

**NATIONAL AND ETHNIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OASIS
ETHNOGRAPHISMS. ETHNOGRAPHIC LACUNAE**

Beknazarov Nodir Beknazar ugli

Abstract: The article examines the ethnographic vocabulary of the Sangzor–Zomin oasis, focusing on its linguistic, cultural, and historical features within the broader context of Uzbek ethnolinguistics. It explores the complex relationship between ethnographisms and dialects, discussing scholarly views on their classification and boundaries. The study emphasizes that ethnographisms serve as a vital source for enriching the national language while preserving the cultural identity of the people. Special attention is given to the origins of certain lexical items, their evolution from dialectal forms, and their reflection in ancient Turkic monuments such as *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*. Furthermore, the paper discusses ethnographic lacunae — lexical gaps arising due to cultural and linguistic asymmetry between languages — as one of the key challenges in translation and intercultural communication. The research highlights the importance of documenting and preserving regional ethnographic lexicon as an integral part of the intangible cultural heritage of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: ethnographisms; dialectology; linguistic identity; Sangzor–Zomin oasis; ethnographic lacunae; Uzbek language; cultural heritage; ethnolinguistics.

Introduction. Language and culture are inseparable phenomena that shape the worldview and identity of every nation. The historical development of a language reflects the spiritual, social, and cultural evolution of the people who speak it. In this regard, ethnographisms — lexical units that embody the material and spiritual culture of an ethnic group — serve as valuable linguistic and cultural resources for understanding the ethnolinguistic worldview of a nation. The study of ethnographisms provides important insights into the relationship between language and traditional life, reflecting ancient customs, rituals, and values preserved within the collective memory of the people.

In Uzbek linguistics, research on ethnographisms has intensified in recent decades, with growing attention to their role in enriching the literary language and preserving regional linguistic identity. However, there remains a lack of consensus among scholars concerning the relationship between ethnographisms and dialects. While some researchers consider ethnographisms to be a subset of dialectal vocabulary, others emphasize their broader cultural and thematic dimensions that extend beyond purely linguistic boundaries.

This study focuses on the ethnographic lexicon of the Sangzor–Zomin oasis — a region notable for its historical coexistence of Uzbek and Tajik populations — and explores its unique linguistic and cultural features. By analyzing the origins, classification, and semantic evolution of these lexical items, the research aims to highlight how regional ethnographisms reflect both national identity and cross-cultural interaction. The paper also addresses the phenomenon of ethnographic lacunae — culturally specific lexical gaps that pose significant challenges in translation and intercultural communication — as a crucial aspect of linguistic diversity and cultural preservation.

METHOD. The research is based on a qualitative linguistic and ethnolinguistic analysis of the ethnographic vocabulary found in the Sangzor–Zomin oasis. The primary method applied in this study is descriptive and comparative linguistic analysis, aimed at identifying, classifying, and interpreting ethnographisms in relation to dialectal, cultural, and historical contexts. The study examines both oral and written linguistic data to trace the diachronic and synchronic development of regional ethnographic terms.

Field observations and linguistic interviews were conducted with local speakers, particularly elderly informants residing in rural areas of the Sangzor and Zomin regions, in order to collect authentic lexical material. The collected data were analyzed in light of existing dialectological and ethnolinguistic research, particularly the works of A.T. Qaydar, A. Ishayev, and other Central Asian linguists who have contributed to the study of ethnographic vocabulary.

Comparative and historical methods were employed to determine the origin, structure, and semantic evolution of selected ethnographisms. Lexical units were also compared with equivalents in other Turkic languages (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Karakalpak, Tatar, etc.) to identify shared ethnolinguistic features and regional variations. In addition, the research utilized elements of cultural linguistics and lacunology to analyze ethnographic lacunae — culturally specific lexical gaps that lack direct equivalents in other languages.

The methodology thus combines descriptive, comparative, and ethnolinguistic approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how regional ethnographisms function as markers of cultural identity and as elements of the intangible cultural heritage of the Uzbek people.

RESULTS. It is well known that the history of language and the history of a people are closely interconnected. In every nation’s language, various linguistic signs reflect its perception of the world and its linguistic image of reality. Written monuments, archaeological findings, ancient artifacts, and traditional customs all hold great importance in the history of any people. However, A.T. Qaydar includes them among what he calls “a thousand and one images taken from the life of an ethnos.”

According to the scholar, “The language of an ethnos reflects not only the ethnos itself but also the natural environment it creates, its social relations, its inner world, its mysteries, joys, and sorrows. Language embodies the concepts and assumptions concerning insults and laughter, dreams, understanding and knowledge, needs, and all the phenomena that occur within it; thus, language is the mirror of the ethnos[1]”.

Based on this, it should be noted that ethnographisms are among the key sources that enrich any language. However, today there exist various scholarly approaches to interpreting the concepts of ethnographism and dialect. Some dialectologists argue that ethnographisms found in dialects constitute a part of dialectisms and therefore should be studied as dialectal phenomena that cannot be separated from them. Other scholars, on the contrary, maintain that ethnographisms should be examined independently of dialectal studies. In particular, the Russian linguist F. P. Filip states that “it is not appropriate to include ethnographic terminology in the Dictionary of Russian Folk Dialects, since such terms are the subject matter of thematic dictionaries[2]”.

In recent years, the study of ethnographisms as an independent field within Uzbek linguistics has been developing rapidly. Similar to international linguistic trends, there are differing views among Uzbek scholars regarding the relationship between ethnographisms and dialects. Since the 1950s, the field of dialectology in Uzbekistan has progressed significantly, with numerous studies devoted to the investigation of regional dialects and local vernaculars.

Within the framework of dialectological research, the topic of ethnographisms has also been addressed to varying degrees. In particular, the dialectologist A. Ishayev proposed classifying ethnographisms into the following groups:

(a) ethnographic words and terms used in the literary language — literary ethnographisms; (b) those common to both the literary language and dialects — literary-dialectal ethnographisms; (c) and those found exclusively in dialects — ethnographic dialectisms[3].

Partially agreeing with the scholar's view, it can be argued that ethnographisms, unlike dialectal words, occupy a more prominent position within the general literary language. However, most regional ethnographisms still conform to dialectal principles in terms of phonetics, morphology, and lexis. For this reason, they may appropriately be termed dialectal ethnographisms. At the same time, important distinctions can be observed between the two categories: dialects are studied mainly from a territorial and synchronic perspective, whereas ethnographisms are analyzed thematically and diachronically.

The famous traveler A. Vámbéry connects the origin of the word ko'lik (vehicle, means of transport) with the word ko'lanka meaning "shadow," suggesting that it might have originally referred to "a person with shelter or shade." However, the hypothesis proposed by other scholars — that the root of ko'lik derives from ko'l (köl), meaning "to add" or "to load" — appears to be more convincing. In my view, the term ko'lik was initially used to denote pack animals used for carrying loads. Moreover, there may be an etymological connection between the morpheme ko' in the verb ko'tarmoq ("to lift, to raise") and that in the noun ko'lik.

A part of the ethnographic lexicon of the Sangzor–Zomin region also belongs to the general literary language, and many of these words are used with the same meaning throughout most regions of Uzbekistan. For instance, the ethnographism sovchi (matchmaker) is a widely recognized term used uniformly across all provinces. Similarly, the term o'tov (traditional nomadic tent, also called qora uy in the studied area) may have different regional names, yet it is understood everywhere in the same general ethnographic sense.

At times, researchers tend to use the concepts of ethnographism and dialect interchangeably. In our view, however, dialects primarily possess territorial and synchronic significance. For example, words such as chakki (strained yogurt), shoti, zangi (ladder), and kurra/qurra (donkey foal) belong to the dialectal layer of the language. Ethnographisms, on the other hand, are more closely tied to ethnic and cultural realities; they are characteristic of particular social groups and generally have a diachronic nature. Ethnographisms bear distinct cultural coloring that reflects the material and spiritual life of the people.

Dialects do not have a standardized literary form, whereas many ethnographisms do. For instance, suyunchi (gift for good news), qudachaqirdi (the custom of inviting in-laws), mehmonkeldi (guest-reception ritual), beshikto'y (cradle ceremony), and to'yona (wedding gift) are considered literary ethnographisms. In contrast, qo'noq, tuvcha, yelqada, boshniyoz (kalniyoz), qarshiquda, and baharjurt belong to the regional ethnographisms of the Sangzor–Zomin area.

As noted by the Kazakh scholar A.T. Qaydarov, ethnographisms are "special names that reflect the everyday and linguistic characteristics of a people — including household items, folk economy, customs and traditions, rituals and beliefs, dwellings, clothing, food, and family relations — as used within a particular region." This view fully supports our understanding of the ethno-linguistic nature of ethnographisms[4].

Due to various social and economic factors, certain crafts and traditional occupations gradually disappear, and the vocabulary associated with them becomes rare, eventually attaining the status of cultural heritage. As a result, dialectal words related to those professions often transform into ethnographisms. For instance, terms associated with the craft of carpet weaving (oʻrmaksozlik) were studied as dialectal vocabulary until the 1950s–1980s, since a considerable part of the population actively practiced this trade. People wove carpets from cotton and wool and sold them in local markets. Families with daughters, in particular, used to weave carpets and embroider various handicrafts for years as part of the bridal dowry preparations.

In recent decades, however, such textile-related crafts have survived only in remote villages. Consequently, like many other disappearing traditions, they have entered the ethnographic domain and are now regarded as part of intangible cultural heritage. The terminology belonging to these crafts has thus acquired the status of ethnographisms. For example, words related to weaving — orqov, qilich, digdika, gʻojari, qoqma, boʻyov, sabov choʻp, and urchiq — are now considered ethnographisms. Moreover, numerous terms related to tent-making (oʻtovsozlik), horse equipment, animal husbandry, and traditional foods are likewise undergoing the same linguistic transformation into ethnographisms.

DISCUSSION. The research revealed that several words and expressions characteristic of the Sangzor–Zomin ethnographic lexicon are also used in the same form and meaning in the languages of related Turkic peoples.

Some scholars divide dialectal words into two categories: pure dialectisms and ethnographic dialectisms. According to their interpretation, ethnographic dialectisms are the local names of objects specific to a given area, whereas pure dialectisms are the local names of objects, phenomena, or concepts that exist in the common national language. From this perspective, the local variants of words that refer to concepts already present in the national language cannot be considered ethnographisms.

For example, the word beshik (cradle) and the items associated with it exist both in many Uzbek dialects and in the literary language. Likewise, the custom of inviting the close relatives of the bride and groom to a post-wedding gathering is common among all Uzbek communities. In some local dialects, the literary word chorlamoq (to invite) has its own regional variant, such as kuyav chəqirdi (“the groom invited”).

Although numerous scholars have expressed valuable opinions regarding the characteristics, similarities, and differences between ethnographisms and dialects, many unresolved issues still remain. While the existing views often complement one another, certain contradictions can also be observed.

In general, ethnographisms represent one of the most important sources enriching the Uzbek language. However, some dialectologists’ refusal to recognize ethnographisms within dialects as a distinct linguistic category has led to this significant lexical wealth being overlooked. This situation primarily arises from the inability to clearly define the boundaries of ethnographisms and to distinguish their unique features — particularly the failure to differentiate between ethnographisms used in the literary language and those occurring in local dialects.

Most ethnographisms trace their origins back to ancient times. Some of these terms are found in early written monuments, notably in Mahmud al-Kashgari’s *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*, and the continued use of several of them in modern speech serves as further evidence of their historical depth and cultural continuity.

When discussing the distinctive features of the Sangzor–Zomin ethnographisms, it is important to note that most of them are based primarily on the Kipchak dialectal layer of the Uzbek language. This, in turn, demonstrates the linguistic proximity between the Uzbek language of this region and the languages of other Turkic peoples belonging to the Kipchak group — such as Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Karakalpak, Tatar, and Nogai.

As shown in the comparative data, a number of ethnographic and dialectal words from the Sangzor–Zomin region are also used in the literary languages of these related Turkic nations. However, these words are either absent in the Uzbek literary language or are replaced by other lexical equivalents. For instance, the ethnographism *kiyit* — referring to gifts presented by the bride’s family to the guests accompanying the groom’s side after the wedding — is found in the Kazakh, Karakalpak, and Kyrgyz languages with the same form and meaning. In the Uzbek literary language, however, the equivalent term *sarpo* (or *qudasarpo*) is used instead. Field observations have revealed the existence of many such words that illustrate deep-rooted historical and cultural ties among the Turkic-speaking peoples.

For thousands of years, the Sangzor–Zomin region has been inhabited by both nomadic pastoralists and settled agricultural communities. In recent times, international organizations have shown increasing interest in the preservation of such elements of our intangible cultural heritage. The organization of the international “Boysun Bahori” (Spring of Boysun) folklore and ethnographic festival serves as a vivid example of this growing attention.

Although the process of globalization today contributes to the gradual disappearance of unique customs, traditions, and rituals, many of these practices have been preserved in the remote villages of the oasis. Moreover, the local population—both young and old—demonstrates a strong inclination toward safeguarding and continuing these ancestral traditions. This can be observed in their active participation and enthusiastic engagement in various cultural events, traditional games, wrestling (*kurash*), *kupkari* (horseback competition), and other communal celebrations that reflect their enduring ethnographic heritage.

In Sangzor–Zomin, when you visit someone’s home, the elders will almost always begin by asking about your lineage and ancestry. For this reason, many people make an effort to know their clan and trace back seven generations. This principle is also strictly observed in marriage and kinship relations. People inquire about each other’s lineage, paying attention to whether one’s ancestry is “pure.” Among the customs of the oasis, there are several interesting traditions related to marriage. In particular, among relatives and villagers, there is a custom called “Qoyillashish.”

According to this custom, two heads of households agree to become in-laws while their children are still very young. Sometimes, even infants are betrothed to each other. In such cases, traditions like “Beshikkerti” (cradle engagement), “Quloqtishlar,” “Etakjirtidi,” and “Belgi qildi” are practiced.

Among the people of the oasis, there is also a marriage tradition called “Sarorat.” According to this custom, a man whose wife has passed away marries his deceased wife’s sister. Levirate and Sarorat marriages took root deeply in the community due to economic and family necessities, as they prevented the division of inherited property.

In addition, the “Qarshi quda” (mutual in-law) custom is also widespread among the oasis population. In this tradition, two families give and take daughters in marriage from each other. Among poorer families, “Qarshi qudashilik” allowed them to agree mutually, considering their

financial situations: they prepared the bride's dowry together but waived the payment of the bride price. This custom also existed in other regions — for example, in the Fergana Valley, it was known as “Qaychi quda.”

If an engaged boy and girl became pregnant before marriage, there was a custom during their wedding ceremony where a donkey saddle was tied to the groom's back while the marriage vows were read.

In addition, since a large portion of the oasis population was engaged in animal husbandry, many related beliefs, traditions, and rituals have been preserved to this day. One of these is totemism.

Totemism (from the Ojibwe word “ototem” in North America, meaning “his kin” or “his clan”) is one of the earliest forms of primitive religious belief.

The herders of the oasis (as well as herders in other regions and related peoples) regarded the wolf as a totemic animal. In fact, for Turkic peoples since ancient times, animals such as the wolf and the deer were considered sacred creatures.

In our view, the perception of the wolf as a totem has changed somewhat in modern times. Today, herders both fear and revere the wolf as a divine being — once the main “enemy” responsible for attacks on their livestock. According to local beliefs, various parts of the wolf's body were thought to protect people from spirits, demons, and evil forces.

Even today, many parents in the oasis name their sons Bo‘riboy, Boybo‘ri, Bo‘ri, Bo‘ribek, Bo‘ritosh, or Bo‘rixol, wishing for them to grow up as strong and brave as a wolf.

Ethnographic lacunae (from Latin lacuna — “gap,” “void,” or “hollow space”) are considered an important linguocultural term that holds a special place within both national and dialectal ethnographic expressions.

According to G. Bikova, “the phenomenon of lacuna arises as a result of incomplete equivalence in the denotative systems of different languages — that is, when certain names or phenomena existing in one of the compared languages are absent in the other[5]”

Simply put, a lacuna refers to lexical items or units that exist in one language but have no equivalent in another. These factors represent one of the major challenges in modern translation and translation studies. In particular, the translation of cultural (ethnographic) lacunae poses a distinct level of complexity. As Y. A. Sorokin notes:

“Today, it is no longer necessary to speak about the mutual complementarity of lacunology and translation studies. Nevertheless, the former should be expected to provide effective impulses for solving the problems of the latter”[6].

Conclusion. In summary, the study of ethnographic lacunae reveals the deep interconnection between language, culture, and national identity. Lacunae serve as linguistic indicators of cultural uniqueness, highlighting concepts, traditions, and worldviews that may not exist in other languages. Their presence demonstrates that translation is not merely a linguistic process but also a cultural one, requiring sensitivity to the historical and social context of both source and target languages. Therefore, addressing ethnographic lacunae effectively is essential for achieving not only linguistic accuracy but also cultural authenticity in translation.

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