



NATIONAL-CULTURAL CODES IN ERKIN A'ZAM'S SHOVQIN: A LINGUOCULTURAL AND COGNITIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive linguocultural and cognitive exploration of contemporary Uzbek prose through the analytical prism of Erkin A'zam's critically acclaimed novel 'Shovqin' (The Noise). Positioned within the anthropocentric paradigm of modern cognitive linguistics, the paper dissects how deep-seated national-cultural codes operate as cognitive vehicles for societal critique during transitional social epochs. Employing a combined methodology of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and structural-semantic linguocultural coding, the analysis exposes four foundational categories of cultural signs embedded within the text: somatic, zoomorphic, colorimetric, and social-communal codes. The research systematically maps how traditional idiomatic expressions, somatic metaphors, and animal symbols undergo cognitive transformation, evolving from historical repositories of cultural heritage into highly sophisticated satirical instruments. These linguistic mechanisms expose the moral disintegration, psychological fragmentation, and existential alienation of the post-Soviet intellectual class confronted with aggressive globalization and unchecked market commercialization. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates that Erkin A'zam's idiosyncratic prose style functions not merely as a passive mirror of linguistic structures, but as an active cognitive mapping mechanism that preserves national semantic boundaries while simultaneously deconstructing local ethical crises.

Introduction. The modern evolution of structural and functional linguistics has consolidated an irreversible paradigm shift toward anthropocentric analysis. Language is no longer viewed as a static, self-contained system of arbitrary signs, but rather as an organic cognitive architecture intricately tied to human cognition, conceptualization, and cultural preservation [4, p. 89]. Within this methodological context, the artistic text emerges as a complex, dense locus of linguocultural negotiation, wherein authors rely on deeply embedded national-cultural codes to encapsulate the psychological, philosophical, and axiological shifts

of a given historical epoch [12, p. 112]. Scholars like Wierzbicka [18, p. 45] have long argued that core cultural concepts are encoded directly into linguistic structures, serving as cognitive filters through which reality is perceived, categorized, and judged. In contemporary Uzbek literary studies, examining these linguistic manifestations becomes critically urgent, particularly when analyzing works that confront the massive sociopolitical and psychological transitions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Erkin A'zam occupies a uniquely towering and structurally significant position in modern Uzbek literature. Known for his surgical linguistic precision, sharp satirical depth, and intense psychological realism, A'zam's prose systematically avoids simplistic moralizing in favor of complex conceptual layers. His landmark novel 'Shovqin' (The Noise) stands as a definitive literary monument to the spiritual crises, socio-ethical fragmentation, and identity anxiety that gripped the Uzbek intelligentsia during the post-Soviet transitional era and the subsequent onslaught of westernized globalization [2, p. 5]. The central title and overarching theme of 'Shovqin' is not merely an acoustic descriptor; it functions as a comprehensive, multi-layered macrometaphor. It represents the chaotic, disruptive, and spiritually deafening interference of market capitalism, cultural commercialization, and moral compromise that threatens to drown out the quiet, foundational, authentic values of national identity, dignity, and intellectual integrity [5, p. 14]. Despite wide popular acclaim and profound literary appreciation, the academic literature remains largely restricted to traditional literary-critical, biographical, and purely thematic analyses of Erkin A'zam's oeuvre [5, p. 18; 10, p. 33]. There is a pronounced and problematic deficit in systemic, rigorous linguistic and cognitive scholarship that meticulously examines the structural mechanisms through which cultural meanings are systematically encoded within his syntax, phraseology, and metaphorical constructs. Consequently, the primary objective of this study is to perform a systematic, multi-dimensional linguocultural and cognitive analysis of the national-cultural codes in the novel 'Shovqin'. By bridging the gap between theoretical cognitive frameworks and specific textual micro-analyses, this paper aims to demonstrate how Erkin A'zam subverts, weaponizes, and reimagines traditional Uzbek linguistic structures to formulate a devastating critique of modern societal decay while mapping the shifting mental landscape of the Uzbek nation.

Theoretical and methodological framework. To comprehensively extract, classify, and evaluate the dense network of cultural signs in 'Shovqin', this research constructs a hybrid methodological framework that integrates post-Soviet linguoculturology with western Cognitive Linguistics. The primary theoretical foundation rests upon Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), pioneered by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson [8, p. 22], and further advanced in cognitive semantics by Langacker [9, p. 57]. CMT posits that metaphor is not an ornamental device of poetic license, but a fundamental cognitive mechanism whereby humans map structured knowledge from a concrete, physically experienced 'Source Domain' onto a more abstract, elusive 'Target Domain'. In 'Shovqin', abstract socio-political decay, ethical compromise, and psychological existential despair are systematically conceptualized through tangible, highly localized source domains rooted in Uzbek somatic experiences, fauna, and traditional communal architecture.

Simultaneously, this study heavily utilizes the structural-semantic principles of cultural coding developed by Telia [17, p. 214] and Maslova [11, p. 67], which have been successfully

localized and expanded within the Uzbek linguistic school by pioneering scholars such as Safarov [15, p. 44] and Mahmudov [10, p. 31]. A cultural code is defined as a culturally determined, historically consolidated system of signs, symbols, and idioms that functions as a structural grid for organizing, evaluating, and interpreting the surrounding objective world [11, p. 70]. These codes operate implicitly within the collective consciousness of a linguistic community. When an author like Erkin A'zam deploys these codes, they trigger a dense network of culturally specific connotations, historical memories, and ethical imperatives. This paper specifically classifies the textual data of 'Shovqin' into four distinct cultural-semiotic categories: somatic (bodily) codes, zoomorphic (animal) codes, colorimetric (color) codes, and social-communal codes. The linguistic material was gathered via a rigorous continuous sampling method from the definitive text of the novel, resulting in an analytical corpus of over 120 key idiomatic, metaphorical, and descriptive fragments which were then subjected to deep context-dependent structural and cognitive parsing.

Results and discussion. The systematic textual and cognitive extraction of the linguistic material reveals that Erkin A'zam constructs the entire semantic universe of 'Shovqin' by interweaving deeply traditional national codes with highly radical, modernized metaphorical extensions. Rather than using cultural signs purely to celebrate historical heritage, the author intentionally triggers these codes to create a striking, disorienting juxtaposition. He exposes the widening, tragic chasm between idealized, historical Uzbek ethical norms and the brutal, distorted realities of a commercialized post-Soviet society. Below, we provide an expansive, thoroughly contextualized analysis of the four major classifications of cultural codes identified within the text.

Somatic (Bodily) Codes in the Representation of Ethical Crisis. The somatic cultural code is arguably one of the most archaic and cross-culturally powerful semiotic systems, as the human body serves as the universal, immediate baseline for experiencing, measuring, and conceptualizing the objective universe [11, p. 102]. In the Uzbek linguistic worldview, somatic components are deeply saturated with profound ethical, social, and moral duties. In 'Shovqin', Erkin A'zam consistently exploits these somatic frameworks to map psychological degradation onto physical deformities or bodily subversions. A prime linguistic manifestation analyzed is the culturally loaded idiom 'ko'zbo'yamachilik' (literally translated as 'the binding or painting of the eye', meaning severe fraud, institutional deceit, or political eye-wash) [1, p. 142]. In traditional Uzbek linguoculture, the eye ('ko'z') is celebrated as the pure, uncorrupted window of the human soul and the seat of honest conscience. By systematically invoking expressions where characters' eyes are covered, blinded, or altered, A'zam constructs a cognitive metaphor: MORAL BLINDNESS IS PHYSICAL BLINDNESS. The systemic institutional deception that characterizes the novel's bureaucratic elite is not portrayed merely as an administrative flaw, but as a violent, grotesque somatic manipulation that completely severs the human subject from reality.

Furthermore, the somatic code functions prominently through the persistent, recurring conceptual metaphorization of the neck ('bo'yin') and head ('bosh'). In the phraseological system of the Uzbek language, 'bosh egmoq' (to bow the head) can carry double connotations: it represents noble, respectful humility ('andisha') when directed toward elders or sacred traditions, but it signifies humiliating, pathetic submissiveness and political cowardice when

performed before corrupt authority structures [10, p. 55]. A'zam brilliantly captures the tragic capitulation of the academic and creative intelligentsia by describing them through the somatic trope of 'bo'ynini egik, tili kesik' (with a permanently bent neck and a severed tongue) [1, p. 204]. Here, the physical inability to stand upright and the somatic destruction of the organ of speech (the tongue) serve as an intense, painful cognitive map of absolute existential disempowerment. The intellectual class, which is historically charged with being the vocal conscience of the nation, is somatically reduced to mute, anatomically broken, subservient entities. The body, which ought to project strength, integrity, and sovereignty, becomes an explicit canvas displaying the deep psychological scars of systemic societal submission.

Zoomorphic (Animal) Codes and Social Satire. The zoomorphic cultural code involves the systematic transference of well-known behavioral traits, physical attributes, and moral connotations from the animal kingdom onto human beings and complex social structures [17, p. 189]. In 'Shovqin', Erkin A'zam utilizes zoomorphic coding as a primary engine for savage social satire and psychological typing. The most prominent, explosive animal metaphor deployed throughout the text is the conceptualization of the rising, unprincipled entrepreneurial class and corrupt officials as a 'shag'ollar galasi' (a pack of jackals) [1, p. 98]. In the classical Uzbek zoomorphic hierarchy, the jackal ('shag'ol') is universally stigmatized as a cowardly, scavenging, opportunistically predatory beast that lacks the noble courage of the lion or the fierce independence of the wolf. By mapping the 'JACKAL' source domain onto the contemporary socio-economic arena, A'zam illuminates the ruthless, parasitic nature of the new elite. They do not build or create; they aggressively scavenge upon the decaying remains of public institutions, exploiting the vulnerable and uneducated masses.

In sharp, heartbreaking structural opposition to this opportunistic pack of jackals, the protagonist and a dwindling minority of uncompromising, old-guard intellectuals are metaphorically rendered through the zoomorphic code of the 'yolg'iz bo'ri' (the lone wolf) [1, p. 115]. While the wolf in certain western contexts can carry purely negative, predatory meanings, in Central Asian Turkic mythology and deep linguistic memory, the wolf ('bo'ri') is an ancient, highly revered symbol of unyielding pride, absolute independence, and refusal to be domesticated or placed in a cage [15, p. 112]. By designating the isolated, struggling intellectual as a lone wolf, A'zam highlights both his tragic moral nobility and his inevitable, painful doom. The lone wolf refuses to join the corrupt, hysterical chorus of the jackals, but precisely because he is alone, he is systematically hunted down, marginalized, and driven to starvation by the collective power of the pack. Additionally, the author utilizes the image of 'ko'lmakdagi baqa' (frogs in a stagnant mud-pond) to describe the passive, uncritical general populace. They remain perfectly content within their narrow, filthy, culturally bankrupt intellectual isolation, completely oblivious to the massive historical crises unfolding around them.

Colorimetric (Color) Codes and Psychological Mapping. Colors are never neutral physical phenomena in high-tier artistic literature; they operate as sophisticated cultural codes that carry immense, deeply anchored emotional, psychological, and ideological weights [11, p. 147]. In Erkin A'zam's 'Shovqin', the text is highly striking in its deliberate, near-complete avoidance of vibrant, life-affirming colors, opting instead for a highly restrictive, stifling color palette dominated by shades of 'kulrang' (grey) and 'sariq' (yellow). In standard

modern cognitive semantics, grey is the ultimate conceptual archetype for absolute monotony, bureaucratic coldness, loss of individuality, and existential emptiness [12, p. 154]. A'zam blankets the urban spaces, governmental offices, and public squares of the novel in a thick, metaphorical grey fog. The 'grey city' and its 'grey people' represent a society where genuine passion, creative non-conformity, and exceptional intellectual genius have been aggressively systematically ironed out by the forces of mass commercial culture. Grey signifies the triumph of mediocrity, where every individual must look, think, and act identical to avoid social excommunication.

The color yellow ('sariq') undergoes an equally fascinating, culturally specific cognitive transformation within the text. While traditional Uzbek folk poetry occasionally associates yellow with the beautiful, nostalgic golden hues of autumn or the light of the sun, its dominant phraseological and cognitive meaning in modern prose is overwhelmingly tied to sickness, liver disease, cognitive decay, intense psychological anxiety, and existential sorrow ('sariq qayg'u') [10, p. 99]. Throughout 'Shovqin', characters who have spiritually compromised their internal ethics are consistently described as possessing 'sariq chehra' (sickly yellow faces) or working under the dim, oppressive glow of yellowed lamps. This is a deliberate cognitive manifestation: ETHICAL COMPROMISE IS A PHYSICAL, WASTING DISEASE. The yellow color code functions as a powerful, silent diagnostic tool. It visually signals to the reader that beneath the flashy, affluent, loud exterior of modern success, the society is suffering from a terminal, deep-seated spiritual jaundice that is rotting its core moral infrastructure.

Social-Communal Codes and Existential Deconstruction. The social-communal code encompasses the dense matrix of highly specialized institutional concepts, architectural spaces, and centuries-old behavioral ethno-norms that define the structural fabric of daily life within a specific nation [11, p. 190]. For the Uzbek identity, the supreme, sacred pillars of this code have historically been the 'mahalla' (the traditional, tightly-knit communal neighborhood) and 'andisha' (a rich, complex socio-psychological concept blending deep mutual respect, polite modesty, extreme moral discretion, and a hyper-awareness of public opinion) [14, p. 77; 15, p. 60]. Under normal historical conditions, the mahalla functioned as an invaluable social safety net, a sacred space of collective warmth, emotional solidarity, and mutual aid ('hashar'). However, in the dark, cynical universe of 'Shovqin', Erkin A'zam executes a devastating, unsparing deconstruction of these sacred communal spaces and concepts.

Under A'zam's pen, the mahalla is stripped of its romanticized, nostalgic folklore charm. Instead, it is cognitively re-mapped as a panoptic, intrusive, highly toxic space of endless surveillance, aggressive gossip, petty material envy, and brutal social policing [2, p. 19]. The community no longer gathers to support the struggling or protect the innocent; they gather to mock the eccentric intellectual, enforce rigid conformity, and worship those who possess ill-gotten material wealth. Similarly, the foundational virtue of 'andisha' undergoes a tragic, ironic inversion. In the savage, predatory socio-economic environment depicted in the novel, practicing andisha—exercising moral restraint, refusing to aggressively push past others, choosing silent dignity over loud self-promotion—is no longer recognized as a sign of high noble breeding. It is re-interpreted by the predatory 'jackals' as pathetic weakness, cognitive impotence, and absolute societal failure [5, p. 22]. The characters who retain their andisha are

ruthlessly trampled, marginalized, and excluded from the economic means of survival. Through this tragic deconstruction of the social-communal code, A'zam conveys a profound existential warning: when a nation's core structural virtues are twisted into liabilities, the society has lost its ethical compass.

Table 1. Structural-Cognitive Mapping of Cultural Codes in 'Shovqin'

Cultural Code Category	Linguistic Source Domain	Cognitive Target Domain	Socio-Critical Function
Somatic (Bodily) Code	ko'zbo'yamachilik (blinding eyes), bo'ynini egik (bent neck), tili kesik (cut tongue)	Moral blindness, total loss of intellectual sovereignty, structural submissiveness	Exposes the tragic moral capitulation of the intelligentsia before power
Zoomorphic (Animal) Code	shag'ollar galasi (jackal pack), yolg'iz bo'ri (lone wolf), ko'lmakdagi baqa (stagnant frog)	Parasitic elite, isolated unyielding intellectual, passive blind populace	Satyrizes extreme socio-economic stratification and civic apathy
Colorimetric Code	kulrang (ubiquitous grey fog), kasalmand sariq (sickly jaundiced yellow)	Monotony, loss of individuality, spiritual decay, existential sorrow	Diagnoses the terminal psychological and ethical rot of modern society
Social-Communal Code	deconstructed mahalla (surveillance), inverted andisha (perceived as weakness)	Communal toxicity, systemic exclusion of noble ethical characters	Warns against the irreversible collapse of national moral infrastructure

Conclusion. The systematic linguocultural and cognitive analysis of Erkin A'zam's novel 'Shovqin' demonstrates that the text operates as a highly advanced, tightly integrated repository of national-cultural codes, transformed into powerful instruments of socio-ethical critique. By systematically examining somatic, zoomorphic, colorimetric, and social-communal systems, this study has illustrated that A'zam's artistic methodology avoids superficial descriptions. Instead, the author utilizes deeply embedded linguistic structures to map abstract, complex processes of social disintegration onto concrete conceptual domains that resonate powerfully within the Uzbek collective consciousness. The body is shown mutilated and silenced, the animal kingdom represents social predation and isolation, the color palette signals a terminal spiritual sickness, and the historical pillars of community are exposed as spaces of toxic surveillance.

Ultimately, this cognitive mapping serves a double function. On one hand, it provides a devastatingly honest, unsparing historical record of the profound psychological traumas and moral compromises experienced by the nation during an era of hyper-commercialization and globalized cultural dislocation. On the other hand, by utilizing the dense, authentic resources of traditional Uzbek phraseology and metaphor, Erkin A'zam actively defends the boundaries of the national language. He prevents it from succumbing to the flat, homogenous 'noise' of globalized monotony. This paper underscores the vital importance of applying modern cognitive and linguocultural methodologies to contemporary Uzbek prose, as it unlocks the deep-seated conceptual structures that allow literature to serve as both the permanent ethical conscience and the living cognitive archive of a nation's soul.

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