

FOOD NAMES IN THE KARAKALPAK LANGUAGE: A LINGUISTIC, LEXICO-SEMANTIC AND ETHNOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract. The article examines Karakalpak food names as a lexical-semantic layer reflecting linguistic development, cultural memory, and social practices. Based on linguistic, ethnographic, and lexicographic sources, it analyzes semantic differentiation, word formation, borrowing, dialectal variation, and ethnographic vocabulary. The findings identify native and borrowed terms for dishes, beverages, ingredients, and utensils, demonstrating semantic specialization and cultural continuity shaped by long-term Central Asian linguistic contacts.

Keywords: Karakalpak language; food names; culinary vocabulary; lexical semantics; ethnolinguistics; lexicology; dialectology.

1. Introduction. Food vocabulary is an important linguistic and ethnolinguistic domain because it reflects everyday life, economic activities, social relations, rituals, hospitality, and cultural identity. In Karakalpak, food names preserve traces of historical contacts and traditional practices [1–3]. Their study is relevant to lexical semantics, morphology, dialectology, language change, and ethnolinguistics. Previous research has examined dialectal food terms, dairy products, fruit and vegetable names, cooking utensils, and ethnographic vocabulary [4–9], but these findings remain fragmented. Therefore, this study provides an integrated analysis of Karakalpak food names, focusing on lexical-semantic structure, morphological formation, dialectal variation, borrowing, semantic change, and their relationship with cultural practices and identity.

2. Literature Review

Research on Turkic food vocabulary encompasses lexicography, dialectology, lexical semantics, ethnography, and borrowing. Mahmud al-Kashgari's *Diwan Lughat al-Turk* provides early evidence of culinary terminology, including bread, dairy, grain, meat, soups, and beverages [10]. Uzbek studies demonstrate how borrowed culinary terms reflect trade, migration, and cultural exchange, while polysemy broadens their meanings [11,12]. Karakalpak research has examined dialectal variation, food morphology, dairy terms, fruit and vegetable names, and ethnographic vocabulary [4–9]. However, studies remain fragmented. An integrated approach combining semantic, morphological, comparative, dialectological, and ethnolinguistic analysis is necessary to understand Karakalpak food vocabulary as a system and cultural representation.

3. Materials and Methods

The study employs a qualitative linguistic approach based on Karakalpak linguistic, ethnographic, literary, dialectological, lexicographic, and comparative materials [4–10]. Food-related vocabulary was analyzed through thematic classification, lexical-semantic, morphological, comparative, etymological, and ethnolinguistic methods. Thematic analysis

grouped terms according to dishes, bread and dough products, dairy and meat foods, grain-based dishes, beverages, ingredients, fruits, vegetables, and cooking utensils. Lexical-semantic analysis examined basic and secondary meanings, semantic specialization, polysemy, and figurative usage, including *as*, *nan*, *osh*, *go'sht*, and *sharbat* [12]. Morphological analysis focused on simple and compound formations, while comparative analysis examined Karakalpak parallels with Uzbek, Kazakh, Turkmen, Persian, Arabic, and Chinese. Ethnolinguistic analysis related food names to hospitality, rituals, memorial meals, household practices, and traditional economic activities.

4. Results

4.1. Thematic and lexical-semantic structure

The analysis demonstrates that Karakalpak food vocabulary has a broad internal structure. At the most general level, it includes names of prepared foods and beverages, but the lexical field also contains terms for ingredients, raw materials, utensils, methods of preparation and social practices associated with eating. The source material records traditional categories based on bread, dough, dairy products, grain, meat, soups and beverages. Such classification corresponds to the economic and environmental conditions of traditional Karakalpak life, in which agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, hunting and horticulture played important roles [3].

Bread vocabulary occupies a particularly important semantic position. The source material records variants such as *shórek*, *patir*, *qatlama*, *gúlshé* and different types of *zagara*. These names do not merely identify bread as an edible product. They encode information about ingredients, preparation technique, shape and baking method. *Qatlama*, for example, is associated with layered dough and the use of fat or milk, whereas *patir* refers to a particular type of bread preparation. Such lexical differentiation shows how culturally important food products generate a relatively rich network of specialized names.

Tea also occupies a distinctive place in the lexical and cultural system. The ethnographic material describes tea as an important component of hospitality and everyday nutrition. Expressions connected with offering tea and bread demonstrate that the lexical representation of tea extends beyond the beverage itself into the communicative practices of hospitality. The environmental context is also significant: the source associates frequent tea consumption with the climate and lifestyle of the Karakalpak region [3]. Thus, a food term can acquire a broader sociocultural value through habitual use.

Dairy vocabulary constitutes another important semantic subgroup. The source material records traditional terms for fermented milk products, curd, cream and other dairy foods. Khojabaeva's research specifically addresses names of dishes prepared from milk and the lexical units associated with food preparation [6]. These data indicate that dairy terminology is connected with both the material culture of animal husbandry and the linguistic differentiation of preparation techniques.

Meat and grain vocabulary likewise reflects the economic organization of traditional society. Words connected with meat dishes are particularly frequent in the description of festive meals and hospitality, while grain terminology is associated with agriculture and staple foods. The discussion of *palaw* in the source material is revealing because it brings together rice, meat, fat, carrot, onion, raisins and spices as components of a culturally recognized dish. The lexical description therefore preserves information about both the product and the cultural model of its preparation.

An additional result concerns the semantic extension of food words. The lexeme *as*, for example, can refer generally to food, while in particular contexts it may denote a hot cooked meal, *palaw*, or a meal served on a commemorative or ceremonial occasion. The phrase *as beri* refers to a traditional memorial meal held after a person's death. Consequently, the lexical meaning of *as* cannot be reduced to the dictionary definition 'food'; it is embedded in a network of social and ritual meanings [12].

Similar semantic variation is observed in *sharbat*. In culinary contexts it denotes a sweet drink or fruit-based beverage, while in poetic usage it may appear in the figurative expression '*ajal sharobi*' (the drink of death). The source material notes that the word is used in both literal and figurative senses in the epic '*Malika ayyar*'. This example illustrates how food vocabulary can participate in general lexical-semantic development and poetic metaphorization.

4.2. Borrowing, dialectal variation and lexical change

The results also show that Karakalpak food vocabulary reflects sustained contact with neighboring languages and cultures. Borrowed or culturally shared forms are particularly visible in names connected with Uzbek, Persian, Arabic, Chinese and other culinary traditions. Examples discussed in the source include *sumalak*, *qatlama*, *mashkhurda* and *ustikhan*, as well as forms associated with Chinese and Uyghur culinary culture such as *lagman*, *manty*, *manpar* and related dough-based dishes. Their presence does not simply represent lexical replacement; borrowed words become integrated into the Karakalpak semantic system and may acquire local phonetic, morphological or semantic features.

The analysis of Chinese-related culinary vocabulary in Uzbek cited by the source provides a useful comparative model. Words such as *lagman*, *manty* and tea-related forms demonstrate that lexical borrowing often occurs through intermediary languages and trade routes. The source specifically notes that some Chinese-derived forms underwent both phonetic and semantic changes after entering Uzbek [11]. A similar mechanism can be considered for Karakalpak, especially in the context of long-standing regional contacts.

Dialectal variation represents another significant feature. Dospanov's description of the southern Karakalpak dialect and Shynazarova's work on the Qanlikol speech area show that food names may vary according to locality [4, 8]. Such variation is linguistically valuable because dialect words can preserve older forms or local semantic distinctions that are absent from the standardized literary language. Therefore, dialectological documentation is essential for reconstructing the historical development of culinary vocabulary.

The source also points to the role of lexical innovation in contemporary language development. Changes in social-economic life, increased interaction with other communities and the expansion of cultural exchange contribute to the appearance and adaptation of new food-related terms. This confirms that the culinary lexical field is dynamic rather than static. It changes together with the material and social conditions of speakers.

5. Discussion

The findings support the view that Karakalpak food names should be studied as a complex lexical system rather than as an inventory of isolated culinary labels. Their linguistic organization is determined by several interacting principles: semantic categorization, morphological formation, historical borrowing, dialectal differentiation and ethnographic function. The coexistence of these dimensions explains why food vocabulary is especially productive for interdisciplinary linguistic research.



From a lexical-semantic perspective, the material demonstrates a close relationship between denotation and cultural meaning. A food name can denote a product or dish while simultaneously indexing a social event, a ritual obligation, a form of hospitality or an aspect of identity. The development of the word as is a clear example. Its general meaning 'food' is supplemented by meanings associated with a formal meal and memorial practice. Such polysemy indicates that semantic development is influenced by recurring cultural situations.

From a morphological perspective, the food lexicon illustrates the capacity of Karakalpak to create specialized names by combining lexical components that indicate ingredients, preparation processes or physical properties. This is especially visible in names of bread, milk-based foods and fruit and vegetable products. The studies of Bekniyazov and Khojabaeva are significant here because they identify thematic and word-formation patterns that can be incorporated into a more systematic account of Karakalpak culinary terminology [6, 7].

The data also confirm the importance of language contact. Similar food names across Karakalpak, Uzbek, Kazakh and Turkmen do not necessarily indicate direct borrowing in every individual case; some may derive from older Turkic common vocabulary or from shared cultural traditions. Therefore, etymological analysis must distinguish inherited vocabulary, regional commonalities and later borrowings. The presence of Persian- and Arabic-derived items further demonstrates the historical layering of the lexicon, while Chinese and Uyghur-related forms illustrate the role of Central Asian trade and cultural exchange.

Ethnolinguistically, the most significant result is the strong connection between food terminology and social practice. Food is present at major stages of the life cycle, from pregnancy-related customs and birth ceremonies to marriage, hospitality and memorial events. The source specifically describes terms and practices associated with ceremonial meals and the tradition of *as beriw*. Such vocabulary provides linguistic evidence for social norms and collective memory. In this sense, food names function as cultural markers as well as lexical units.

The special status of bread deserves separate consideration. In the ethnographic material, bread is described as highly respected, with norms concerning its use, handling and treatment. Bread accompanies tea, travel and hospitality and therefore functions simultaneously as food, symbol and social medium. The lexical differentiation of bread types reflects technological distinctions, while the cultural respect attached to bread expands its semantic and pragmatic significance. This is an example of how lexical specialization and cultural symbolism reinforce one another.

The findings further suggest that the Karakalpak culinary lexicon can serve as a source for historical linguistics. Traditional terms preserve information about subsistence strategies, local environments, economic relations and contacts with neighboring peoples. Names associated with grain, dairy, meat, fish, wild fruits and vegetables correspond to different forms of resource use. In this respect, lexicological analysis can complement ethnographic reconstruction.

At the same time, the available material reveals several limitations. The existing literature is uneven: some semantic groups have been studied in detail, whereas others remain scattered across dictionaries, literary works and ethnographic descriptions. Dialectal materials are also unevenly represented. A comprehensive future study should therefore establish a unified corpus of food names, document regional variants, provide chronological attestations and

distinguish native, inherited and borrowed vocabulary. Such a corpus would make it possible to investigate semantic change and lexical productivity quantitatively.

Another promising direction is lexicographic standardization. Because food names occur in different spelling and dialectal forms, a specialized dictionary could record the standard form, variants, meaning, etymology, geographical distribution, cultural context and examples of usage. This would be useful not only for linguistic research but also for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. The source materials already demonstrate that the explanatory dictionary and ethnographic publications contain valuable data for such a project [9].

6. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that food names form a significant and internally differentiated lexical layer of Karakalpak. This vocabulary includes names of dishes, bread products, dairy and meat foods, grain-based dishes, beverages, ingredients, cooking utensils, and culturally marked meals. It is characterized by semantic specialization, polysemy, morphological productivity, dialectal variation, and lexical borrowing. Karakalpak culinary vocabulary reflects both internal linguistic development and long-term cultural contacts in Central Asia, while terms such as *as* and *nan* demonstrate the interaction of lexical and ethnographic meanings. Further research should develop a comprehensive corpus and dictionary incorporating semantic groups, dialectal variants, etymology, word formation, historical attestations, and ethnographic contexts.

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