

## Lexicographic Interpretation and Semantic Features of the Term *Gerb*

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### ABSTRACT

*This article provides a semantic and etymological analysis of the term *gerb*, which entered the Uzbek language from German through the mediation of the Russian language. In the course of the study, the use of this term in various language systems, its historical origin and evolution, as well as its semantic stabilization in the recipient language are examined and consistently elucidated.*

**Keywords:** Naturalism, social phenomenon, lexical layer, heir, phonetic change, polysemy, comparative analysis, electronic source, proto-language, etymological evolution, flag, coin, national and natural features, class differentiation, Ancient Roman state, national heritage, official document.

### INTRODUCTION

The great nineteenth-century German scholar and founder of the Naturalist school, August Schleicher, regarded language as a natural phenomenon and defined it as follows: “Languages, like human beings, are born, live, develop, age, and die” [19: 21]. Certainly, this view may be considered correct to some extent; however, language is primarily a social phenomenon, and its existence is directly connected with the existence of the people who speak it.

When discussing the development of a language and the enrichment of its lexical layer, this process is achieved, first of all, through the internal resources of the language as well as

through the incorporation of foreign words. Nevertheless, in this process both native and borrowed lexical units may undergo a certain degree of deformation, namely semantic, structural, and phonetic changes. Generally, words are polysemantic and possess multiple meanings; however, the characteristics of a word in its original source are adapted to the national linguistic and cultural coloring of the recipient language.

Therefore, the study of the etymological evolution of loanwords, as well as the identification of how form and meaning are preserved or transformed in the process of borrowing, constitutes one of the most relevant issues in modern linguistics.

Taking the above considerations into account, the term *gerb*, which entered the Uzbek language from German, was selected for analysis. In this article, a comparative analysis of the interpretations of this term in German, Russian, and Uzbek dictionaries is conducted. Based on this analysis, the similarities and differences of the term, its historical development, and its current status in the Uzbek language are identified, and conclusions are drawn within the framework of contrastive linguistics.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employs historical-comparative, descriptive-linguistic, conceptual, etymological, and semantic analysis methods, as well as approaches aimed at describing lexicographic sources.

As primary sources, both printed and electronic explanatory and etymological dictionaries of the German language, such as *Langenscheidt*, *PONS*, and *Duden*, were utilized. Since Russian served as the intermediary language in the process of borrowing the term *gerb* into Uzbek, Russian lexicographic sources were also included in the analysis.

Given that Uzbek constitutes the core focus of the research, not only explanatory dictionaries but also German-Uzbek and Uzbek-German bilingual dictionaries were consulted. This approach made it possible to determine to what extent the lexical and semantic features of the term in its proto-language have been preserved in the recipient language.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A comparative lexicographic, etymological-semantic, and phonetic analysis of the term *gerb* was conducted on the basis of dictionary definitions in three languages. Below are the results of the analysis.

Comparative analysis of lexicographic definitions based on sources such as *The Five-Volume Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language* (Madvaliyev 2020; Madvaliyev ET AL. 2021), Boymatov et al. (2016), Kuznetsov (2000), as well as *Duden*, *Kluge*, and other lexicographic materials, the term “*gerb*” occupies two major lexical-semantic domains:

- **Heraldic or visual-symbolic domain** – symbolic signs of a state, city, clan, or family (flag, seal, coin depiction, shield-shaped emblem);
- **Etymological-historical domain** – the origin of the word and its specific etymological sources.

In Uzbek dictionaries, the definition of *gerb* predominantly emphasizes functional and socio-political aspects: *gerb* is defined as “a symbolic sign representing the political and historical ideas of a particular country or territory” [13: 495; 14: 80].

Russian dictionaries highlight the traditional heraldic nature of the term, presenting *зепѳ* within the context of official documents, flags, and seals [11: 200; 17: 20, 174].

German sources, in contrast, explicitly distinguish the dual role of heraldry (*Wappen*) and the etymological root (*Erbe*): *Wappen* refers to a shield-shaped emblem within heraldic tradition, whereas *Erbe* is etymologically linked to the meaning of “inheritance/heritage” [4: 238; 9: 838; 12: 337; 18: 2329].

*Etymological pathway*

the analysis demonstrates that the formation of the lexeme *gerb* reflects a historical intersection between two elements:

- Through the German root *Erbe* (“inheritance”), the Polish form *herb* emerged, which subsequently entered Russian as

*zep̄o* and Uzbek as *gerb*. This pathway resulted in a hybrid semantic transformation: from the functional symbol of “inheritance” to a socio-political symbol representing state heritage and national legacy [9: 838];

- On the other hand, the German concept *Wappen* (“shield, emblem”) is heraldically more precise and has consistently functioned in close semantic proximity to *gerb*. Sources such as *Duden* and *Langenscheidt* clearly define *Wappen* as a heraldic term, historically derived from the notion of “weapon/protective sign” (*Waffe* → *Wappen*) [5: 532; 12: 337].

As a result, the Uzbek term *gerb* emerged through secondary etymological layering that combines elements of *Erbe* and *Wappen*. This process is especially evident in the transition from Polish (*herb*) to Russian and subsequently to Uzbek, as confirmed by the analyzed lexicographic data.

#### *Semantic expansion and polysemy*

The analyzed sources indicate that the meanings attributed to *gerb* extend beyond a purely visual-heraldic sign and also encompass social, political, and cultural heritage [1: 99; 2: 559; 13: 495]. This reflects semantic expansion from the original heraldic meaning (shield, insignia) toward a cultural-political metaphor (national heritage, historical identifier).

At the same time, the theoretical semantic link *Erbe* → “inheritance” further reinforces the interpretation of *gerb* as a marker of cultural heritage.

From a polysemantic perspective, dictionaries attribute the following meanings to *gerb*:

1. a heraldic emblem (*Wappen*);
2. an emblem used in official documents;
3. cultural and historical heritage;
4. in Russian sources, related scholarly and financial terms (e.g., *гербовая марка* “stamped duty mark,” *гербовый сбор* “stamp duty”).

These meanings demonstrate the pragmatic contexts of the term, including official documentation, currency, seals, and monetary symbols.

*Phonetic and morphological adaptation*

The adaptation of the term into Uzbek followed a phonetic and graphic pathway: German *Erbe* → Polish *herb* → Russian *зепѣ* → Uzbek *gerb*. During this process, the initial [h] sound was adapted as [g] in Uzbek (*herb* → *gerb*), which reflects mediation through Russian and general phonological adaptation. This phonetic correspondence is consistently recorded in dictionaries and translations [8: 452; 3: 194].

Furthermore, *Wappen/Wap-pen* is presented in translations as a semantic equivalent of *gerb*, although lexicographic sources clearly indicate its distinct morphological origin [12: 337; 18: 2329].

*Lexicographic inconsistencies and linguo-cultural aspects*

Although Uzbek and Russian dictionaries generally provide compatible definitions of *gerb*, several discrepancies and ambiguities were identified:

- In some sources, etymological clarity is insufficient (for instance, *Langenscheidt* offers detailed information on *Wappen* but provides limited explanation of the *Erbe* → *gerb* pathway);
- Russian dictionaries often emphasize Polish *herb* via Czech *erb* as the source but do not consistently elaborate the connection with German *Erbe*;
- Uzbek dictionaries predominantly interpret *gerb* within a heraldic-political framework, while historical-etymological explanations are not always comprehensively presented.

Such inconsistencies may lead to confusion in translation practice and lexicographic work, as translators may adopt differing approaches depending on whether they prioritize the “heritage”-based historical explanation or the purely heraldic meaning of the term.

*Heraldry and socio-political functions*

The analyzed materials demonstrate that *gerb* functions not only as a symbolic sign but also as an indicator of social stratification, historical identity, and political-cultural heritage [1: 99; 14: 80]. Through the *gerb*:

1. state identification is achieved;
2. intergenerational cultural continuity is expressed (national heritage);
3. authority is symbolized in legal and ritual contexts (seals, official documents).

*Lexicographic recommendations*

Based on the results of the analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Dictionaries should present the etymological explanation of *gerb* clearly and sequentially (*Erbe* ← *herb* ← *Wappen*);
- Heraldic and etymological contexts should be provided in separate paragraphs within each dictionary entry, with explicit cross-referencing between *Wappen* and *Erbe*;
- In translation and terminological practice, the official (heraldic) and cultural (heritage-related) dimensions of *gerb* should be clearly distinguished, supported by contextual collocations and examples from official documents.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analyzed lexicographic sources in Uzbek, Russian, and German demonstrate that the term *gerb* shares a common semantic field as a heraldic symbol, while its etymological foundation is formed through the historical intersection of the German *Erbe* (“inheritance, heritage”) and the heraldic element *Wappen*. In the process of entering the Uzbek language, the mediating roles of Polish *herb* and Russian *герб* proved to be particularly significant. Consequently, from a semantic

perspective, *gerb* denotes not only a visual emblem but also cultural and political heritage.

In Uzbek lexicography, the meanings of *gerbare* not always presented comprehensively or consistently across heraldic, etymological, and socio-political dimensions. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed for dictionary compilers:

1. explicitly indicating the etymological sequence (*Erbe* ← *herb* ← *gerb*);
2. clearly distinguishing and explaining the difference and interrelation between *Wappen* and *Erbe*;
3. providing contextual examples (flags, seals, coins, official documents).

Translators should take into account that the term *gerb* may require different renderings depending on context: in a heraldic sense (*Wappen* / *public emblem*) or in a cultural-historical sense (national heritage, ancestral legacy). In addition, it is recommended that Uzbek academic texts include explanatory parenthetical notes or annotations for *gerb*, particularly in historical or legal contexts.

Based on the findings of this study, the following directions for further research are suggested:

1. corpus-based analysis of the collocations of *gerb* in Uzbek, Russian, and German corpora;
2. deeper exploration of the historical and cognitive interpretation of heraldic terminology;
3. development of terminological guidelines for standardizing etymological explanations in dictionary entries.

Overall, this research clarifies the intersection between heraldry and lexicography, contributing to the accurate assimilation of heraldic terminology in the Uzbek language and enhancing the theoretical and practical quality of translation studies.

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