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# COGNITIVE FOUNDATIONS AND SEMANTIC MOTIVATIONS OF HYDRONYMIC NOMINATION IN THE UZBEK LANGUAGE

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### Abstract

This article investigates the cognitive and cultural mechanisms underlying the nomination process of hydronyms in the Uzbek language. Viewing toponymic nomination as a complex interaction between the naming subject (human) and the named object (water body), the study traces the historical evolution of Uzbek hydronyms from generic geographical appellatives to specific proper nouns. The findings demonstrate that the development of agricultural and irrigation culture in Central Asia served as the primary catalyst for hydronymic specification. Using a structural-semantic framework, the research analyzes how physical attributes, anthropocentric factors, and local flora/fauna operate as core naming motivations. The study concludes that hydronyms are not arbitrary labels but crystallizations of centuries of human empirical experience and environmental interaction.

**Keywords:** Cognitive onomastics, hydronymy, semantic motivation, nomination theory, agricultural linguistics, appellatives, Uzbek language.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In modern linguistics, the process of naming (nomination) is recognized as a profound cognitive act reflecting the nominator's empirical experience and spatial perception. According to Superanskaya (1973), the emergence of a specific name for an object or phenomenon is unimaginable without the foundation of human experience. In toponymy, this manifests as a complex subject-object paradigm where the "nominator" (subject) assigns a proper noun to a geographical entity (object) based on specific motivating features.

The Uzbek hydronymic system provides a rich landscape for analyzing these nominative processes. Historically, the transition of Central Asian societies toward advanced agricultural and irrigation cultures necessitated a highly differentiated vocabulary for water objects. While early linguistic studies (Gak, 1977; Begmatov, 1985) have touched upon general lexical layers, a focused structural-semantic analysis of how agricultural practices dictated the specific motivations behind Uzbek hydronyms remains underrepresented in global onomastic discourse.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the cognitive principles of hydronymic nomination in the Uzbek language, specifically tracing the evolutionary shift from generic terms to complex proper nouns driven by agricultural expansion.

### 2. METHODS

This research employs a descriptive-analytical methodology integrated with cognitive and historical-lexicological analysis.

**Data Collection:** The corpus of hydronyms was extracted from historical and contemporary geographical data of Uzbekistan, specifically focusing on the Namangan, Bukhara, and Tashkent regions. **Cognitive-Semantic Analysis:** The data was analyzed to identify the "motivational base" of the hydronyms—

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determining exactly which physical or cultural attributes the nominator (subject) selected to name the water object.

Diachronic Approach: The study traced the evolutionary pathway of generic geographical terms (appellatives) transitioning into capitalized proper nouns.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Evolution from Appellatives to Proper Nouns

The data indicates that the initial stages of hydronymic formation in Uzbek were inherently simplistic. Early human populations utilized generic appellatives (common nouns) that merely indicated the type of water body without differentiating it from others.

Words such as Ariq (canal), Ko‘l (lake), To‘g‘on (dam), and Soy (stream) functioned simultaneously as the object's descriptor and its specific name. Over time, due to the critical necessity of spatial orientation, these generic terms linguistically solidified into proper hydronyms. Contemporary examples validating this evolution include Arna (a hydronym in the Shofirkon district of Bukhara), Anhor (Tashkent city), and Buloq (Pop district of Namangan).

#### 3.2. Agricultural Expansion and Semantic Differentiation

As agricultural culture expanded, the quantity and types of water objects (particularly artificial irrigation structures) proliferated. This required nominators to select specific distinguishing features (motivations) to differentiate them. The study identifies the following primary semantic motivations:

**Anthropocentric/Historical Motivation:** Hydronyms named after the individuals or ethnic groups who built or inhabited the area around the water source. Examples: Xonariq (Khan's canal - Chust district), Urisariq (Russian canal - Uchqo‘rg‘on), Qalmoqariq (Kalmyk canal - Chortoq).

**Physical/Geographical Motivation:** Names derived from the shape, location, or structure of the water body.

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Biological Motivation: Names derived from the flora and fauna surrounding the water source.

### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that the nomination of Uzbek hydronyms is a highly motivated, conscious cognitive process. The nominator does not assign names randomly; rather, they operate within a framework of generalization and specification. As noted by Begmatov (1985), just as abstraction is necessary for common nouns, the individualization of objects is a vital existential necessity for proper nouns.

The study confirms that the "Subject-Object" interaction is heavily mediated by the motive of nomination. The agricultural reliance on irrigation in Central Asia forced the Uzbek language to develop a highly granular toponymic system. The transition of words like Anhor from a mere descriptor of a large canal into an official, capitalized proper noun reflecting a specific geographical entity demonstrates the diachronic lexicalization process driven by societal needs.

### 5. CONCLUSION

The nomination of hydronyms in the Uzbek language is fundamentally a product of long-term historical evolution and human environmental interaction. Empirical data from the Namangan, Bukhara, and Tashkent regions substantiates this trajectory: foundational appellatives that originally served merely as common nouns for water objects (e.g., *Ariq* [canal], *Buloq* [spring], *Anhor* [large canal]) progressively lexicalized into independent, capitalized proper nouns (e.g., the *Anhor* canal in Tashkent or the *Arna* hydronym in Shofirkon). This shift from simple appellative descriptors to complex, motivated proper nouns was necessitated by the sophisticated agricultural and irrigation practices of Central Asia. Specifically, the proliferation of artificial irrigation systems catalyzed the need for precise spatial

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differentiation, leading nominators to attach distinct anthropocentric and ethno-historical identifiers to generic terms.

This is evidenced by the corpus data, which features specific culturally motivated hydronyms such as *Xonariq* (Khan's canal; indicating political/administrative ownership), *Urisariq* (Russian canal; indicating historical demographic shifts), and *Qalmoqariq* (Kalmyk canal; reflecting ethnic settlements). Ultimately, the semantic motivations behind these names — whether ethnic, historical, or physical — serve as highly specific linguistic archives of the nominator's worldview and the region's agricultural history. Future research should aim to map these semantic motivations and lexical transitions across broader Turkic-speaking regions to establish macro-typological onomastic patterns.

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