggests patience and acceptance of life's uncertainties.[8] Uzbek

idioms, influenced by Islamic philosophy and tribal traditions, more often emphasize human agency within divine providence.

The desert versus forest dichotomy profoundly shapes symbolic systems. Uzbek idioms treat water, bread, and shelter as precious resources requiring careful management and sharing. Russian expressions, emerging from a land of forests and rivers, more often address spiritual and emotional sustenance, though physical hardship remains a recurring theme.[9]

Conclusion

Despite modernization and globalization, these traditional idioms remain vital in contemporary speech, demonstrating their continued cultural relevance. Young Uzbeks still use expressions about bread and water, while Russians reference bears and winter, suggesting that national symbols retain psychological resonance even when material conditions have changed.

In Uzbekistan, the resurgence of national identity following independence has renewed interest in traditional sayings as markers of cultural authenticity. Language policy has emphasized Uzbek linguistic heritage, making idioms important vehicles for transmitting cultural values to new generations.[10]

In Russia, idioms serve as cultural anchors amid rapid social change, connecting contemporary Russians to their historical roots. The persistence of these expressions in digital communication, adapted to new contexts, demonstrates their flexibility and enduring significance.

REFERENCES

1. Abdurahimova L. (2025). Comparative study of phraseological units in English and Uzbek literature. International conference of innovations in language teaching, learning and assessment. 535-536p.
2. Apresyan, Y. D. (1995). Integral Description of Language and Systemic Lexicography. Moscow: Languages of Russian Culture.
3. Buranova M. (2020). Linguistic analysis of reading and teaching reading by literary translation. Journal of community and innovation. 501-505p.
4. Dobrovol'skij, D., & Piirainen, E. (2005). Figurative Language: Cross-cultural and Cross-linguistic Perspectives. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

5. Karimov, I. A. (1998). Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century. Tashkent: Uzbekistan Publishing House.

6. Mirziyoeva, S. M. (2019). National symbolism in Uzbek phraseology. Uzbek Language and Literature, 3, 45-52.

7. Nurmonov, A. (2016). Uzbek Proverbs and Sayings: Cultural Heritage. Tashkashi: Fan Publishing House.

8. Shamuradova N. (2021). Comparative study of English and Uzbek proverbs (usage of parts of body). International journal of art.

9. Wierzbicka, A. (1992). Semantics, Culture, and Cognition: Universal Human Concepts in Culture-Specific Configurations. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

10. Zoyitova D.D. (2025). The Influence of Mentality on Idiom Translation from English to Uzbek and Russian. International Journal of Artificial Intelligence. 713-716p.