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LEXICAL-SEMANTIC INTERPRETATION OF RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS IN THE DICTIONARY “ASH-SHUZUR AZ-ZAHABIYYA”

Abstract. *This article analyzes the lexical-semantic features of religious concepts presented in the dictionary “Ash-Shuzur az-Zahabiyya.” The study examines theonyms, religious terms, and lexical units related to worship and cosmological representations contained in the dictionary. Particular attention is given to the relationship between Arabic and Turkic lexical layers, the methods of interpretation, and the mechanisms of conceptual explanation. In addition, the historical and cultural foundations of religious notions are discussed on the basis of comparative materials. The results of the study contribute to revealing the process of the formation of religious terminology in medieval Turkic lexicography.*

Keywords: *religious concept, theonym, lexical-semantic analysis, onomastics, theonymy, Tengrianism, worship terminology, Turkic layer, Arabic borrowings, historical lexicography.*

INTRODUCTION

The term theonym originates from the Greek words *theós* (“God”) and *ónyma* (“name”). Within the framework of onomastics, it refers to mythonymic units that denote the names and meanings of divine beings and sacred entities. This concept serves as a linguistic tool for the study of divine names that have emerged within religious beliefs and theological traditions.

The field of onomastics classifies proper names into several lexical groups according to the categories of objects they denote. In particular, anthroponyms refer to personal proper names (such as given names, surnames, patronymics, nicknames, and pseudonyms), while toponyms denote the proper names of geographical objects.

Theonymy encompasses the names of gods, deities, and religious-mythological figures according to various religious beliefs. Zoonyms are the proper names assigned to animals. Cosmonyms refer to the names of regions of outer space, galaxies, constellations, and other cosmic objects used both in scientific discourse and in popular usage. Astronyms, in turn, include the names of individual celestial bodies, particularly planets and stars.

In addition, onomastics comprises several specialized subfields. In particular, realionyms denote the names of objects that have existed or currently exist in reality, whereas mythonyms refer to the names of imaginary entities or objects that are products of mythological imagination. Zoonymy studies proper names assigned to animals, cosmonymy investigates the names of regions of outer space and cosmic objects, while astronomy focuses on the names of celestial bodies, particularly planets and stars. Theonymy, in turn, stands out as a distinct branch of onomastics that encompasses the names of deities, gods, prophets, and other religious or mythological figures formed on the basis of various religious beliefs and mythological concepts.

J.R.R. Tolkien's work *The Silmarillion* reflects an epic worldview grounded in medieval Western mythology and Christian philosophy. In this work, heaven and earth are depicted as the principal components of the universe known as Arda. This world, created by Ilúvatar, is shaped through the activities of divine beings such as the Valar and the Maiar. Heaven is interpreted as a symbol of divine light, purity, and eternity. For instance, the stars created by Varda signify the sacredness of the heavens and the manifestation of divine power. These stars serve not only as aesthetic elements but also as important symbols associated with the awakening of the Elves and the beginning of human history.

In *The Silmarillion*, the Earth is portrayed as the material world where conflicts between good and evil take place. During the creation of Arda, the land formed by the Valar is constantly subjected to change and turmoil due to the destructive actions of Morgoth. The Earth functions as the dwelling place of humans, elves, dwarves, and other beings, and is depicted as a dynamic world full of trials and transformations. Tolkien's representation of the Earth closely resembles the Christian philosophical notion of the "fallen world," in which human freedom and responsibility in determining one's own destiny occupy a central role.

The relationship between the heavens and the earth in *The Silmarillion* is represented as the boundary between the divine and the material realms. The heavens are depicted

as the domain of the Valar, whereas the earth functions as a testing ground for created beings. The tension and harmony between these two realms constitute one of the central themes of the work. For instance, Morgoth's inability to affect celestial symbols (such as the stars and the sun) illustrates the limits of his power, while his disruptive actions on earth lead to significant consequences. In this way, the concepts of heaven and earth in Tolkien's cosmology reflect both a cosmological and philosophical equilibrium.

MAIN PART

In Turkic philosophy, existence is conceptually unified with the notion of Tangri. According to Chinese sources, "Tangri" corresponds to Tian (天), meaning "heaven" (Murzayev, 1996: 161). In the Mongolian language, "tangri" (Tenger Eseg, or "Father Tangri") is depicted as a creator or demiurge (Karpini, 1957).

The Turkic peoples consistently combined the term "Tangri" with Ko'k ("heaven"), using the expression Ko'k Tangri. In the Altai language, Tengere denotes "cosmos" (Gorno-Altaysk, 2018: 669). This indicates that the Turkic perception of the world was not limited to mythological imagination but was primarily intertwined with the belief system of Tengriism. According to this worldview, existence was conceptualized as comprising three principal layers: the heavens, as the dwelling of Tangri; the earth's surface, as the domain of the Great Ruler; and the underworld, conceived as a realm belonging to the earthly plane.

Religious-lexical units, like other linguistic units, can be classified according to various criteria. For instance, they can be grouped based on the entities they denote, such as proper names, toponyms, rituals, specific actions, and other categories. Alternatively, they can be analyzed by distinguishing between different types of expressions, such as religious terms versus religious phrases.

In the Names chapter of Solih ibn Muhammad's *Ash-Shuzur az-zahabiyya*, religious terms appear across several sections, particularly in the section *šudra fi bayanis samavat val arḍ wa ma fihinna biqadaril imkan mimma yanbaḡi ma'rifatuh wa iṭqanuhu* ("An exposition of the heavens and the earth, and of the entities therein, in accordance with what each person ought to know and comprehend to the best of their ability"). Within this section, the following religious lexical items can be observed:

No	Arabic	Transcription	Turkic	Transcription	Meaning
1	الله تعالى	Allahu ta'ala	تنكرى	Taŋri	God
2	الرسول	ar-rasūl	پيغمبر	payğambar	prophet
3	الملائكة	al-malaika	فرشته لر	farištalar	angels
4	العيد	al-iyd	بيرام	bayram	religious festival
5	الصلاة	aş-şolat	نماز	namaz	prayer
6	صلاة الصبح	şolatuş-şubh	صبح نمازی	sobah namazi	fajr
7	صلاة الضحى	şolatuđ-đuha	قوشلق نمازی	quşluq namazi	duha
8	صلاة الظهر	şolatuz-zuhr	اويلی نمازی	oyla namazi	dhuhr
9	صلاة العصر	şolatul-a'şr	ايكندی نمازی	ikindi namazi	asr
10	صلاة المغرب	şolatul mağrib	اخشام نمازی	axşam namazi	maghrib
11	صلاة العشاء	şolatul-i'şaa	يتسو نمازی	yatsu namazi	isha

شمشك – *şimşak* (lightning), الرعد -ar-ro'd, كوك كورملك – *kök kōrlämäk* (thunderbolt), المطر – *al-maṭor*, يغمور -yağmur (rain), الثلج - *aş-şalj*, قار -*qar* (snow), السحاب -*as-sahab*, بلوط – *bulut* (cloud), السخن -*as-saxin*, اسى – *isi* (hot), البرد -*al-bard*, صوق - *şavuq* (cold), ay اى, الشهر -*aş-şahr*, قيش -*qiş* (winter), الشتاء -*aş-şita'*, ياز -*yaz* (summer), الصيف -*aş-soyf*, ay (moon), السنة -*as-sana*, يل – *yil* (year), اليوم – *al-yavm*, كون -*kun* (day), النهار -*an-nahar*, كوندز – *kunduz* (daytime), الليل – *al-layl*, كجه – *kiçä* (night), الظلام -*az-zolam*, قرنلق -*qaranliq* (darkness), النور -*an-nūr*, ايدنلق -*aydinliq* (light), العيد -*al-i'd*, بيرام -*bayram* (holiday), امس – *ams*, دون – *dun* (night.), اليوم – *alyavm*, بوكون - *bukun* (today), غدا -*ğodan*, يارن – *yarin* (tomorrow), و بر كون - *va bir kün* (the day after tomorrow).

This section begins with الله تعالى [Allahu ta'ala] and concludes with the phrase و بر كون [va bir kün].

A statistical study of the lexical wealth in Ash-Shuzur az-Zahabiyya, particularly of its religious and educational terms, allows for precise information regarding the number of lexical units in the text. It also enables a reflection on the proportion between the Turkic and adopted layers, providing insights into the author's mastery of language use and the distinctive features of his stylistic approach.

In Solih ibn Muhammad's Ash-Shuzur az-zahabiyya, the term الله تعالى [Allahu ta'ala] (Sh.Z. 33a.3) is rendered in the Turkic layer as تنكرى [Taŋri]. Various explanatory dictionaries provide the following definitions of this term. In particular, the Encyclopaedia of Islam defines it among Arabs as *al-iloh* – divine power; among Turkic peoples, especially Uzbeks, as *Tangri*; and among Persian-Tajiks as *God*, *Yazid*, or *Allah* – the supreme divine force that created all existence in Islam; essentially, the name of God.

Typically, Allah is referred to with attributes such as Taolo (Great, Exalted), Taboraka wa Ta'ala, Jalla Jalalahu, Karim, Buzurg, and Parvardigori olam. According to Islamic doctrine, Allah is the one and only God, the Creator of the universe, and the Master of the Day of Judgment (Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2004: 28). In Uzbek explanatory dictionaries, الله is defined as a divine power or God; the supreme, divine force that created all existence, the name of God. In later years, the local pronunciation "Allah" has also come into use (O'TIL, 2006: 70). In Uzbek, numerous theonyms are attested, including Alloh, Tangri, Haq, Xoliq, Razzoq, Robbi, Parvardigor, Parvardigori olam, Xudo, Rahim, Rahmon, Jabbor, Qodir, G'affor, G'ufon, Ug'on, Karim, Buzurg, Yaratgan, Olamlar egasi, Sattor, Rahmon, Mavlon, Subhon Azim, Subhon Alloh, Subhon Izim. In the DTS, the word Tängri occurs with the following meanings: 1. Heaven: er buşuşluy täñri bulitliyi bolti ("the young man was sad, and the sky was cloudy") [Ths II.79]. 2. Tangri / Deity: Tängri jalnuq jarattı ("Tangri created the human") [MK II 315]. 3. Ruler / Sovereign: Bu savıy eşidip men ötrü olarqa inça tep tedim aj-a edgülärim täñrimlärim ("Hearing these words, I said to them: O my benefactors, O my rulers") (DTS, 1969: 544).

In Muqaddamatu-l-adab, the term appears in its Arabic form الله [Allah] and in Turkic as حق تېگىرى يعنى طېمىقه لائق تېگىرى [haq Teñri ya'ni tapmaqa laiq Teñri] (MA 65a).

In the Arabic text, the term الرسول [ar-rasūl] (Sh.Z. 33a.2) is explained in the work in Turkic as پيغمبر [payğambar]. In early Turkic sources, it appears in the form jalavaç:

1. Messenger / Envoy: Jalavaç uzaq bardı ("the envoy traveled far") [MK I 66]; Xan jalavaçiy boşudı ("the khan dispatched the envoy") [MK III 266]. 2. Prophet / Nabi: Jalavaçqa alqış bergil ("send blessings to the prophet") [MK I 97]; Tängri jalavaç iđti ("the Lord sent the prophet") [MK III 438]; Muhämmäd jalavaç xalajıq başı ("Prophet Muhammad – leader of the community") [QB 4].

Today, this term has preserved its original meaning. In contemporary Uzbek explanatory dictionaries, payg'ambar is defined as "a messenger, one who brings a prior message." Religiously, it refers to a divine representative who conveys God's will to the servants, i.e., a prophet or rasūl. For example, Amir Temur expressed great respect for the generations of prophets, scholars, and elders (Fan va turmush). Similarly, Ergash Jumanbulbul o'g'li writes: "I listened, I obeyed, I became a servant to Allah, and a follower of God's Prophet."

The Arabic term الملائكة – al-malaika is rendered in the Encyclopaedia of Islam as Farishta and is defined as follows: Farishta (Persian; Arabic: malak – malaika) – according to Islamic belief, beings who carry out the commands of God. Angels are innumerable, each assigned a specific function. For example, in Islam, angels are believed to record every person’s good and evil deeds, guard the gates of Paradise and Hell, question the deceased in the grave (Munkar and Nakir), uphold God’s throne in heaven, and perform other duties. Four of these angels – Azra’il, Jibra’il, Mika’il, and Israfil – are considered chief angels. Belief in angels is one of the tenets of Sunni creed (Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2004: 79).

In contemporary Uzbek, the term farishta is still used. According to Uzbek explanatory dictionaries: 1. In Islam and some other religions, it denotes a supernatural being executing God’s commands, i.e., a malak. Some traditions describe angels pouring the water of Kawthar from Paradise into our pitchers (M. Muhammadjonov, Turmush urunishlari). Angels, or maloik, are created from light, whereas humans are created from clay (“Malikai ayyor”). 2. Figuratively, the term can also signify blessings or adornment. For instance, a woman’s angel refers to her virtue and household guardian (Maqol). Likewise, a father protects the street and a mother the home as angels (L. Tojiyeva, Mehrim sizga odamlar) (O‘TIL II, 2006: 329).

In the Saudi manuscript of Muqaddamatu-l-adab, the term farishta appears in Arabic as the loanword anbiyo (63a.1).

The arabic term العيد – al-**iyd** (bayram) is defined in Al-Ma‘aniy al-Jami as follows: with the ayn pronounced with kasra, the plural form a’yod refers to a day of celebration commemorating a significant event (jurisprudential definition). In other words, it denotes a festival or holiday observed in remembrance of an important occurrence. According to the Encyclopaedia of Islam, **iyd** refers to a religious festival; for instance, phrases such as “Iyd Muborak!” or “Iyd kunlari” denote blessed festival days.

Regarding prayer, the terms الصلاة [aṣ-ṣalat] and نماز [namaz] are defined in the Encyclopaedia of Islam as acts of worship performed at specific times during the day according to prescribed rules and conditions. Prayer (salat) is described as the most essential of the five pillars of Islam. The Turkic term نماز [namaz] retains the same meaning in Uzbek. For example, in Qutadg’u Bilig: qopup jundi qildi jana tañ namaz – “He performed the prayer, recited supplications (having performed ablution, he prayed

the dawn prayer). The mosque was ruined and people were left without worship” (QBN 285). In contemporary Uzbek explanatory dictionaries, *namaz* is defined as the act of worship and supplication performed by Muslims for Allah, including the set of five daily prayers: morning prayer, evening prayer, Friday prayer, etc. For example, “The architect washed, performed ablution, prayed, and went out to the courtyard. He instructed his students to prepare breakfast” (Mirmuhsin, Me’mor).

Among the religious lexicon in the manuscript, in addition to the five daily prayers, the *zuho* prayer (صلاة الضحى – *ṣalatuḍ-ḍuha*) is also mentioned. The *zuho* (forenoon) prayer is performed from approximately twenty minutes after sunrise until the time of *peshin* (noon) and serves as a voluntary (*nafl*) prayer that can substitute for almsgiving for each limb of the worshipper. This prayer may consist of 2, 4, 8, or 12 *rak‘ahs*, with the four-unit format considered the most meritorious (Hadis va hayot, 2023: 471). In the Turkic variant, this term appears as قوشلۇق نمازی – *quşluq namazi*. The term *qushluq* denotes the period from after sunrise until noon, that is, the late morning interval (DTS, 1969:544).

In Yusuf Khaṣ Ḥojib’s work, *qushluq* functions as a temporal category referring to a specific time of the day. Although the exact phrase “*qushluq namazi*” is not frequently used, the term *qushluq* operates as a temporal marker (QB 112). This indicates that Islamic ritual time units were absorbed into the Turkic language. Mahmud al-Kashgari interprets *qushluq* as the early part of the day, specifically the period after sunrise (MK I). Similarly, Ahmad Yūgnaki’s writings employ Turkic terms for different times of the day, using *qushluq* within social and religious contexts (HH 54).

In Chagatai-period manuscripts, the terms *choshgoh namozi* or *qushluq namozi* appear. *Choshgoh* has Persian origins and functions as a synonymous temporal unit. Some religious treatises also use the Arabic term *duho namozi*.

This analysis demonstrates that in the manuscript, the Turkic equivalent *qushluq namazi* for صلاة الضحى (*zuho* prayer) reflects an active process of semantic adaptation of religious-practical concepts into the Turkic linguistic environment. The use of *qushluq* as a temporal category in early Turkic sources, later incorporated into the name of a ritual, attests to the sacralization of time units. Moreover, the parallel use of Arabic (*duho*), Turkic (*qushluq*), and Persian (*choshgoh*) variants illustrates the multi-layered and historically continuous development of religious terminology.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the religious concepts expressed in the lexicon of Ash-Shuzur az-zahabiyya were analyzed from a lexical-semantic perspective. During the research, the theonyms, names of prophets, the concept of angels, prayer terminology, and cosmological units within the dictionary were examined in their mutual semantic relations. The results indicate that the religious lexicon in the work does not constitute a random collection, but rather forms a coherent semantic field structured according to a specific conceptual system.

The rendering of الله تعالى (Allahu ta'ala) as Tanrı in the Turkic layer clearly demonstrates the conceptual congruence between Arabic and Turkic religious thought. This reflects the author's reliance on semantic equivalence principles when translating religious concepts. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of units such as الرسول (ar-rasūl) – “payğambar” and الملائكة (al-malaika) – “farištalar” with their forms in early Turkic sources confirms the historical continuity of religious terminology.

The analysis demonstrates that a portion of the religious-educational units in the lexicon are Arabic borrowings; however, their explanations and semantic interpretations are rendered through the Turkic language. This indicates the presence of a two-layered lexical system in the work: on one hand, Islamic scholarly-traditional terminology, and on the other, an explanatory model shaped by Turkic thought. Consequently, religious concepts are interpreted in a manner that reconciles popular understanding with Islamic scholarly tradition.

Furthermore, cosmological notions such as heaven, earth, light, darkness, seasons, and natural phenomena are presented in close semantic connection with the religious field. This reflects the interpretation of existence in the Turkic worldview as grounded in divine principles and highlights the conceptual continuity between Tangri-oriented beliefs and Islamic perspectives.

Overall, the lexicon of Ash-Shuzur az-zahabiyya serves as a crucial source for studying the formation of religious concepts, their semantic development, and the interaction between linguistic layers in medieval Turkic lexicography. In this work, religious terminology is presented not merely as definitional lexical units but as the linguistic manifestation of a specific doctrinal and philosophical system. Therefore, the work holds particular scholarly significance for the historical-semantic study of religious lexicon and for examining the conceptual capacities of the Turkic language.

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