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**LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL IMAGE OF PERSIA IN “TRAVEL  
NOTES” BY A.S. GRIBOEDOV**

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***Abstract***

Research on the national picture of the world, selection and description of cultural concepts made it possible to identify "linguistic and cultural images" – special cognitive entities that are characteristic of one national culture or a group of similar cultures. Verbalized concepts exist in the system of linguistic and cultural images. Culture specific units are those concepts that do not have full or partial equivalents in other languages. Linguistic and cultural images can be described when comparing cultures. A set of typical linguistic and cultural units may represent a holistic linguistic and cultural image of the country. But it is not evident whether it is unique for all the representatives of the country. The article describes the linguistic and cultural image of the country, its development under the influence of various factors; analyzes linguistic means used to create a linguistic and cultural image of Persia based on “Travel Notes” by A. Griboedov. The notes devoted to the description of Griboedov's trip from Tebriz to Tehran, were analyzed. Several groups of lexical units were identified: proper names, mainly toponyms; common names, including words naming people by their social characteristics; and culture specific lexical units. All the words were analyzed in terms of semantics, etymology, and historical lexicography.

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**Keywords:** Linguistic, cultural image, specific vocabulary, semantics.



## 1. Introduction

This article studies the linguistic and cultural image of Persia through linguistic means of “Travel Notes” by Griboedov (1959).

The genre of travel notes is a very complex text form, as it includes an essay, a diary, memoirs, artistic journalism and a documentary description. Movement of the character in space and his observations are at the heart of the plot. One of the main goals is to see what he did not see, knew and did not know before.

“Travel Notes” by A.S. Griboedov, who in the middle of 1818 was appointed secretary of the Russian diplomatic mission in Tehran, are of particular interest for researchers.

Authors of travel notes often include comments into their their notes in order to explain incomprehensible things. Griboedov (1959) does not follow this rule, since he does not intend to publish these texts, he addresses them to his friend S.N. Begichev. The author’s task is to create an image of an unfamiliar world, tell about his uniqueness, and position himself as an attentive researcher. Non-equivalent words related to the opposition "friend-foe" emphasize the specifics of the country with its geographical and social realities.

## 2. Problem Statement

Specialists try to assess the cultural significance of a language unit (“cultural knowledge”) based on the correlation of language units with culture “codes” of native speakers. “Studying linguistic and cultural concepts in their dynamics and diversity, researchers describe linguistic mentality – a specific way of representation of knowledge of the surrounding reality, the system of values and behavior patterns of native speakers” (Bastrikov & Bastrikova, 2012, p. 17). Mentality is an intangible category represented in concepts and images. They can be studied in words, phraseological units, grammatical categories, metaphors and secondary nominations, speech formulas and stereotypes; traditions of the stylistic system associated with peculiarities of the history of literary language. Therefore, the study of culture specific images can and should be carried out on the material of various discourses, texts of all styles, in various linguistic transformations. However, researchers often focus on the vocabulary.

Conceptual units of various levels “are revealed through semantics. The meanings of words, phrases, utterances, texts serve as a source of knowledge about the content of concepts. Concepts are represented by words, but the whole set of speech means does not give a complete picture of the concept. A word with its meaning represents only a part of the concept, hence it is necessary to study synonyms, texts that reveal the content of the concept” (Khrolenko, 2009, p. 84). The verbalized concept exists in the system of linguistic and cultural images. Culture specific units are concepts that do not have full or partial equivalents in other languages.

## 3. Research Questions

The subject of this study is linguistic means used for creating a linguistic and cultural image of Persia.

Linguistic and cultural images are associated with linguistic and cultural concepts that make up the picture of the world reflected in the language and culture of the country. Most of them are universal, others are unique. In any picture of the world, there are "reference points" that form its core, in which both universal and unique units are fused. A linguistic and cultural image of the country or the people is a system of concepts, frames, scenarios that have no analogues in other cultures. However, cultural uniqueness can be revealed only through comparison. Identification of identity of each culture is a subject of linguistic and cultural studies.

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

The main purpose of the article is to determine which semantic and linguistic units can express the linguistic and cultural image of Persia reflecting various fragments of the national worldview. We assume that these informative units can be expressed in language (words, individual meanings, phraseological units, semantic categories) and in speech (formulas, scripts of verbal and non-verbal behavior).

The main research tasks are identification of words that represent linguistic and cultural images and systematization of these words for determining semantic fields whose core and periphery are culture specific language units.

#### **5. Research Methods**

Two different cultures can be compared by their vocabularies and texts. However, the most interesting method is an empirical one based on direct comparison of cultures. This is possible when the representative of one culture is immersed into another one. The results are often reflected in the genre of travel notes.

One of the methods for identifying unique concepts and images is the lacunary method which can be used for comparing the vocabulary of two languages. Using the contrastive analysis, the absence of an equivalent lexical unit in one of the languages is revealed.

A lexical gap is a word or other form that does not exist in some language. Lexical gaps arise when two cultures interact with each other (Popova & Sternin, 2003). The most striking gaps are subject ones which indicate the lack of a material object or phenomenon in one of the cultures. Lexical gaps are often characterized as "basic elements of the national specificity of a linguistic and cultural community. They make it difficult for other fragments of texts to be understood by recipients of foreign cultures" (Belyanin, 2002, p. 36).

#### **6. Findings**

The Linguistic and cultural image is created by a set of thematic groups of vocabulary, covering various areas of culture. We found 35 words creating the linguistic and cultural image of Persia. 18 words are toponyms. (e.g. Tabriz, Shirvan, Kodabenda, Abgar, Kazbin, Tagiran, Raga, Rasht, Marand, the Miana River, Demavend). Other words denote social and political nature phenomena, since author does not forget about his diplomatic mission. 30% of all words were names of jobs which describe the structure of society, living connections and relations between its parts and subjects. The linguistic and cultural image

represented by the author is politically marked because it is estimated on the basis of political and social factors. The author gathers information about the culture trying to convey new linguistic and cultural images.

Tomakhin (1986) argues that realities are “names of objects of material culture inherent only in individual nations and peoples, facts of history, state institutions, names of national and folk heroes, mythical creatures” (p. 9). The main list of words used in the "Notes" are culture specific units. It should be emphasized that most words are not Iranisms. There are many Turkisms, words that go back to the classical Arabic language (the language of the Koran). Many of these words exist in modern Farsi, but have always been alien barbarisms for the Persian culture. It is clear that Griboedov (1959) took phenomena which are not characteristic of the Persian culture for Persian culture specific units.

In Tabriz, Griboedov (1959) and his companions dealt with the Azerbaijani language rather than Farsi. Therefore, the text contains many Turkisms corresponding to the dialects of that period.

All this confirms another important point: each culture represents a complex system of mutual influences. Culture specific phenomena are borrowed by other cultures and perceived as native ones.

We selected words that 1) had no equivalents in Russian, 2) were transcribed or transliterated. Their meanings were analyzed. First of all, a group of proper names was selected (toponyms and common names, including social terms naming individuals by their social characteristics, names of holidays, public places, etc.). These words were subject to etymological and historical-lexicographic analysis using the Persian Dictionary and the Explanatory Dictionary of the Persian Language.

The composition of the vocabulary reflecting the linguistic and cultural image of Persia can be explained as follows: Griboedov as a diplomat is interested in people who make political decisions, and everything that surrounds these people is a system of power and control. He pays special attention to the people of power: kaymakam, shakh-zidy, sardar, sedezam, bimbashi, mullah, khan, sarbaz, nagi-sultan, shah, mirza. The next big group of words is cultural names: holidays, buildings, places of trade: bazaar, Navruz, harem, caravanserai.

Let us analyze the selected words.

I: proper names

1. Toponyms

1.1 Names of cities: Tavis, Pers. تبریز [Tabriz]; city in northwestern Iran (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009). Udzhan, pers. اوجان [Ujan]; an ancient city in the Province of East Azerbaijan (the current name of Bostanabad) (Sadri Afshar, Hacks, & Hacks, 2009).

Zangan, pers. زنجان [Zandjan]; city in the north-west of Iran (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Sultaneya, pers. سلطانيه [Soltaniyye]; A small town in the north-west of Iran in Zanjan Province (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009). Ямы на поле, замок, далее руины Султанеи. (Griboedov, 1959).

Shirvan, pers. شيروان [Shirvan]; a city in northeastern Iran in the territory of North Khorasan Province (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Kodabende, pers. خدابنده [Khodabandeh]; One of the seven provinces of the Iranian Province Zanjan (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Abgar, pers. ابهر [Abhar]; a city in the Zanjan Province (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Kazbin, Pers. قزوین [Qazvin]; a city in the north-west of Iran (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Tagiran, pers. تهران [Tehran]; the capital, administrative center and one of the largest cities of Iran (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Raga, pers. راگا [Raga]; a city in the province of Tehran, the current name of Ray Perce. ری [Rey] (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Miana, pers. میانه [Mianeh]; a city in the Province of East Azerbaijan (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Median, from Persian Mussel. ماد [Maad]; An ancient eastern state, as well as an ancient ethno-geographical region in the west of Iran (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

#### 1.2. Mountain names:

Demavend, pers. دماوند [Damavand]; The highest peak of the mountain system of Elburz is located in the center closer to the north of Iran with volcanic craters (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

#### 1.3. Name of the rivers:

Miana, pers. میانه [Mianeh]; a river in the Province of Eastern Azerbaijan (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

### II. Anthroponyms

Fethalihan, Pers. فتحعلی خان [Fat-halikhan]; the title of Babakhan, the second Shah of Iran of the Qajar dynasty, reigned from 1797 to 1834 (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

### III. Common Names:

#### 3.1. Government, titles, titles (social terms):

Kaymakam, pers. قائم مقام [Ghaemmagham]; 1) the manager of the heir to the throne 2) who represents a deputy or official in a special mission or work (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Shah-zidy, pers. شاهزاده [shahzade]; 1) the son of the Shah 2) the one who is from the Shah dynasty (Moin, 1996).

Qajar, Pers. قاجار [Qajar]; the dynasty of Persian rule, founded by the Azerbaijani Turk and ruled Iran from 1795 to 1925 (Moin, 1996).

Sardar, pers. سردار [sar-dar]; 1) corps / army commander, 2) power, 3) head of the tribe, 4) master (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Sedezam, Pers. صدراعظم [Sadrazam]; Supreme Vizier, Prime Minister (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Bimbashi, Pers. مین باشی [Minbashi]; military rank, commander of a thousand soldiers (Moin, 1996).

Mulla, pers. ملا [molla]; 1) the priest, especially the religious worship of Muslims. 2) an educated and knowledgeable person (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Khan, pers. شاه [Khan]; the leader of the tribe in the states formed after the collapse of the Mongolian empire, the han title of sovereign, in the Ottoman empire the title of sultan (Moin, 1996).

Shah, pers. شاه [Shah]; 1) the ruler of the country, 2) the title of ruler (Moin, 1996).

#### 3.2. Public places

Bazaar, Pers. بازار [bazar]; 1) the place of purchase and sale of goods and products, 2) a closed alley, in which there are benches on both sides; market, fair (Moin, 1996).

Caravanserai, Pers. کاروانسرای [Karvan-saray]; 1) A parking space with caravan premises on the roads, 2) a courtyard where there are several shops where traders trade and store their goods in their closets, 3) a building that has rooms, closets, a barn and a stable and a yard used for a long time travelers for rest (Moin, 1996).

Harem, pers. حرم [Haram]; 1) the female part of the palace of the shahs (temple-shed), 2) a place inside the religious temple (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

Meydan, pers. میدان [Meydan]; any open area, park or square (Sadri Afshar et al., 2009).

### 3.3. Holidays

**Nowruz**, pers. نوروز [nowruz]; 1) the Persian holiday in honor of the new year, 2) a new day, 3) spring, 4) one of the melodies of ancient music of Iran (Moin, 1996). In *Navruz, as revolutionary officers, we have the master of ceremonies, drive through several streets, enter covered winches* (Griboedov, 1959).

## 7. Conclusion

The core element of the vocabulary constituting the linguistic and cultural image of the country in “Travel Notes” is onomastic units (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov, 1980). Along with toponyms and anthroponyms, the group of culture specific words includes social terms naming holidays, national dishes or household items. On the one hand, this may reflect views of Griboyedov as a diplomat. On the other hand, peculiarities of the traveler’s view have never been dependent on the analysis of culture specific words used to describe Persia. Perspectives of the studies can show what seems to be especially important and interesting to the “stranger”, who is trying to plunge into the culture, to tell about it. The analysis of non-equivalent vocabulary used to create a unique linguistic and cultural image of the country can give an answer to this question.

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