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**LEXICAL ASPECTS OF THE CONCEPT "FOOD" IN THE**  
**KHAKASS LANGUAGE**

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**Abstract**

The article deals with the study of linguistic representation of some lexical aspects of the concept "food" in the Khakassian language. It presents the results of a linguocultural analysis of the words and phrases that represent this concept. The relevance of the study stems from the fact that food in all its volume and diversity is one of the most important factors of life. This is reflected in language and communicative activity, but the specificity of this concept in the Khakass language has not been investigated. The structure of the concept "food" in Khakass culture includes such concepts as the basis of life, wealth, relatives, and connection with ancestors. The Khakasses believed that food was a value essential to life. The concept "food" in the Khakass family relations system testifies to kinship mutual aid. In Khakassian life, shared meals of relatives were linked to both joy and grief. Festive food was prepared to celebrate events such as weddings, births and funerals. Death did not mean the breakdown of kinship. Each side continued to have a kinship with the other. This continuous unity of the dead and the living, of ancestors and descendants, was a guarantee of the family's existence. This analysis contributes to the reconstruction of the Khakass ethnoses' holistic linguistic picture of the world.

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## 1. Introduction

A concept can have different ways of describing it, but the most important way of its explication is the national cultural concept. It represents a set of language units reflecting in the consciousness a wide range of cultural values of the ethnic group - material and spiritual (Samsitova, 2011). The information that a concept carries is not only cognitive, it is supplemented by general knowledge, but not every name in a language should be considered a concept. Only those facts that are valuable and relevant to a particular culture in real life reach the level of a concept. Thus, vocabulary of food provides evidence of the material and spiritual culture of the ethnos and gives invaluable information about the life of the people (Kurbanov & Kuchkildina, 2012).

Food is an important and indispensable environmental factor in the livelihood and development of humanity. The process of eating is not only a necessity of life, it is a domestic culture that determines the relationships of people in society, it is the norms and rules of behaviour accepted in that society (Arutyunov, 2001). In this regard, it is possible to argue that the conceptual sphere of "food" is a rich source of defining various spheres of national mentality and worldview, the system of socio-cultural relations, traditions, customs and beliefs characteristic of traditional culture.

## 2. Problem Statement

In Khakassian linguistics, the lexical aspects of the *food* concept were not the subject of a special study, although many authors have touched on this problem in works of an ethnographic nature. Concepts are mental entities with a complex, multifaceted structure, comprising abstract phenomena based on collective experience. Traditional forms of Khakass family and everyday culture, which directly reflect the lexical features of the food concept, are disappearing over time. So studying and recording them is an urgent task today.

## 3. Research Questions

### 3.1. The concept "food" in the cultural space of the Khakass language

The Khakassian language belongs to the Altaic language family of the Turkic language group (Abdina et al., 2021). The Khakasses are a Turkic-speaking ethnic group, predominantly living in the Republic of Khakassia. The Republic of Khakassia in the Russian Federation is situated in the valleys of the Yenisei and Abakan rivers. The republic borders the Kemerovo Oblast to the northwest, Gorny Altai and Tyva to the south and southwest, and Krasnoyarsk Krai to the northeast. The southern border of Khakassia runs along the ridges of the Western Sayan. The Khakasses, like many peoples, understood that food was a value essential to life. This is evidenced by the following words: астың пазына сых полбас (proverb) – there is nothing higher (dearer) than food (bread). In Khakass oral folklore, it is possible to single out algystar (алгыстар) – well-wishes, which are small verbal formulas used to wish someone wellbeing. Algystar, as sacred texts, were obligatory elements both in everyday life and in life cycle rites (Lvova et al., 1989). A good algys was valued as a great gift, almost a material value. In many of the texts of the Algis, it is also possible to trace the ethnos's attitude towards food and meals that

emphasize their value: алтанып мўнер аттыг пол, азыран чўрер тамахтыг пол – may you always have a horse to ride, may you always have food to eat; тоозылбас астыг пол, тўгенмес кўстї пол – may you have endless food, may you have inexhaustible strength (Anzhiganova et al., 2006).

The structure of the concept "food" includes such concepts as the basis of life, wealth, relatives, hospitality and prosperity. Researchers believe that the classification unit should be not only the food itself, but also the process of making and consuming that food. We should note that stable combinations, riddles, proverbs and sayings associated with the vocabulary of nutrition have preserved many national customs and traditions, concepts and notions (Arutyunov, 2001). For example, nomadic Turkic peoples, including the Khakasses, have known cereal crops and dishes made from them since ancient times. We can provide indirect confirmation in the following riddles: хызыл пуғдайым пусха чайыл партыр (чылытстар) – red (golden) wheat on ice scattered (stars); чар алтында чарымдых іпек – there is half of a loaf under the cliff (ear). Such words as «хызыл пуғдай» – golden wheat, «чарымдых іпек» – half of a loaf testify to the spread and use of cereals in the diet of the Khakasses. We find direct confirmation of this in the following riddles: ікі пуға ахсыларынаң кипсеніп, азырып тоос полбинчалар, тосханнарын даа пїлбинчелер, астааннарын даа пїлбинчелер (теербен тастары) two bulls chew and swallow continuously, but are neither full nor hungry (millstones); хырых тїстіг инейек (хол теербенї) an old woman with forty teeth (handmill). It is well known that the instruments of labour (which are Khakass word "teerben" - mill), in their form and function, contain the ideal, historically developed, generalised ways of labour activity of the ethnos. Tools were the first object-based, material "abstractions", which influenced the processes of formation and development of thinking.

As proof of the existence of agriculture among the Khakasses, the month of September is called ўртўн in the Khakass calendar – the month of grinding bread (lit.: ўртўн – barn, i.e. a place to store and process grain). Among the Khakasses' calendar festivals, the harvest festival Ўртўн той takes the special place. They held this festival in autumn after the harvest, where the grain was used to make a hop drink called "поза". The meal was held right in the barn. The elder held a ritual, blessing the land, the mountains and thanking the spirit-owner of the field for the harvest. During harvesting, a bundle of uncut ears was left at the edge of the plough for хыра ўлўзи (the share of the plough's master spirit). At the festival, they ceremoniously tied the ears with coloured ribbons (Butanaev 1996). Therefore, we can conclude that Turkic peoples, including the ancestors of Khakasses, were engaged in agriculture since ancient times and used cereals in the manufacture of food. The inclusion of such concepts in the complex semiotic system "food" determines their different characteristics in different concepts and explains their features and distinctive features peculiar to the conditions of the nation's existence.

The Khakassian language uses the words тамах, ас meaning food, treat. The lexeme тамах is part of the stable expressions defining and specifying the socio-cultural position of a person – a well-fed person with food is, above all, a person without any want, living in prosperity: тамах пазындағы кїзї a well-off person (who eats well). Hunger, the opposite characteristic of fullness, is also present in the analysed linguistic material: тамах чеен кїзї астапчатханны нимее салабачаң – a man who has eaten does not know a hungry man (lit.: a man who has eaten food does not understand a hungry man).

Based on the theoretical positions of linguists on the concept, we propose to consider the system of the concept "food", which is the basis of human life activity in the system of kinship relations.

### 3.2. The concept of "food" in the kinship system

Regardless of societal features, the cross-section of the concept "family" is based on the type of kinship: direct blood, non-direct blood, kinship by marriage, as well as those unrelated relationships that fall into the category of family relationships. Based on these types of kinship and their combinations, there are two main types of family: nuclear (one married couple with children) and complex (including relatives in ascending and lateral lines). In this paper, we look at the complex family, which includes relatives, as the field of the concept "family" in the Khakass national consciousness is filled with incomparable kinship relationships between people. According to Khakass traditions, it was strictly monitored that relatives were united, sharing joys and sorrows together. Each clan had respected elders who led every effort and gave useful advice in everyday life. In the space of national existence, the manifestation of the concept "family" can also be traced in the names of dishes, customs and eating habits. For example, among the meat products and dishes we can single out a meat set called *ыста/ысты* (a hospitality for relatives made of meat and entrails of animals) as a separate category. The Khakasses used to prepare this kit on a compulsory basis after slaughtering animals, usually in late autumn. It included the best parts of meat and entrails. All these pieces were frozen into one lump. It was not prepared for one's own consumption, but sent to relatives. We can also see this in the way the word *ысты*, derived from the verb stem *ыс-* (send) and affix *-ты*, forming nouns with the meaning of result. The desire to preserve the unity of kinship, friendship and other relationships is also evident in the tradition of eating together, which can be traced back to antiquity among Turkic peoples. The traditional Khakassian etiquette of distributing pieces of meat during meals is proof of this. For example, the head of the house was sure to get the first cervical vertebra, the atlas, the first two ribs and the thighbone from the lamb. The spatula was given to the most distinguished guest or son-in-law to eat, if he was in the house. Some types of food were forbidden to be eaten by more than one relative, otherwise they would break up. So, the Khakas say: *инек хапаа чиккен чон* – people who ate the eyes of one cow, i.e. feuding people (Butanaev, 1996). The Turkic peoples had various types of collective family gatherings linked to the main economic activities and seasons, and necessarily accompanied by a family meal. The abundant food at such festivals was the basis of the people's contentment and peaceful life. The Khakasses celebrated *Tun ayran* (tun 'first', ayran 'sour-milk drink') in spring, when the cattle began to produce large quantities of milk. Practically this holiday was held in the following way: in spring, when 5–10 buckets of ayran accumulated, it was distilled into milk wine, called *тун араа* – the first wine. It is noteworthy that the Khakasses also called the first child in the family, *тун пала*. The same term was used at weddings for the wine (*тун араа*) which was first served to guests on behalf of the newlyweds. During the festival of *Tun ayran*, one of the eldest of the clans would invite his relatives of the same clan to join him. The guests went to him with their milk wine, which was poured into a communal dish. The guests were seated in a semi-circle. Men on the men's side and women on the women's side of the yurt. The table was filled with *potkha*, *salamat*, *pysylach* and other dairy products and meat dishes. The householder was the first to pour the *araka* for himself. He sprinkled it on the house, sprinkled it up and around, then into the fire. Behind him, the hostess threw small pieces of each type of food into the fire. It was a treat for the spirits, who were asked for the well-being of the family, livestock and the whole household. After these ceremonies, guests were treated to *araka* and fresh dairy products. The meal was held in each family in turn.

Patachakov (1982) also notes that young people of premarital age did not participate in this feast, even those married before their first or second child refrained from being in the company of adults, much less drink araka. As can be seen from ethnographic sources, the family meal was an obligatory attribute of such festivities. The attribute 'family, mutual assistance, kinship' can also be seen in the generic term 'tamah'. The word tamah is homonymic in the Khakass language and is used to mean 'fresh meat' in addition to 'food'. Thus, in autumn, when the cold weather finally set in, each family prepared soghym (cattle destined for slaughter) for the winter. They slaughtered livestock fattened for the purpose, usually cattle or horse, and a few rams each. It was a kind of celebration where relatives were invited. After the slaughter they cooked the fresh meat, the tamah. They cooked the best cuts of meat here, called yřsŷn 'the best cuts of meat'. Pieces of meat and entrails were placed in wooden troughs so that everyone could get their hands on them. The oldest relatives got the best pieces. The meat was eaten with broth, which was poured into a communal cup. Women and men were seated separately. Here, apart from meat dishes, broth and salt, no other food was placed on the table. Each Khakassian family took turns chopping sogym for the winter. To preserve its taste and nutritional value, the frozen meat was then piled in pieces in tubs and covered with snow. In these traditions of shared meals associated with the festivals, we observe the qualities of tribal mutual aid.

### **3.3. The concept of "food" in Khakass funeral rites**

In Khakassian life, treating relatives is associated with both joy and grief. For example, festive as-tamah was prepared to celebrate events such as weddings, births and funerals. The above word tamah is used in the phraseology tamah salargah, referring to the tradition of putting food on the deceased's table. The custom is that those who come to say goodbye to the deceased carry food which they place on a special memorial table and then, after burial, these foods are burned. The process of burning these dishes and foods is called huyuh salargah. It is believed that the smoke from burning food feeds on the spirit of the deceased. The desire to communicate with a deceased relative in this way is confirmed by the repeated number of commemorations. For the wake, the relatives of the deceased had cattle, called tŷrir 'cattle slaughtered for the wake', which were used to prepare meals for the relatives and fellow villagers who came to express their condolences. If a man died, his relatives would slaughter his horse, called khoylagha 'a sacrificial horse to be slaughtered for the commemoration'. The Khakasses, like many other Turks, believed in the eternity of the afterlife. The horse was one of the attributes that accompanied the spirit of the deceased to the other world. During the memorial meal, the relatives held a feeding ceremony for the soul of the deceased – 'tamah őrtirge'. A meal to feed a deceased relative is called chidimnig tamah. Chidimnig tamah should be fatty and be sure to contain cereals, dairy and meat products, as well as drinks. During the feeding of the soul of the deceased, a small portion of the food and drink was put back into the dishes and treated to elderly relatives with the words: "A share of human food must remain in this world! We cannot give everything to the dead" (Butanaev, 1996, p. 105). The Khakassian language has designations for this food: sardykh/sartykh 'the remainder of the funeral drink (wine, tea, milk) remaining in the cup after being poured into the fire three times, in the days of remembrance of the deceased'; yłıey – the remainder of the meal left after 'feeding' the deceased. At the same time, not only the ritual food, but also the formed system of eating reveals the ancient norms and principles of traditional

social relations and their inviolability. For example, at a memorial meal in memory of the deceased it is forbidden to eat with sharp objects, otherwise it may harm the soul of the deceased.

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

The aim is to investigate and describe the main characteristics of the concept “food” in Khakassian linguocultur.

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

The study involved a set of general scientific methods, including a theoretical analysis of the scientific literature and a descriptive method to convey the peculiarities of the Khakass linguistic culture.

#### **6. Findings**

- i. The conceptual realm of 'food' is a rich source for defining different spheres of national mentality and worldview;
- ii. The lexical sources of the Khakass language confirm that the Khakass considered food to be a value, nourishment is wealth, prosperity, as opposed to hunger;
- iii. The structure of the concept "food", along with the meaning of food as the basis of human life in Khakass culture, includes, above all, the value of kinship and family relations.
- iv. Food is necessary not only for the living but also for deceased relatives, as evidenced by the naming of the foods intended to feed them.

#### **7. Conclusion**

Thus, the concept of food is a complex multi-layered entity of high significance for Khakass culture, reflecting both universal and national-specific aspects. According to the Khakasses, deceased relatives do not disappear for good. We could say that the tradition of feeding the dead, the commemoration meal for them, is about communicating with them. Relatives thus sought intimacy with the dead, to maintain a relationship with them in which both those who remained on earth and those who had left it were believed to be interested. The latter were seen as the authorised inhabitants of another world inhabited by deities and spirits. Going out into that world did not mean a break in kinship. Each side continued to have a kinship with the other. This continuous unity of the dead and the living, of ancestors and descendants, was a guarantee of the family's existence.

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