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THE REPRESENTATION OF PHYTONYMS AND THEIR LINGUO-SEMANTIC FEATURES IN MUNIS'S TRANSLATION OF RAVZATU-S-SAFO

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Abstract: This article examines phytonyms—lexical items denoting plants, trees, fruits, flowers, and plant parts—in the Old Uzbek translation of Mir-Khwand's historical work Ravzatu-s-safo traditionally associated with Munis. It explores the lexical-semantic groupings of the plant-related vocabulary, discusses the Turkic, Persian, and Arabic lexical strata identified in the material, and considers the contextual and figurative functions of selected plant names. The analysis draws on a comparison between the Persian source text and the Old Uzbek translation, alongside componential, contextual, comparative-historical, and linguopoetic approaches. The examples discussed suggest that plant vocabulary serves not only referential purposes but may also contribute to the representation of beauty, dignity, prosperity, decline, and political change. The article highlights the value of historical translations as evidence for the study of lexical contact and the stylistic resources of pre-modern Uzbek prose. The findings should be regarded as qualitative and illustrative: a fully reproducible account will require a complete inventory of occurrences, verified manuscript foliation, and systematic source–target alignment.

Keywords: phytonym; historical lexicology; Munis; Ravzatu-s-safo; Old Uzbek; Persian–Turkic translation; lexical semantics; metaphor; linguopoetics.

1. Introduction

Classical Persian historiography and prose are valuable sources not only for the reconstruction of political and cultural history but also for the study of historical vocabularies and literary representation. One such work is Ravzatu-s-safo fi siyar al-anbiya wa-l-muluk wa-l-khulafa ("The Garden of Purity concerning the biographies of the prophets, kings, and caliphs"), written by the Timurid-era historian Muhammad ibn Khwandshah ibn Mahmud, commonly known as Mir-Khwand. The work circulated widely and became an important source for later historiography.

Phytonyms—the names of plants, trees, fruits, flowers, and their parts—belong to an old and culturally significant layer of vocabulary. In historical prose, such words can identify elements of the natural environment and material life; in particular contexts, they may also function as components of imagery, symbolism, and metaphor. The garden imagery embedded in the title Ravzatu-s-safo makes the plant-related vocabulary of the work especially relevant to a study of its literary and semantic texture.

Although Ravzatu-s-safo has primarily attracted attention as a historical source, its plant-related vocabulary in the Persian original and in the Old Uzbek translation associated with Munis merits more focused linguistic analysis. This article therefore investigates the semantic grouping,

lexical provenance, and contextual functions of selected phytonyms in the translation, with reference to the Persian text.

2. Aim and research questions

The aim of the study is to describe the phytonymic vocabulary represented in the Old Uzbek translation of Ravzatu-s-safo and to examine how selected items function in context. The discussion is guided by three questions: (1) What semantic groups of phytonyms can be identified in the examples presented? (2) Which Turkic, Persian, and Arabic lexical elements are represented, and what evidence is needed to establish their etymological status? (3) What referential, descriptive, metaphorical, or symbolic functions do selected phytonyms perform in the translated text?

3. Materials and methods

The primary materials identified by the author are the Persian text of Ravzatu-s-safo and an Old Uzbek translation preserved in the Manuscripts Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan (inventory no. 1423). The source manuscript and the translated witness should be cited separately in a final publication, with volume, folio, and—where available—line references. The present draft retains the page references supplied in the source manuscript of the article; these references require verification against the exact editions or manuscript witness before submission.

The study employs four complementary procedures. Componential analysis is used to describe semantic features associated with individual plant names. Comparative-historical analysis compares Persian lexical items with their Old Uzbek equivalents. Contextual analysis considers the meanings activated by the immediate textual environment. Linguopoetic analysis examines whether plant names contribute to imagery, metaphor, symbolism, or the organisation of historical narration.

The material is treated qualitatively. The source article does not provide a complete concordance, the total number of occurrences, explicit selection criteria, or a frequency count. Accordingly, the examples below are illustrative rather than statistically representative, and no quantitative claims are made.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Semantic classification of the phytonyms

The examples recorded in the article can be organised into five provisional semantic groups:

Tree and shrub names: sarv (cypress), chinor (plane tree), shamshod (boxwood), archa (juniper), tol (willow), and qayrag‘och (elm). In the cited discussion, these items are associated mainly with landscape description, height, shade, and strength.

Fruit and cultivated-plant names: anor (pomegranate), angur (grape), seb (apple), bodom (almond), and pista (pistachio). These occur in descriptions connected with cultivation, subsistence, and abundance.

Flower and ornamental-plant names: gul (flower/rose, depending on context), lola (tulip), nargis (narcissus), binafsha (violet), and rayhon (basil or a fragrant herb). These items contribute to descriptions of beauty, gardens, and seasonal change.

Medicinal and aromatic plant terms: za'faron (saffron), kafur (camphor), zanjabil (ginger), and isiriq (wild rue/peganum). Their contexts are associated in the article with medicine and everyday practices.

Plant parts and botanical terms: shox (branch), barg (leaf), rishta (root/fibre/vein, according to context), and g'uncha (bud). These terms describe the structure and development of plants and may also participate in figurative expressions.

This classification is provisional because the article does not supply a complete list of all occurrences or define a formal inclusion criterion for borderline items. In particular, the semantic value of a word such as rishta must be established from its specific context rather than assigned a single botanical meaning in advance.

4.2. Lexical strata and language contact

The article identifies Turkic, Persian, and Arabic elements in the phytonymic vocabulary. This tripartite description is useful as a working framework, but the etymological origin of each item should be verified individually. A word's presence in a Persian or Old Uzbek text does not, by itself, establish the language from which it entered the relevant lexicon; historical borrowing, shared regional vocabulary, and transmission through an intermediary language must also be considered.

Persian-associated items discussed in the source article include sarv, nargis, chinor, and binafsha. They are presented not merely as botanical designations but also as elements of established literary imagery: the cypress may evoke uprightness and grace, the narcissus may be associated with the eye or gaze, and the plane tree may suggest stature and shade. These associations should be understood as context-dependent literary conventions, not as fixed meanings inherent in the plant names.

The Arabic-associated group includes zaytun (olive), tin (fig), nakhl (date palm), shajara (tree; also lineage or genealogical tree), and rayhon (a fragrant plant). The occurrence of these items in religious or historical passages may reflect the cultural and textual register of the narrative. Their precise etymological classification, however, requires reference to historical dictionaries and the relevant forms in the Persian and Old Uzbek witnesses.

The Turkic-associated examples include yantoq (camelthorn), qamish (reed), qamishzor (reed-bed), and qayrag'och (elm). These forms may be particularly relevant to the representation of local landscapes and everyday environments in the translated text. Their classification should nevertheless be supported by historical-etymological evidence, especially where forms have cognates or borrowing histories across neighbouring languages.

4.3. Contextual and figurative functions

The examples presented in the source article indicate that phytonyms can operate beyond literal reference. Their stylistic contribution becomes visible when they are interpreted in relation to the surrounding sentence, the narrative situation, and the conventions of Persianate literary expression.

Cypress and plane tree. The translation contains the passage: "...and around each palace tall cypresses and verdant plane trees stood upright, their shade covering the ground..." The Persian wording is cited as "...sarv-i ravān va chinār-i buland..." (the exact wording and its location should be checked against the edition used). In this context, the tree names contribute to the depiction of

an ordered and impressive landscape. The translation appears to preserve the principal botanical images while rendering them through Old Uzbek descriptive phrasing.

Tulip and violet. A further passage describes the spring breeze and the adornment of plains and gardens with tulips and violets, after which people enter the garden of delight. The flowers participate in a seasonal scene and may suggest renewal, pleasure, and prosperity. The symbolic interpretation should be tied to the narrative context and should not be generalised to every occurrence of these flower names.

The garden of sovereignty. The expression "The autumn wind blew through the garden of sovereignty, and the leaves of the tree of state fell..." uses botanical imagery to represent political decline. The garden and tree function metaphorically: the loss of leaves corresponds to the weakening or collapse of political power. This example demonstrates how plant-related vocabulary can provide a conceptual model for narrating changes in the fortunes of a dynasty or state.

Taken together, the examples suggest three overlapping functions: (1) referential description of landscapes and cultivated environments; (2) aesthetic construction of scenes through colour, shape, height, and seasonal imagery; and (3) metaphorical representation of human, dynastic, or political conditions.

5. Conclusion

The selected examples from the Old Uzbek translation of Ravzatu-s-safo show that phytonyms form a semantically varied lexical group encompassing trees and shrubs, fruits and cultivated plants, flowers, medicinal and aromatic plants, and plant parts. In the passages discussed, these items perform both referential and stylistic functions.

The comparison with the Persian source, as reported in the article, points to the importance of examining the translation as a site of lexical and literary interaction. The Turkic, Persian, and Arabic elements identified in the vocabulary offer a useful starting point for investigating historical language contact; however, a definitive account of their origins requires item-by-item etymological verification.

The contextual examples further indicate that plant imagery can contribute to the representation of beauty, seasonal renewal, abundance, and political decline. Thus, the phytonymic vocabulary of the translation is relevant not only to historical lexicology and semantics but also to the study of translation practice and the linguopoetics of historical prose.

The principal limitation of the present study is the absence of a fully documented corpus inventory and systematic quantitative data. Future work should collate all occurrences in the Persian source and the Old Uzbek manuscript, record folio-level references, distinguish inherited vocabulary from borrowings, and analyse shifts in meaning and imagery across corresponding source–target passages.

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