
CONFERENCE ARTICLE**Naming The Hierarchy: Translating Nicknames And Titles Of Rank In "Shaytanat" And "The Godfather"****Saidova Nilufar Anvar qizi**Alisher Navoi University of Uzbek Language and Literature, Uzbekistan

Abstract: Before a single line of dialogue is spoken, a criminal novel has usually already told its reader who outranks whom — through names. This paper narrows in on exactly that mechanism: how nicknames and titles establish and signal hierarchy within the criminal world of Tohir Malik's "Shaytanat" and Mario Puzo's "The Godfather," and what happens to that hierarchy once a translator gets involved. Malik's characters carry laqab — nicknames built from appearance, temperament, or deed — while Puzo's carry structural titles such as "Don," "consigliere," and "caporegime" that name a specific position within an organizational chart rather than a personal trait. The paper argues that this difference in kind, not just in vocabulary, is the real translation obstacle: a laqab must be read and decoded by the audience to reveal rank, while a title like "caporegime" announces rank directly, requiring no decoding at all. Rendering personality-based nicknames into English therefore demands a different toolkit than rendering position-based titles into Uzbek, and the paper works through what each direction actually requires in practice.

Keywords: Nicknames, laqab, titles of rank, social hierarchy, literary translation, "Shaytanat", "The Godfather", sociolinguistics.

Introduction

Open almost any page of "Shaytanat" or "The Godfather" and, in my reading at least, rank is already on display before a character says a word — it is built into how that character is named. This is worth isolating as its own translation problem, distinct from the broader question of criminal jargon in general, because nicknames and titles do not just carry social meaning the way slang does; they carry it through two structurally different mechanisms, and conflating the two obscures what a translator is actually up against in each case.

Malik's laqab system works by indirection. A nickname drawn from a man's appearance, a habit, or a past deed does not announce rank outright — it requires the reader to infer standing from what the label implies, filtered through the social logic of the group awarding it. Two characters can carry equally striking nicknames while occupying quite different positions in the hierarchy; the nickname signals identity and reputation more directly than it signals rank as such. Puzo's titles work the opposite way. "Don" names the head of a family without ambiguity. "Consigliere" names the counselor position without requiring the reader to decode anything about the individual holding it — the title is the org chart, spoken aloud.

This is, I think, where the distinction really starts to matter. A title like "caporegime" travels reasonably well into Uzbek through calque or explanatory paraphrase — "brigada boshlig'i" or similar — because what is being translated is a structural role, and structural roles tend to have some rough analogue across cultures with any organized hierarchy at all, criminal or otherwise. A laqab resists this kind of clean structural mapping. Translating "Shaytanat"'s nicknames into English means either inventing an English nickname built on comparable logic (appearance, habit, deed) — which risks losing the specific cultural flavor of the original naming convention — or explaining the nickname's origin outright, which drains it of the compactness that made it function as a nickname rather than a

description in the first place.

Puzo's own title, "Godfather," sits in an interesting middle position between these two types. It is not a purely structural title like "caporegime," since it also carries a repurposed religious meaning (a baptismal sponsor) layered underneath the criminal one; nor is it a pure laqab, since it names an organizational position rather than a personal trait. Its successful transfer into general English usage suggests a third path worth noting: a title that borrows its emotional resonance from one cultural domain (religion) while redirecting its functional meaning toward another (crime) can travel unusually well, because it gives readers two different points of entry into the same word rather than one.

Taken together, what I take this narrower comparison to suggest is that translators should not treat "naming" as a single undifferentiated category of literary jargon requiring one general strategy. Titles of rank, being structural, generally tolerate calque and direct translation. Nicknames, being descriptive and culturally coded, generally require either invention of a comparable target-language nickname or a willingness to sacrifice some compactness for clarity. My own conclusion, for what it's worth, is that recognizing which type a given name belongs to — before choosing a strategy — matters more than memorizing any single fixed rule for "how to translate nicknames" in the abstract.

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