

# THE PLANT LIFE IN THE ONOMASTIC WORLDVIEW OF THE TATARS

## *A VIDA VEGETAL NA COSMOVISÃO ONOMÁSTICA DOS TÁRTAROS*

## *LA VIDA VEGETAL EN LA COSMOVISIÓN ONOMÁSTICA DE LOS TÁRTAROS*

Gulshat Raisovna GALIULLINA<sup>1</sup>

Gulfiya Kamilovna KHADIEVA<sup>2</sup>

Zilya Mullakhmetovna MUKHAMETGALIEVA<sup>3</sup>

Margarita Emilievna DUBROVINA<sup>4</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The onomastic worldview reflects the most important aspects of culture and history, world outlook and psychology of the people. The meaning of some onomastic units contains hidden informational layers of archaic mythological thinking. One of the most significant groups among those units includes names of the plant world. This article is aimed at demonstrating the specificity of the plant life representation in the onomastic worldview of the Tatars. The analysis involves interpretation of the meaning of toponyms and anthroponyms retaining repercussions of beliefs of the ancient Turks. The analysis was carried out on linguistic and culturological material by means of a complex of interdisciplinary methods and techniques. The conducted analysis revealed that the tradition of using names of flora as proper nouns traces its origin to the archaic forms of mythology, which conceived a tree as the supreme god's symbol. The ancient naïve views of the Turks were transmitted to the modern onomastics of the Tatars. Due to its stability, the toponymic system retains the earliest views. In the anthroponymic system, despite the fact that many of ancient anthroponyms grew out of use, traditions and motives of naming continued when borrowing anthroponyms from other languages

**KEYWORDS:** The Tatar Language, Onomastics, Linguoculturology, Ethnoculture, Phytonymy

**RESUMO:** *A cosmóvisão onomástica reflete os aspectos mais importantes da cultura e da história, visão de mundo e psicologia das pessoas. O significado de algumas unidades onomásticas contém camadas informativas ocultas do pensamento mitológico arcaico. Um dos grupos mais significativos entre essas unidades inclui nomes do mundo vegetal. O objetivo deste artigo é demonstrar a especificidade da representação da vida vegetal na visão de mundo onomástica dos tártaros. A análise envolve a interpretação do significado dos topônimos e antropônimos, retendo repercussões das crenças dos antigos turcos. A*

---

<sup>1</sup> Doctor of Philology, Professor of the Department of Tatar Linguistics, Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication, <sup>1</sup>Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia, [caliullina@list.ru](mailto:caliullina@list.ru), id Scopus [56177938300](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6923-2190), ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6923-2190>,

<sup>2</sup> Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor of the Department of Tatar Linguistics, Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication, <sup>1</sup>Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia, [gul-khadieva@yandex.ru](mailto:gul-khadieva@yandex.ru), 89050384996, id Scopus 57192110568, ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5316-4947>,

<sup>3</sup> without a degree, postgraduate student of the Department of Tatar Linguistics, Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication, <sup>1</sup>Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia, [zilyu@mail.ru](mailto:zilyu@mail.ru), ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5763-6227>,

<sup>4</sup> Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor of the Department of Turkic Philology, Faculty of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg State University, <sup>2</sup>St Petersburg University, St Petersburg, Russia, [maggydu@rambler.ru](mailto:maggydu@rambler.ru), ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7170-6217>

*análise foi realizada em material linguístico e cultural por meio de um complexo de métodos e técnicas interdisciplinares. A análise conduzida revelou que a tradição de usar nomes de flora como nomes próprios remonta às formas arcaicas da mitologia, que concebiam uma árvore como o símbolo do deus supremo. As antigas visões ingênuas dos turcos foram transmitidas à moderna onomástica dos tártaros. Devido à sua estabilidade, o sistema toponímico retém as primeiras visualizações. No sistema antroponímico, apesar do fato de que muitos dos antropônimos antigos perderam o uso, as tradições e os motivos de nomeação continuaram ao se emprestar antropônimos de outras línguas*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Língua tártara, Onomástica, Linguoculturologia, Etnocultura, Fitonímia*

**RESUMEN:** *La cosmovisión onomástica refleja los aspectos más importantes de la cultura y la historia, la perspectiva del mundo y la psicología de las personas. El significado de algunas unidades onomásticas contiene capas informativas ocultas del pensamiento mitológico arcaico. Uno de los grupos más importantes entre esas unidades incluye nombres del mundo vegetal. Este artículo tiene como objetivo demostrar la especificidad de la representación de la vida vegetal en la cosmovisión onomástica de los tártaros. El análisis implica la interpretación del significado de topónimos y antropónimos conservando las repercusiones de las creencias de los antiguos turcos. El análisis se realizó sobre material lingüístico y culturoológico mediante un complejo de métodos y técnicas interdisciplinares. El análisis realizado reveló que la tradición de utilizar nombres de flora como nombres propios tiene su origen en las formas arcaicas de la mitología, que concibió un árbol como símbolo del dios supremo. Las antiguas ideas ingenuas de los turcos se transmitieron a la onomástica moderna de los tártaros. Debido a su estabilidad, el sistema toponímico conserva las primeras vistas. En el sistema antroponímico, a pesar del hecho de que muchos de los antropónimos antiguos dejaron de usarse, las tradiciones y los motivos de los nombres continuaron cuando se tomaron prestados antropónimos de otros idiomas.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Lengua tártara, Onomástica, Linguoculturología, Etnocultura, Fitonímia*

## **Introduction**

The people's culture, world outlook, psychology, and cultural mentality are represented in the onomastic worldview in all its manifestations. Researchers emphasize the inextricable connection of onomastics with a number of other sciences, and its doubtless extralinguistic nature. Onomatologists state that "any name formation assumes the cause, the reason, and the motive of the naming unit. The motives of the name are the complex of cause-and-effect links represented in the names of different types and accessible to different extents for observation and studying" (SUPERANSKAYA ET AL., 2007). The nominative process is the process permanently accompanying the human beings' world cognition; and the governing motives of naming are identical for all of mankind. The singularity of each language system consists notably in specific features of combinations of the meaning of

language units united in one whole semantic worldview. Central to the process of naming proper nouns is the mythopoetic world model which contains some information layers of archaic thinking. The survey of onomastic database reveals that it contains the layers made up of mythologically marked units with noticeable number of names denoting flora among them.

Researchers of the Turkic onomastics have quite often highlighted that aspect. Thus, plenty of examples can be found in the publication “Comparative-historical Grammar Book of the Turkic Languages” (2006), where G.F. Blagova represents the study of the anthroponymic system as projection of cosmological perceptions of the ancient Turks (BLAGOVA, 2006).

In the Turkic onomastics a number of aspects of the issue in question are the subject of studies by K.M. Musaev, G.F. Sattarov, F.G. Khisametdinova, A.G. Shaykhulov, Y.N. Isaev, and others. In the Tatar onomastics this subject is partly under consideration in researches by G.R. Galiullina (GALIULLINA ET AL., 2001), I.K. Yerbulatova (Yerbulatova et al., 2019), A.M. Ismagilova (ISMAGILOVA ET AL., 2016), Kh.Kh. Kuzmina (Khatipovna Kuzmina et al., 2019), I.I. Mukhametova (MUKHAMETOVA ET AL., 2019), G.K. Khadieva (KAMILOVNA KHADIEVA ET AL., 2019), A.S. Yusupova (YUSUPOVA ET AL., 2014), and others. Despite this fact, studying the specificity of representation of the Tatar people’s world perception in onomastic units involving flora continues to be a relevant objective.

The information represented in this article is assumed to be of interest for researchers dealing with the issues in linguistics, onomastics, linguoculturology, ethnolinguistics, and history of language.

## **Methods**

The analysis of the factual material in terms of the scientific paradigm in question is conducted through the use of some linguistic methods and techniques. Being the most promising, the descriptive methods (studying the factual material, generalization, interpretation and classification), the structural and word-forming method (investigation of ways and means of naming), the etymological method (for revealing the primary nature of naming), the method of seme and motivational analysis, and some elements of component and conceptual analysis are used.

## Results and Discussion

The plant life in the Tatars' onomastics reflects the animistic conceptualization of the ancient ancestors and traces its origin to the pagan list of names. Two layers of onomastic lexis are under consideration: anthroponyms and toponyms.

The tradition of using the terms of the plant kingdom as proper names traces back to archaic forms of mythology, which conceived a tree as sacred, as the supreme god's symbol. Plants are associated with birth and death; they are the symbols of human life. In the ancient Turkic mythological view of the world, likewise in the world mythological systems, the world tree is the universal spatial model, combining three spaces: upper (the world of heaven), middle, and lower (underworld). A tree, along with elements of the vegetable world, is the symbol of life energy, beauty, youth, solidity, physical vigor and strength.

Names of various kinds of trees are the most favourable to be used in the Tatar toponymy. Naming was mainly focused on the kinds of trees growing on the territory inhabited by the Tatars. Thus, it is reflected in the names of such villages on the territory of the Republic of Tatarstan as *Chyrshy* "spruce", *Naratly* "pine", formed by the nouns with the affix *-ly*.

Among Tatar localities, *kaen* "birch" is the most used name. The ancient Turks used to divinize the birch: legends, epics, folklore of many Turkic peoples retain this folk belief (Blagova, 2006). Y.N. Isaev states that the Chuvash onomastics reflects the ancient legends related to the birch as well (ISAEV, 2013). Even nowadays the attitude of the Tatars to the birch is very specific: on the one hand, one should not plant a birch in close propinquity to the house for it can bring disaster, on the other hand, a birch growing outside one's land makes wishes come true and is the symbol of feminine beauty. In ancient manuscripts there is a legend, according to which, Prophet Mohammed sent three of his companions – sahab – to Volga Bulgaria to promote the spread of Islam. They reached Bulgar as healers and cured many patients. Khan Aydar had a daughter, Tuybike, she was badly ill. Aydar Khan asked them to cure his daughter. After examining her, the sahab stated that her treatment would require a birch bath broom made of a birch grown of a staff. Upon saying a prayer, sahab Gabdrakhman planted his staff into the ground. Water streamed therefrom and a birch grew up at once. Using that water and the bath broom made of that birch they cured the Khan's daughter. That legend is fraught with the motive of the holiness of birches. On the territory of modern Tatarstan, there are several localities with names designating "the place where birches grow" (the village *Kaensar* in the Arskiy district, the villages *Yaña Kaensar*, *Iske*

*Kaensar* in the Kukmorskiy district, the village *Kaensar* in the Atninskiy district, the villages *Kaenlyk* in the Aktanyshskiy, Buinskiy, Kukmorskiy districts), formed from *kaen* “birch” and the affix *-sar* (Irani relict with a collective meaning, designating a cluster of something) or the affix *-lyk* – the Tatar word-formation affix with the meaning “place, lodgment”.

*Imän* “oak” is one of the most sacred trees, many symbolic layers being associated with it by the peoples neighboring the Tatars. The oak is the symbol of firmness, strength, reliability. The basic mythopoetic meaning can be traced in the mythological thinking of the Tatars as well. *Imän* “oak” is the symbol of virile strength, wisdom and knowledge. In the historical anthroponymycon of the Tatars there are masculine names derived from the word *imän* “oak”: *Imän*, *Imänkol*. Along with such anthroponyms, formed from names of various trees (*Baitiräk*, *Zäikuak*, *Ishtiräk*, *Yukä*, and others), they were used as masculine names, being the symbols of virile strength.

The toponyms with the component *Imän* exist nowadays, for example, the oikonym *Imänkiskä* in the Laishevskiy district was formed from *imän* “oak” and *kiskä* designating “clear-cut” in the middle dialect of the Tatar language (Dialect Dictionary of the Tatar Language, 1993), wherefrom the meaning comes “the place where the oak (or a forest) was clear-cut”; the village *Imän Avyly* “the oak village” in the Sarmanovskiy district, and others.

Besides the placenames listed above, the onomastics possesses other examples: the anthroponyms *Baitiräk* “rich” and “poplar / tree”, *Ishtiräk* “two trees” with the metaphoric meaning “trusted friend”, *Alma* “apple-tree”, *Yözäm* “raisin”, *Yukä* “linden”, and others. Phyto-terms are also the topographic base in forming the following placenames: *Balanly* in the Aznakaevskiy, Buinskiy, Muslyumovskiy districts, *Balan-Büläk* in the Aznakaevskiy district, *Zirekle* in the Arskiy, Chistopolskiy districts, *Zirekle Yelga* in the Aznakayevskiy district, *Chiyalek* in the Aktanyshskiy district, *Chiyale Tau* in the Leninogorskiy district, *Naratly* in the Aktanyshskiy, Bugulminskiy, Almmetievskiy districts, and so on.

According to the results of the analysis of the factual materials, ancient Tatar proper nouns included a large group of naming units based on the names of various plants, cereals: *Akhmüch* “white bitter pepper”, *Borai* “wheat”, *Borchak* “pea”, *Kamysh* “cane”, *Kabak* “pumpkin”, *Tiräk* “willow coppice”, *Könbagysh* “sunflower”, and others.

As indicated by linguistic and historical data, by the XI-th century the Turks have already been familiar with agriculture. In the beginning of the X-th century the Arab geographer Ibn Ruste described the Bulgars as farming people growing wheat, millet, barley (Khvolsen, 1869). Ibn Fadlan (X-th century) made a point that the Bulgars had wheat, barley, millet in plenty as well. They carried on a routine trade with Rus’ (Kovalevskiy, 1956).

According to researchers, the advantage in agriculture that the Bulgars had of the neighbors in the X-XI-th centuries was due to the special equipment for deep tillage.

All the names of cereals *arpa*, *arysh*, *tary*, *soly*, *kinder* are used in the Turkic languages and trace origins back to ancient times. This fact is proved by oikonyms as well. In the Kukmorskiy district of the Republic of Tatarstan there is a village named *Arpayaz*, derived from the ancient Turkic *arpa* “barley” and the ancient Turkic *yaz* “steppe” = “barley steppe”. *Arpa* had the meaning “barley” in the ancient Turkic language (Khvolsen, 1869). Growing barley was so traditional for the Turks that it was reflected in proverbs. The dictionary by M. Kashgarskiy includes the proverb *Arpasiz at asumas, arkasiz alt cerig siyamas*. – “A horse will not run without barley, a hero will not rout troops without exterior help” (Ancient Turkic Dictionary, 1969). The word is largely used in the modern Turkic languages: Azerbaijani, Bashkir, Kazakh, Nogai, Karaite, Kumyk, Kirghiz, Tatar *arpa*; Chuvash *urpa*; Tuvan *arbai* “barley”.

The village names *Iske Arysh*, *Yaña Arysh* in the Rybno-Slobodskiy district reflect the occupation of people, i.e. growing *arysh* “rye”. The word *arysh* is a linguistic borrowing from the ancient Russian language. This lexical item is common in a small group of Turkic languages: Altaian, Bashkir, Kumyk *arysh*; Kazakh, Nogai, Khakass *arys*; Chuvash *yrash* < Russian *rozh*’. In these languages, the word emerged later, obviously having been borrowed from the Tatar. The forbears of the Tatars had been familiar with this important cultivated plant by the XIII-th century. The appellative *arysh* evolved into an oikonym. G.F. Sattarov leaves open the possibility that the oiko-component traces its origin to the ancient Udmurt nickname *Arysh* “one-year-old baby”, i.e. *Arysh* is the ancient Udmurt anthroponym denoting the age of a child (SATTAROV, 1973).

In the Turkic onomastics, one more fact is the use of plant names in feminine names, which can be names of flowers symbolizing beauty and elegance. It is noticeable that in the ancient Turkic anthroponymycon they were not numerous: *Çeçak* “flower”, *Çınar Çeçak* “the flower of the Oriental plane tree” – feminine names (Ancient Turkic Dictionary, 1969). But in more recent times of the Tatar anthroponymycon development, upon Islamization, the tradition of using the names of flowers as feminine names became widespread. National linguistic individuals, solicitous of reflecting the ideal in the newborn baby, utilized different variants of anthroponyms, and by that wishing the baby to be beautiful, tender, eye-catching; for example, names with the component *göl* “flower, rose” (*Gölnara*, *Gölbikä*, *Gölnur*, and others); with the component *chächäk* “flower” (*Chächäk*, *Chächkä*); *Lalä* “tulip”, *Yasminä* “jasmine”, *Närgiz*, *Närgizä* “narcissus”, *Räikhan*, *Räikhana* “basil”, and others.

## Summary

Based on the above stated, we make the conclusion that the plant life is central to the onomastic space of the Tatars, and the specific character of naming traces back to the ancient times. Undoubtedly, flora was of great importance in human life's activity. The special way of the world perception, mythopoetic views of ancient people penetrated into the onomastic worldview as well.

## Conclusion

The linguocultural hermeneutical approach can be ministerial to complementing data to solving some issues of the ethnic culture of the Tatar people. The analysis has shown that flora, represented in the onomastics, witnesses the specificity of the archaic thinking of the Tatars' forbears. The ancient naïve views of the Turks were transmitted to the modern onomastics of the Tatars. In the frame of the toponymic system they preserved the earliest views in the same linguistic units. In the anthroponymic system, despite the fact that many of ancient anthroponyms grew out of use, traditions and motives of naming continued when borrowing anthroponyms from other languages. Extensive use of names of flora as forenames occurred upon Islamization, and afterwards that group of names formed a whole anthroponymic field and became a progressive form of the linguocultural traditions, going back to the ancient Turkic epoch.

## Acknowledgements

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

## References

- (1969). *Ancient Turkic Dictionary*. Leningrad, 676 p.
- (1993). "Dialect Dictionary of the Tatar Language" (in Tatar), 789 p.
- BLAGOVA, G. *Anthroponymic System as Projection of Cosmological and Social Views of the Ancient Turks*. Comparative-historical Grammar Book of the Turkic Languages. The Ancient Turkic Proto-Language. The Worldview of the Ancient Turkic Ethnos by the Language Data", Moscow, 660–754. 2006.

- GALIULLINA, G., YUSUPOVA, A., KHADIEVA, G., & DENMUKHAMETOVA, E. *Turko-Tatar Vocabulary as Cognitive Mapping of the National Mentality*. Kazan, 120 p. 2001.
- ISAEV, Y. *Phytonymic Conceptuary as Dictionary of a New Type (a case study of the Chuvash and Tatar Languages)*. Cheboksary, 191 p. 2013.
- ISMAGILOVA, A., GALIULLINA, G., & KUZMINA, KH. Functional potential of mother tongue in conditions of bilingualism among youth of the Republic of Tatarstan. *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods*, 66–70. 2016.
- Kamilovna Khadieva, G., Raisovna Galiullina, G., Khatipovna Kuzmina, K., & Airatovna ABDRAKHAMANOVA, A. Metaphoric Terms in Tatar Toponyms as the Reflection of the National World-View. *Research in Applied Linguistics*, 10(Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Applied Linguistics Issues (ALI 2019) July 19-20, 2019, Saint Petersburg, Russia), 802-808. 2019.
- Khatipovna Kuzmina, K., Kamilovna Khadieva, G., Raisovna Galiullina, G., & Ramilevna AKHUNZHANOVA, D. The History of the Development of Literary Tatar Language in the 20th Century (Based on the Example of the Language of Literary Works). *Research in Applied Linguistics*, 10(Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Applied Linguistics Issues (ALI 2019) July 19-20, 2019, Saint Petersburg, Russia), 847-854. 2019.
- KHVOLSEN, D. *News on the Khazars, the Burtas, the Bulgars, the Magyars, the Slavs, and the Rus by Abu-Ali Ben-Omar Ibn-Dast*. Saint-Petersburg. 1869.
- KOVALEVSKIY, A. *Book by Akhmed Ibn Fadlan on his Journey to the Volga in 921-922*. Khar'kov, 345 p. 1956.
- MUKHAMETOVA, I. I., KADIROVA, E. K., YUSUPOV, A. F., & ALKAYA, E. SOMATISMS IN THE OLD TATAR LANGUAGE. *Revista TURISMO: Estudos e Práticas*, 1, 1-5. 2019.
- SATTAROV, G. Anthroponyms of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. (in Tatar), Kazan, 296 p. 1973.
- SUPERANSKAYA, A., STALTMANE, V., PODOLSKAYA, N., & SULTANOV, A. *Theory and Methods of Onomastic Research*. Moscow, 254 p. 2007.
- YERBULATOVA, I., KIRILLOVA, Z., & SAHIN, L. National and Cultural Realias of Translations into Tatar. *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews*, 7(6), 984–987. 2019.
- YUSUPOVA, A. S., GALIULLINA, G. R., & DENMUKHAMETOVA, E. N. Representation of national mentality in Turkic-Tatar vocabulary. *Life Sci J*, 11(7), 506-508. 2014.

**Gulshat Raisovna Galiullina**, Born in 1970. Doctor of Philology, specialty 10.02.02 - Languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation (Tatar language). Graduated from Kazan State University in 1994. In 2009 she defended her doctoral dissertation on the topic: "Tatar anthroponymy in the linguoculturological aspect". Professor, Head of the Department of Tatar Linguistics, IFMK KFU. Research interests: Tatar language, languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation, lexicology, semasiology, onomastics, cultural linguistics, sociolinguistics, ethnic culture.

**Gulfiya Kamilovna Khadieva**, Born in 1971. Candidate of Philological Sciences, specialty 10.02.06 - Turkic languages. Graduated from Kazan State University in 1994. In 1998 she defended her thesis on the topic: "Historical and linguistic analysis of the oikonymy of the Kazan Khanate." Associate Professor of the Department of Tatar Linguistics, Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication, Kazan Federal University. Research interests: Tatar linguistics, lexicology, onomastics, phonetics, ethnolinguistics.

**Zilya Mullakhmetovna Mukhametgalieva**, Born in 1992. No degree. In 2018 she graduated from the Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication of the Kazan Federal University, direction: Pedagogical education. Qualification: Master. The theme of the master's thesis: "Ethnocultural and linguistic-local lore components in the lessons of the Tatar language and after school hours." Post-graduate student of the Department of Tatar Linguistics, Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication, KFU. Research interests: Tatar linguistics, lexicology, ethnolinguistics.

**Margarita Emilievna Dubrovina**, Born in 1977. Candidate of Philology, specialty 10.02.22 - Languages of foreign countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, aborigines of America and Australia (Asia and Africa). Graduated from St. Petersburg State University in 1999. In 2008 she defended her thesis on the topic: "The language of ancient Türkic runic monuments as a source of information for constructing a model of Türkic morphology (substantive inflection)." Associate Professor at the Department of Turkic Philology, St. Petersburg State University. Research interests and teaching: phonetics, morphology, lexicology and syntax of modern and ancient Turkic languages, the theory of Turkic grammar.

Ismagilova Aida Maranovna, Galiullina Gulshat Raisovna, Kuzmina Khalisa. Khatipovna. Functional potential of mother tongue in conditions of bilingualism among youth of the Republic of Tatarstan // Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods. Special Issue (December 2016) – Pp. 66-70