

**ISCKMC 2020****International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****HEALTH AS VITAL VALUE OF LANGUAGE CULTURE OF  
RUSSIANS AND KALMYKS**

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**Abstract**

The paper is devoted to the study of health as a vital value of the Kalmyks and Russians. Health, which refers to the value of the social level, is considered as an axiologically significant concept of the Russian and Kalmyk language culture. The analysis is carried out on the material of proverbs (paroemia), which, being the products of the entire social and cultural life of the peoples, reflect the ethnic representation of the peoples about any phenomenon. The source of the language material was the authoritative works of well-known collectors and researchers of the folk wisdom pronounced by the Russian (V.I. Dahl) and Kalmyk (B.H. Todayev) peoples. Some statistical, comparative and linguistic methods were used as research methods, as well as the method of continuous sampling. In the course of the analysis of the paroemiological units of the Russian and Kalmyk, it was concluded that the fields of “health” and “piece”, “health” and “happiness” were crossed over. In paroemia there is the philosophy of the peoples about health, where health is associated with the head as the main organ of a human body. In the Russian proverbs, the concept “health” correlates with the particular material values such as money – gold, treasure, rather than in Kalmyk the main wealth of nomads (local people) is cattle. Both Russian and Kalmyk language culture postulate the benefits for health in examples of clean water and tea and the harm as alcohol and overeating.

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*Keywords:* Language culture, Kalmyks, Russians, concept, vital values



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## 1. Introduction

The study of axiological systems is one of the priorities of the modern humanitarian science, because, as the classics of sociology M. Weber, E. Durkheim, P. Sorokin, T. Parsons point out, it is possible to understand and describe any society only by studying the system of values characteristic of it. In philosophy and sociology, “value” is interpreted as a concept used to point to a human, social and cultural meaning of certain objects and phenomena. Philosophers, psychologists, and linguists consider axiological problems taking into account the achievements of a particular field of knowledge, which in general expands and deepens ideas about content, typology, dynamics, functioning of values. The values functioning will depend on the specifics of a particular society, its socio-political, historical, economic and socio-cultural features. In world science, there is a perception that there are values, strong beliefs in the fundamental preference of certain goals or ways over others (Rokeach, 1973). Discussions were held in the way of searching for definitions, number and range of values. Rokeach (1973), using the results that were obtained by his predecessors, offered a list of 36 values, which he divided into the crucial components that make up the meaning of a human life, and the instrumental ones, related to the ways of actions and methods used for goals achievement. In recent years, after criticism of the ideas proposed by M. Rokeach, the list of values developed by the researcher with small clarifications was adopted, as his research in particular was recognized as the richest and most methodically reasoning enabling to study the insight of values (Leontiev, 1998).

## 2. Problem Statement

In Russian science, the issue of values is given increased attention due to the fact that Russia, with its multi-ethnic population and its original historical path, presents a unique opportunity to study the peculiarities of the externality of values in the language cultures of some ethnic groups in Russia, taking into account objective and subjective factors that influence the modification of their content, as well as their hierarchy. There are two main vectors to research values. Within the first vector, presented in some sociological studies, which rely upon the ideas proposed by Rokeach (1973), the scientists study the relationship of representatives of different social groups and how they express their attitude to the universal values. This aspect is presented in many works of sociologists, philosophers, educators, and psychologists. Linguistic works study the functioning of values in specific language cultures. They do it through the analysis of a polytext that characterizes and denotes the externality nature of the values content. The studies of recent years use the concept “value-based picture of the world”, which includes the most important meanings for the culture, cultural dominants, the totality of which creates a certain type of culture, supported and preserved in the language (Karasik, 2012). Among the values that are able to create the culture, there are some material ones, which includes a set of outstanding works of intellectual, artistic, religious nature and some spiritual values as well (Gubskiy, 2006). The linguocultural study targeted at the universal values is carried out in a number of works.

### **3. Research Questions**

The subject of this work is the concept “health”, which refers to such mental associations that can serve as a kind of key to understanding some important features of the culture of the people (as the nation) (Shmelev, 2002). Health, being a value of the universal level, can be considered as axologically significant vital concept of any, including the Russian and Kalmyk, language culture. This explains our appeal to this concept.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the work is to analyze the universal concept “health” as it is introduced in the language culture of the Kalmyks and Russians, who have been in contact for more than 400 years in the Lower Volga region. The analysis is carried out on the material of proverbs (paroemia), which, being the products of the entire social and cultural life of the people, reflect the ethnic representation of the people about any phenomenon. The source of the language material was the works of Dahl (2009) “Proverbs of the Russian People” (Dahl, 2009) and Todayeva (2007) “Proverbs, sayings and riddles of the Kalmyks of Russia and the Oyrats of China”. The appeal to these sources is explained by the fact that they are the most complete and authoritative collections of wisdom of the Russian and Kalmyk peoples. The proverbs, in which the concept “health” is, were selected from these sources.

### **5. Research Methods**

Some statistical, comparative and linguistic methods were used as research methods, as well as the method of continuous sampling. Using a solid sampling method, all units dedicated to the “health” concept were selected from the above-mentioned language sources. Using a statistical method, the language units in which the concept “health” is verbalized were counted. The comparative method was used in the analysis of the concept in such unrelated and typological languages as Russian and Kalmyk. The use of the linguocultural method allowed revealing the mechanism helping to comprehend the concept “health” in the paroemiological fund of the Kalmyks and Russians.

### **6. Findings**

According to the Russian sociological studies, health takes the second place among the most important traditional values of the Russian archetype, trailing to the family values, but standing higher over the material ones (Sergeeva, 2004). This situation is reflected in the Russian proverbs: health and peace is a whole kingdom; health is better than wealth; you cannot buy health; losing health is easier than saving it; health is the head to all; money losing means nothing, health losing means a lot. The Kalmyk proverbs also have the idea of the health value. The health in the Kalmyk proverbs is associated with livestock and its preservation, the main source of the material condition of nomads and the indicator of their well-being: [эрүл-менд күүнә мал бүрдән] – who is healthy that has the cattle preserved.

Analysis of the proverbs of these two ethnic groups allows concluding that the fields of “health” and “piece” are crossed over. In proverbs there is a philosophy of the people about health: health can not

be bought, but you can lose it, and this will be a fatal loss. It is no coincidence that in the proverbs of the two peoples health is associated with the head, the main organ of the person, which is the receptacle of the mind and makes a person homo sapiens. So, for example, the Kalmyks say: [тө тарһнас толһан мөндһ дээр] – than to have fat thick as a span (9 inches), it is better to have a healthy head. Proverbs mark the intersection of the fields as “health” and “happiness”. The proverb collections of the Kalmyks and Russians allow concluding that, according to the life philosophy of these peoples, happiness is impossible without health. Thus, the Kalmyks say: [өвчн уга – кишгтә, өрн уга – байн] – if not be sick – you are happy; if have no debts – you are rich; and the Russians claim that health and happiness do not live without each other; if you want to be happy all your life, be healthy; God would give health, and we would find happiness. Let us pay attention to the metaphorical associations pronounced by the Kalmyks, who compare the absence of diseases with a sunny day: [үүлн уга өдр сәәхн, өвчн уга бий сәәхн] – a beautiful day is the day that is sunny, a beautiful body is the body that is healthy. In addition, the Kalmyk metaphor shows an associative link between disease and prison, i.e. the freedom limitation: [йов гих зарһ уга, ях гих өвчн уга] – not to be convicted, not to suffer from a disease. The Kalmyks believe that a person is healthy is who knows that he is abnormal: [адтаһан мөдсн – эрүл, һәрһтәһән мөдсн – ухата] – a healthy person is the one who knows that he is crazy, intelligent is one who knows that he is stupid. This proverb is not about the physical, but the mental health of a person. The proverb proclaims the relativity of the category of health: there are no perfectly healthy people, understanding this circumstance testifies to the real mind and true health. In the Russian proverbs, the concept “health” correlates with the particular material values such as money – gold, treasure, rather than in Kalmyk the main wealth of nomads (local people) is cattle. At the same time, the idea of superiority of health is emphasized: health is the best wealth, health is more expensive than gold, health is more expensive than money, health cannot be bought. Comparing health with some material wealth, the Russian person concludes about the priority of health: health is a priceless thing impossible to buy. Although in general, the Russian language culture highlights the high value of health, understanding of health as an unconditional value, at the same time there is an ironic attitude to excessive attention to health. For example: health is the most expensive thing and money too; fighting for health – do not get a rupture; some are eternally ill because they care very much to be healthy; who does not smoke or drink, will die healthy; learned the price of medicines – and be healthy. According to Vezhbitskaya (2011), the Russian consciousness is characterized by the feelings that people are beyond the control of their own lives, that their ability to control life is limited. The proverbs devoted to health reflect this belief of the Russians in predestination of life: God will add health! Health has not come to life. These features of the Russians mentality can be explained by the ambivalence expressed towards health: on the one hand, there is recognition of its unconditional priority, and on the other hand, there is an ironic view of the excessive concern of a person who cares of health much. Healthy lifestyle is an important component of the concept in the issue we consider, so paroemia pays enough attention to this component. The importance of a healthy lifestyle comes down to the thesis: if you want to be healthy – lead a healthy lifestyle. At the same time, two semantic groups are singled out in the paroemia dedicated to a healthy lifestyle: “nutrition” and “habits” (purity, cold water treatment, motor activity, etc.). Thus, health is directly associated with longevity through movement (move more – live longer), health correlates with hardening (if you want to be healthy – treat with cold water), healthy habits

(life saves those who does not smoke and do not drink). In the Kalmyk paroemia among the habits, harming health is called overeating ([эрул-менд кергтэ болхла, хот бичкэр эдл, бийэн күндлх саната болхла, бичэ бур] – if want the health – do not overeat, if want respect – chat less) and as a result – excess weight ([том тарһнас толһа бүтһь] – than to have fat thick in a span, it is better to have a healthy head). In the proverbs of the two peoples, the purity of the body is seen as a prerequisite for health. The Russians claim that purity is the key to health, and Kalmyks recommend: [эрүлиг күсвл цевр йов, эрдмиг күсвл бичг сур] – if want to be healthy – keep clean, if want to have knowledge – learn; [гемин эхн – бузр] – source of disease is dirt.

In the culture of the Russian people, an important place is taken by a bath or sauna (banya), which is understood as a source of health. This is the understanding of the bath we find in the Russian paroemia. Thus, the Russians believe that in sauna to wash – to be born again, sauna is the mother second, hot steam any ailment will heal, sauna is not a nanny, and at least someone will please. Harsh climate, long snowy winter, heavy agricultural work led to an important place of sauna in the life of the Russian people. According to the Russians belief, sauna keeps health, treats ailments, gives rest to a body after a lot of grueling work. As known, the main attributes of the Russian sauna are steam and a broom, which are understood in the Russian paroemia not only as important components of sauna, but also as a means of preserving health. As an example, we can cite the following proverbs: sauna without a broom is the same as a flowerbed without flowers; without a broom, sauna does not work; the broom in sauna is the boss to all. The presence of these components in the concept “health” is explained by the fact that a broom and steam help to fight diseases and contribute to good health. The value of health is postulated through the antonic opposition as healthy – sick, for example: eat fast – not to be healthy. Moderation in food is approved in the proverbs of the Russians and Kalmyks: moderation is the mother of health; [эрул-менд кергтэ болхла, хот бичкэр эдл] – if want health, don't overeat. The proverbs explicitly state that bad habits lead to disease: smoking is harmful to health; [рк уухла, эмнд харш, ээл кеехлэ, ажлд харш] – if you drink vodka, you harm your health. Kalmyk proverbs note the harm of alcohol (Yesenova & Tsende, 2012) and smoking ([эрк арвн нас хулхалдг, тэмк тавн нас хулхалдг] – vodka steals from a man ten years, and tobacco – five). The proverb collections of the Kalmyks and Russians speak about the importance for health of sunlight and fresh air. So, according to the Russians, in a house where fresh air and sunlight, a doctor is not needed, musty air and dirty water is the trouble for health, where the sun often comes, there rarely comes a doctor. This group is joined by the proverbs about the role of proper clothing to preserve health, which is important for Russia with its harsh climate. For example, the Russians believe that if you get dressed warmer in frost – you will be healthier.

Analysis of the Russian proverbs shows the intersection of the concept “health” with the lexicon-semantic field of the concept “nutrition”. Thus, in paroemia there are called the products with which the Russians associate good health. The main attention is paid to the importance of eating bread, cereals and vegetables to preserve health: bread and water – healthy food, bread is all over the head, buckwheat porridge – our mother, and rye bread – our native father, disease – not a problem, if there is bread and water, bread will feed, water will pour, etc. Among the health-friendly products, according to the Russians, there is a carrot (carrots add blood, etc.); onion (onion from seven ailments, onions and sauna rule all, who eats onions, will be under God’s care forever, eat onions – cleaner teeth you will have);

honey (honey and onions are a health circle); horseradish (horseradish and onions do not let go of hands), radish (who eats horseradish and radish, be ill rarely); cabbage (horseradish and radish, onion and cabbage dashing will not allow); turnip (horseradish and turnip – that's it and strong). Appetite is considered in proverbs as an indicator of human health: appetite from the patient runs away, and to a healthy one comes. The Kalmyk language does not reveal proverbs about healthy foods and there is no mention of appetite as an indicator of health. As for health-friendly beverages, the most attention is paid to tea. This is due to its benefits for the body: drink tea – forget about melancholy; drink tea, do not let in the sadness; drink tea – live longer; if drink tea – up to a hundred years will live. At the same time, tea is considered not only as an elixir of health, longevity, but also as a means of maintaining a good mood, cheerfulness of spirit. The long tradition of tea culture allowed the Russians to make the following observation: fresh tea is a medicine, old tea is poison. The Kalmyks made similar conclusions about tea (Yesenova & Yesenova, 2012), which is reflected in the Kalmyk paroemia. It is appropriate to say here that there is scientific and non-fiction literature about the healing properties of this drink, as well as its place in the Kalmyk culture (Habunova, 2009). This drink is considered not only in terms of its place in the culture of the ethnic group, but also in the aspect of nutriciology (Nastinova, 2014), and as a subconcept in the ethnolinguistic aspect (Bovaeva, 2012). Both Russian and Kalmyk's language cultures postulate the importance for the health of clean water: clean water is a disaster for ailments; [геснд гем уга болвл, кийтн ус уухас ээх уга] – if the stomach is healthy, do not be afraid of drinking cold water. In the Russian proverbs it is said that sleep plays a big role in preserving health, restoring energy: having a good sleep as if reborn; sleep – better than any medicine. The Kalmyk proverb says that wealth interferes with sleep: [алтн иктэ күмни эврнь мууха, зөөр иктэ күмни зүүдн мууха] – who has a lot of gold is bad-tempered, who has a lot of wealth, he/she does not have a good sleep. Probably, according to the Kalmyks, wealth harms health. In the Russian proverbs there is a provision that health depends on the quality and duration of sleep: if you do not get enough sleep – you lose health. In the Kalmyk and Russian proverbs it is said that early to go to bed and get up early is good for health: when chickens go to bed – you go either, when roosters wake up – wake up with them (at the same time); who get up until a day starts, he will be gifted by this day; who gets up early, lives twice. In addition, the Russians believe that the best sleep is until midnight. However, there is also an observation about the benefits of daytime sleep: after lunch, lie down after dinner, walk long. The Kalmyk paroemia notes the importance of the medicine for good health: [өвичг засхд эм эрднь, элсиг засхд модн эрднь] – to treat the disease medicine is a jewel, for the suspension of sand a jewel is trees; [нашун эм өвчнд туста, нашун үг бийд туста] – bitter medicine is useful for disease, bitter words are useful to yourself. Accordingly, the importance of the doctor's help in the treatment of diseases is postulated: [өвчнэс гетлхд эмч туслдг, өөдэн хархд күчкөлсн туслдг] – to get rid of the disease, a doctor will help, but to raise the well-being, the labour. In paroemia, both Russians and Kalmyks, health is seen as a condition for the realization of all benefits: it would be health and there are many days ahead; if you're healthy, you will get some money. Healthy is all great; without health, there is no good life; [өвчнэс ах, эдгснэс дү] – more than a disease, less than recovery.

Proverbs as the quintessence of folk experience also affect the spiritual health of a human. At the same time, paroemia postulates the importance of spiritual righteousness, warns against committing sinful

acts that cause irreparable harm to health: the stone heart is not to be healthy; greed for health is a foe; do not brag about your health, you will be healthier; who overcomes the anger, will be stronger; [хар санан бийд харш] – evil intentions will do much harm; [хар санан – хорн, хармч седкл – тушан] – evil intention is poison, greed is putts, and etc. The idea of the importance of spiritual purity for health is characteristic: who overcomes the anger, will be stronger; [көвчин чагчмд күлг зовдг, уурин өсрүнд седкл зовдг] – on a steep climb a horse is tired and from the outburst of anger, the soul suffers. A number of proverbs speak about human vices/drawbacks, which negatively affect the physical and spiritual health. Among these negative qualities in the paroemia of two peoples there are referred boasting, hypocrisy, lies, flattery, laziness, fear, sadness, anger, temperance, hate, greed, alcohol addiction, etc. Proverbs emphasize the effect of good and evil on human health: a good person is healthier than a bad one; good to be – to live longer. The ethnocultural specificity of the physical component of health can be traced, in particular, in zoonims. In Russian consciousness, a healthy person is associated with a bear, a horse, a bull, a cow (healthy as a bear; healthy as a horse; healthy as a bull; be healthy as a cow). This parallel is not typical to the Kalmyk language.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the comparative analysis of the Russian and Kalmyk proverbs on health allows to conclude the following. The “health” concept includes a broad meaning area associated with the absence of diseases, healthy lifestyles, healthy diets, healthy clothing, and bad habits that harm health. The significant number of proverbs devoted to this concept, as well as the intersection of the semantic fields of this concept with such important semantic fields of language culture as calmness, happiness, shows that health correlates with the higher life values of the Kalmyks and Russians.

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