

The lexical-semantic representation of horse coat colors in Turkic-Mongolian written monuments

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to a lexical-semantic description of the names of horse coat colors in Turkic and Mongolian written monuments as a significant component of historical lexicology and ethnolinguistics. In the context of nomadic culture, the horse functioned not only as an economic and military resource but also as an important socio-cultural symbol, which led to the formation of an extensive and highly differentiated system of linguistic description. The relevance of the research lies in the fact that, in the traditions of nomadic peoples, coat-color vocabulary performs not only a nominative function (i.e., the designation of color) but also serves as a means of precise identification of the animal, recording shades, patterns of color distribution, markings, and culturally conditioned evaluative meanings. The aim of the study is to determine the composition and structural principles of this microsystem, to describe nomination models, and to establish semantic regularities through a comparison of Turkic and Mongolian materials. The empirical basis of the study comprises of medieval written sources of the Turkic and Mongolian traditions representing various genres, including religious texts, narrative works, and lexicographic monuments that reflect different chronological and dialectal layers of the written tradition. Methodologically, the study relies on lexical-semantic and componential analysis, contextual analysis of usage, as well as

comparative and historical-comparative approaches. Elements of etymological analysis are employed to clarify the internal form and motivation of individual lexical units. The analysis demonstrates that the system of coat-color terminology has a multilevel organization and includes: 1) basic color designations; 2) intermediate and shade coat categories; 3) terms denoting patterns of coloration distribution (piebaldness, spotting, etc.); and 4) names of markings and “portrait” features (e.g., a white spot on the forehead or the whiteness of the mane and tail). In many contexts, these features function as a type of coat-color designation in the identification of animals. Productive attributive naming models have been identified, as well as cases of polysemy and variation determined by the genre characteristics of the sources and by historical-dialectal fluctuations. The results demonstrate that coat-color vocabulary represents two interrelated levels: practical-descriptive and cultural-symbolic. On the one hand, it ensures precise classification and “portraiture” of the animal. On the other hand, it conveys notions of prestige, sacredness, and the normative image of the “proper” horse within traditional worldviews. In Turkic-Mongolian written monuments, coat-color designations constitute a culturally significant, multilevel system for naming and identifying horses. This system simultaneously performs descriptive and evaluative-symbolic functions. In Turkic texts, it is primarily realized as a system of classification, whereas in Mongolian texts, it functions as a narrative-evaluative system, reflecting the ethnocultural worldview of nomadic peoples.

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Түркі-моңғол жазба ескерткіштеріндегі жылқы түстерінің лексика-семантикалық көрінісі

Аннотация. Мақала тарихи лексикология мен этнолингвистиканың маңызды құрамдас бөлігі ретінде түркі және моңғол жазба ескерткіштеріндегі жылқы түстері атауларының лексика-семантикалық сипаттамасына арналған. Көшпелі мәдениетте жылқы тек шаруашылық пен әскери қызметтің негізгі құралы ғана емес, сонымен бірге әлеуметтік мәртебе, салт-дәстүр және дүниетаныммен де тығыз байланысты мәдени символ болған. Осыған байланысты жылқы малының түстерін сипаттайтын атаулар жүйесі ерекше дамып, оның тілдік қабаты қалыптасуына ықпал етті. Зерттеудің өзектілігі көшпелі халықтардың дәстүрінде жылқы түстерін білдіретін лексикалар тек номинативтік қызметпен (жылқының тек түсін білдіру) ғана шектелмей, жануардың реңктік айырмашылықтарын, ерекшеліктерін, белгі-таңбалары, сондай-ақ мәдени тұрғыда бағалау мәндерін нақтылай отырып, дәл сәйкестендіру құралы ретінде айқындалады. Зерттеу жұмысының мақсаты – аталмыш микрожүйенің құрамы мен құрылымдық алғы шарттарын айқындау, модельдерін сипаттау және түркі-моңғол тілдеріндегі материалдарды салғастыру кезіндегі семантикалық заңдылықтарды анықтау. Зерттеудің эмпирикалық негізін түркі және моңғол жазба мәдениетіндегі жанры мен хронологиясы әр түрлі, диалектілік қабаттарды бейнелейтін ортағасырлық дереккөздер (діни мәтіндер мен лексикографиялық ескерткіштер) құрайды. Әдіснамалық тұрғыдан зерттеу жұмысы лексика-семантикалық және компоненттік талдау мен контекстуалды сипаттау, салғастырмалы және салыстырмалы-тарихи тәсілдерге сүйенеді. Жекелеген атаулардың ішкі формасы мен уәждемесін нақтылау үшін этимологиялық талдау элементтері де пайдаланылды. Зерттеу нәтижесінде жылқы түстері көпдеңгейлі жүйеден құралатындығы анықталды. Оларға: 1) негізгі түстерді білдіретін атаулар; 2) өтпелі және реңктік түстерді білдіретін атаулар; 3) түстің таралу типін білдіретін атаулар (ала-құла, теңбіл және т.б.); 4) белгі-таңбалар мен «портреттік» сипаттағы белгілерді білдіретін атаулар (мысалы, маңдайдағы ақ дақ, жал мен құйрықтың ақ болуы) жатады. Бірқатар контекстерде мұндай белгілер жануарды сәйкестендіру мақсатындағы сипаттамада жылқы түстерінің атауларымен тең дәрежеде қызмет етеді. Атаулардың атрибутивтік өнімді модельдері мен дереккөздердің жанрлық ерекшеліктері мен тарихи-диалектілік құбылмалылыққа байланысты көпмағыналылық және варианттылық құбылыстары да айқындалды. Алынған нәтижелерге сүйенер болсақ, жылқы түстеріне байланысты лексикалар өзара сабақтас деңгейде, яғни, практикалық-сипаттамалық және мәдени-символдық сынды екі деңгейді көрсетеді: бір жағынан, ол жануарды дәлме-дәл жіктеп, «бейнелеу»-ді қамтамасыз етсе, екінші жағынан, дәстүрлі дүниетанымдағы «дұрыс» тұлпардың тұрқы, киелілігі мен нақты бейнесі туралы түсініктерді білдіреді. Түркі-моңғол жазба ескерткіштеріндегі жылқының түс атаулары, оны атау мен сәйкестендірудің мәдени мәні, көпдеңгейлі жүйені құрайды және бір мезгілде сипаттамалық, әрі бағалау-символдық қызметін де атқарады; сонымен қатар түркі мәтіндерінде ол көбіне классификациялық сипатта болса, моңғол мәтіндерінде баяндау-бағалау сипатында жүзеге асып, көшпелі халықтардың этномәдени дүниебейнесін бейнелейді.

Кілт сөздер: түркі тілдері, моңғол тілі, тарихи лексикология, ортағасырлық жазба ескерткіштер, этносемантика, атбегілік терминдер, жылқының түстері, салыстырмалы-семантикалық талдау, лексемалардың мағыналық варианттылығы, мәдени-символ.

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**Лексико-семантическое представление масти лошадей в тюрко-монгольских
письменных памятниках**

Аннотация. Статья посвящена лексико-семантическому описанию наименований мастей лошадей в тюркских и монгольских письменных памятниках как значимого фрагмента исторической лексикологии и этнолингвистики. В условиях кочевой культуры лошадь выступала не только хозяйственным и военным ресурсом, но и важным социально-культурным символом, что обусловило формирование разветвлённой и высоко дифференцированной системы её языкового описания. Актуальность исследования определяется тем, что мастевая лексика в традиции кочевых народов выполняет не только номинативную функцию (обозначение цвета), но и служит инструментом точной идентификации животного, фиксируя оттеночность, особенности распределения окраса, отметины, а также культурно обусловленные оценочные смыслы. Цель работы – выявить состав и структурные принципы данной микросистемы, описать модели номинации и установить семантические закономерности в сопоставлении тюркского и монгольского материала. Эмпирическую базу составляют разножанровые источники средневековой тюркской и монгольской письменной традиции (религиозные тексты и лексикографические памятники), отражающие различные хронологические и диалектные пласты соответствующих письменных традиций. Методологически работа опирается на лексико-семантический и компонентный анализ, контекстуальное описание употребления, сопоставительный и сравнительно-исторический подходы. Для уточнения внутренней формы и мотивировки отдельных единиц привлекаются элементы этимологического анализа. В результате установлено, что система наименований мастей имеет многоуровневую организацию и включает: 1) базовые цветовые обозначения; 2) переходные и оттеночные масти; 3) обозначения типа распределения окраса (пегость, пятнистость и др.); 4) названия отметин и «портретных» признаков (например,

белое пятно на лбу, белизна гривы и хвоста). В ряде контекстов такие признаки функционируют как равнозначные масти при идентифицирующем описании животного. Выявлены продуктивные атрибутивные модели номинации, а также случаи полисемии и вариативности, обусловленные жанровыми особенностями источников и историко-диалектными колебаниями. Полученные результаты показывают, что мастевая лексика репрезентирует два взаимосвязанных уровня – практико-описательный и культурно-символический: с одной стороны, она обеспечивает точность классификации и «портретирования» животного, с другой – маркирует представления о престижности, сакральности и нормативном образе «правильного» коня в традиционной картине мира. Мастевые обозначения в тюрко-монгольских письменных памятниках образуют культурно значимую многоуровневую систему номинации и идентификации коня, выполняющую одновременно описательную и оценочно-символическую функцию; при этом в тюркских текстах она реализуется преимущественно как классификационная, а в монгольских – как повествовательно-оценочная, отражая этнокультурную картину мира кочевых народов.

Ключевые слова: тюркские языки, монгольский язык, историческая лексикология, средневековые письменные памятники, этносемантика, коневодческая терминология, масти лошадей, сравнительно-семантический анализ, смысловая вариативность лексем, культурная символика.

Introduction

Turkic-Mongolian written monuments constitute important sources for historical lexicology and ethnolinguistics, as they record sequences of events, genre forms of medieval literature, and elements of the material culture of nomadic societies, including economic practices, social norms, and value orientations. Within the Turkic-Mongolian cultural and linguistic sphere, these texts are particularly valuable because they make it possible to compare culturally specific terms and their semantic models across different written traditions. In this corpus, the vocabulary of horse breeding occupies a special place. In the Turkic-Mongolian world, the horse is a fundamental component of the economic system and a key cultural symbol. This explains why related lexical nominations are especially informative in the written tradition.

An important source for the study of Mongolian history is the 13th-century monument *'The Secret History of the Mongols'* (1240), which combines historical and literary elements. The significance of this monument lies in its detailed depiction of the internal life of Mongolian society. Information about external campaigns is presented in less detail, which distinguishes the monument from external chronicles and later historiographical accounts (Vladimirtsov, 1922). At the same time, philological analysis of the text takes into account the specifics of its written transmission, as well as the traditions of scholarly publication and translation, as reflected in annotated editions and studies of the monument (Kozin, 1941; Rachewiltz, 2004).

At the same time, the research task cannot be confined to the Mongolian corpus, since the vocabulary of horse coat colors and related terminology constitutes a common and well-developed component of the lexicon in both the Turkic and Mongolian languages. For the Turkic material, the following sources are of fundamental importance: a) Old Turkic texts,

in which coat-color designations function within narrative and formulaic contexts; and b) the lexicographical tradition, primarily the *‘Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk’* (Kashgari, 2005), which documents the systematic character of equine terminology. Old and Middle Turkic data make it possible to identify formal-semantic models of nomination, including color and shade, markings, coat quality, and sex and age. These models are subsequently compared with their Mongolian equivalents and variants.

The nomination of colors occupies a special place in this field, since color designations in the Turkic-Mongolian tradition convey more than merely a basic chromatic characteristic. In written monuments, color terms often express nuances of shade and distribution, as well as the presence of specific markings. Color may also be associated with coat quality. In many contexts, evaluative and symbolic components emerge on the basis of the cultural significance of the horse. Studies of the semantics of color terms and their cultural conditioning confirm the sophistication of the system of coat colors and markings in Turkic material (Kononov, 1975; Qaydarov et al., 1992). In this regard, coat-color designations are regarded as units that reflect fragments of the ethnocultural worldview, since they combine nominative, descriptive, and evaluative functions.

The relevance of this study is determined by the following factors: 1) the high frequency and informativeness of horse-related vocabulary in Turkic-Mongolian monuments; 2) the complexity of the lexical and semantic organization of horse-color terminology; and 3) the need for a comparative description that reveals common and specific models of nomination in Turkic and Mongolian written traditions.

The aim of the study is to identify, classify, and semantically analyze lexical units denoting horse colors. In addition, it seeks to determine their role in shaping the linguistic and ethnocultural worldview of Turkic-Mongolian peoples. To achieve this aim, the following tasks have been formulated:

1. To identify and systematize the names of horse colors recorded in Turkic-Mongolian written sources.
2. To analyze their lexical-semantic structure and identify the principal naming models.
3. To determine the common and specific features of the use of these lexemes in Turkic and Mongolian monuments.
4. To establish the semantic and cultural connotations associated with the designation of horse colors.

Materials and research methods

The research material consists of Turkic and Mongolian written monuments, including ancient Turkic texts such as the *‘Irk Bitig’*, monuments of the Turkic written tradition such as the *‘Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk’*, and Mongolian sources such as *‘The Secret History of the Mongols’* (Kozin, 1941; Rachewiltz, 2004; Kashgari, 2005). The methodology of the study is based on lexical-semantic and component analysis, as well as comparative, comparative-historical, and etymological methods. It also incorporates contextual analysis (Clouston, 1972; Sevortyan, 1974-2003).

The material was selected using a targeted sampling method, whereby all contexts containing direct designations of coat colors, stable attributive constructions, and cases in

which metaphorically motivated or qualitatively descriptive units functioned as coat-color characteristics were recorded. For each example, the following parameters were taken into account: form and variability, morphological structure, immediate context, translation and interpretation, and functional load. The systematization was carried out according to the parameters of the basic color feature: shade, degree of saturation, nature of color distribution (uniformity, mixture, or spotting), presence of local markings, qualitative characteristics motivating coat texture, and the evaluative-symbolic component identified in context.

The analysis of coat color designations in Turkic-Mongolian written monuments makes it possible to integrate two research perspectives: the historical-linguistic perspective, which describes systemic nomination mechanisms and the semantic differentiation of characteristics, and the ethnocultural perspective, which identifies the value-based and symbolic meanings of equine vocabulary. Notably, in the Turkic tradition, coat color is primarily described through stable classification models and lexical fixation in ancient Turkic texts and the ‘*Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*’. In contrast, in Mongolian material, such as ‘*The Secret History of the Mongols*’, coat color designations are actively incorporated into narrative descriptions of horses and may perform evaluative functions. This difference justifies a comparative approach, as it makes it possible to distinguish common typological modes of color description from contextually conditioned forms of realization in particular genres and languages. The following sections focus on the corpus of sources employed, the principles of example selection, and the analytical procedures applied to ensure the comparability of Turkic and Mongolian data and the reproducibility of the results obtained.

Research background

Research questions concerning the lexical and semantic representation of horse colors in the Turkic-Mongolian written tradition lie at the intersection of several fields: 1) source studies and textual criticism of Turkic and Mongolian written monuments; 2) comparative-historical lexicology of the Turkic and Mongolian languages; and 3) the semantics of color designations and ethnolinguistics, in which horse color terminology is regarded as a culturally marked lexical layer. The degree to which this topic has been studied is determined not only by the level of scholarly engagement with individual monuments, but also by the extent to which the vocabulary of horse coat colors has been systematically described as an independent subsystem comparable across Turkic and Mongolian sources.

The textual and source-based foundation of Mongolian studies relies heavily on the scholarly tradition surrounding ‘*The Secret History of the Mongols*’. The early stages of introducing the hieroglyphic recording of the monument into academic circulation are associated with the work of Palladius Kafarov, who transcribed and translated the text line by line, thereby enabling subsequent reconstructive and interpretative research (Palladius, 1866). The studies of A.M. Pozdnev, which focused on clarifying the status of the Chinese-Mongolian record and reconstructing the original text, represent a further development of the reconstructive-textological approach (Pozdnev, 1884).

The historical and literary interpretation of the monument in European academic research is associated with the works of V.V. Barthold and B.Ya. Vladimirtsov, who emphasized the text’s value as a historical source, as well as its genre and stylistic features (Barthold, 1963; Vladimirtsov, 1922). Other scholars, such as B. Laufer, examined the writing systems and graphic history of the Mongolian tradition (Laufer, 1927). However, differences persist in

scholarly discussions regarding the status of the text as both a historical document and a literary monument. This is reflected in S.A. Kozin's translation and commentary tradition (Kozin, 1941), as well as in hypotheses concerning its genesis and authorship proposed by Sh. Bira and Sh. Gaadamba (Bira, 1978; Gaadamba, 1961).

At the same time, the specific nature of this study requires extending the historiographical focus beyond a single monument and research direction, since the vocabulary of horse coat colors is equally well represented in Turkic written sources. The lexicographical and textual corpora of the early period are methodologically important for Turkology, particularly Mahmud Kashgari's *'Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk'*, which records horse coat color terms as elements of the lexicon. These terms make it possible to reconstruct the meanings and typology of the designations. The ancient Turkic monument *'Irk Bitig'* is also significant, as it demonstrates early designations of horse coat colors in formulaic and culturally marked contexts. However, despite the general development of textology and lexicography of early Turkic monuments, thematically oriented descriptions of horse coat color designations are usually fragmentary and often "dissolved" within broader studies of color terminology or ethnolinguistics.

The Turkological tradition has developed the semantics of color designations and their historical and cultural extensions (particularly in studies of color-term semantics and their secondary meanings). This provides a foundation for interpreting horse coat color nominations as culturally loaded lexical units. Research on the semantics and vocabulary of the dictionary is referenced in the works of M. Ravshanov (Ravshanov, 2024: 307–311), S. Davlatova, G. Kosymova, K. Telgozhayeva, Z. Temirgazina, O. Andryushchenko, and A. Amangeldy (Temirgazina, Andryushchenko, Amangeldy, 2024: 150–167), M. Kosybaev (Kosybaev, 2014)¹, I. Zaatov (Zaatov, 2020: 97–123), and Ch. Mirzezade, among others. The "Irk Bitig" has been studied by H.N. Orkun (1939), D. Klosson (1961), T.A. Arlotto (1970–1971), M. Erdal (1978), I.V. Stebleva (2001), F. Yıldırım (2013)², V.M. Yakovlev (2004), T. Ensegenuly (2012), A. Zhumabaeva (2021), A. Garkavets (2022), and N.G. Shaimerdinova and A.E. Dikhanbayeva (Shaimerdinova and Dikhanbayeva, 2024: 112–134).

Nevertheless, a research gap persists in comparative Turkic-Mongolian studies. The lexicon of horse coats is often treated within the framework of a single language or monument, or presented merely as an ethnographically interesting list. However, a systematic comparison of nomination models, semantic differentiation, and functional-symbolic components across the Turkic and Mongolian corpus of sources is lacking. This highlights the necessity of a thorough analysis of coat-color designations as a subsystem that reflects not only nominative features (color, shade, and color distribution) but also cultural meanings (horse value, social status, and symbolic markings) manifested in nomadic traditions.

Analysis

In Turkic-Mongolian written monuments, the vocabulary of horse coat colors constitutes a distinct and specialized section of the lexicon. Here, "color" is not an isolated physical attribute, but rather a complex classifier that simultaneously encodes shade, type of color

¹ Kosybaev M., 2014. Yazykovaya kartina mira v "Divani lugat-it-turk" M. Kashgari [The linguistic worldview in Divan Lughat al-Turk by Mahmud Kashgari]. M. diss. na soisk. uch. st. Almaty. 123 p. (in Russian)

² Yıldırım F., 2013. Irk Bitig ve Runik Harfli Metinlerin Dili: Doctora Tezi. İstanbul: Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi. 359 s.

distribution (uniformity or spottiness), presence of markings, and, in some cases, the quality and perceived “social suitability” of the animal within nomadic culture. This explains why horse coat color designations in early texts are semantically “overloaded”: they may function as precise nominatives (to identify a specific horse or herd), as elements of stable descriptive formulas, as markers of status, and, finally, as carriers of symbolic meanings (e.g., sacredness, auspiciousness, prestige, or the “correctness” of the animal). This multifunctionality is particularly evident within the Turkic-Mongolian corpus, since the written tradition preserves both lexical-classification models (e.g., lexicographical works, dictionaries, and formulaic descriptions) and narrative models (e.g., chronicle-literary accounts), in which color becomes an integral element of artistic characterization.

The cited material (Mongolian data from *The Secret History of the Mongols*’ and Turkic data from the Old Turkic texts *’Irak Bitig’* and *’Diwān Lughāt al-Turk’* by M. Kashgari) is primarily realized in attributive constructions, such as “color-horse”, but differs in the degree of elaboration and the range of additional semantic components. The most transparent model is “color feature – hypernym”, in which the color is expressed by an adjective or substantivized color term, and the carrier of the feature is the word “horse” (e.g., *mor/at*). Even within this “simple” scheme, however, there are variations: a) the addition of clarifying components (e.g., speed, breed, or purpose); b) the inclusion of color in the name of a specific horse, functioning as a kind of “nickname”; and c) the use of derivational means that establish the feature as a stable characteristic.

Mongolian materials show that coat color in *The Secret History of the Mongols*’ is usually inseparable from the evaluative-pragmatic layer. For example, a fragment listing horses as gifts and items of exchange is illustrative: “*Šarg’a agt*” (“horses of the ‘šarga’ color”) are part of a “package” that includes rare fabrics/kamqi: “*Šarg’a ayt, lüsi, kamqi...*” (Even, Pop, 1994: 22). In this context, the color ‘sharga’ (a yellowish-red or light reddish hue, close to shabdar/zhiren) is significant: including the color in the list emphasizes the gift’s value. In other words, the color functions as a sign of quality, indicating that it is not merely any horse, but a horse of a culturally preferred color. This function is also evident in other instances where the horse appears in the narrative not merely as a means of transportation, but also as a symbol of status and a vehicle for exercising power.

The intratextual variability of Mongolian color terms allows us to observe not only the “basic” color terms, but also nuanced and evaluative lexical units. For example, in the phrase “*Oγtor qoγγor moriig*” (“horse of light red/’hongor’ coat”), the color “hongor” precisely conveys ‘lightness’ and the softness of the shade. In this case, “hongor” is not simply “red” but a “light reddish” or muted tone. Within the traditional system of shades, it may carry its own aesthetic value (Luvsandarj, 1986: 415). Early written records show that, in the Mongolian tradition, gradations within the red-yellow range are essential, rather than merely the contrast between white and black.

Special attention should also be paid to the combination of coat color with qualitative and dynamic characteristics, in which the color trait is associated with speed or breed markers. For instance, “*Qurdan uqa’a mori*” (fast ‘uhaa’ horse) (Kozin, 1941: 78–80) illustrates this: ‘uhaa’ indicates the coat color, described as various shades of red, and together with ‘qurdan’ (“fast”), forms a complex in which the horse is valued both for its coat color and functional qualities. This reinforces the “portrait-like” nature of the narrative: the horse becomes a

characteristically significant entity associated with the hero's actions. Thus, the designation of this coat color in the Mongolian text is consistently considered in the context of evaluation.

A characteristic technique of *"The Secret History of the Mongols"* is introducing a horse by its color as part of the social scene. *"Tsagaan moritoi..."* (*"having a white horse..."*) (Poppe, 1937: 57). In the Turkic-Mongolian system of meanings, a white coat is significant: it is associated with purity, sacredness, high status, and ritual. Even if an episode is not ritualistic, choosing a white coat to describe a character or his horse provides a cultural hint: a white horse is not *'random'*; it is potentially symbolic. This is consistent with broader observations about the significance of the color white in Turkic traditions and its presence in *"prestigious"* images of power and heroism. There is evidence of ethnocultural representations in which white is interpreted as a sign of holiness and purity (Toktabay et al., 2005: 52-53).

Other expressive names include *"Qara-qurдан"* (*"black-fast"*) and *"Oroq-qurдан"* (*"bay-fast"*) (Tsevel, 1966). Here, the coat color (*'qara'* – black; *'orog'* – bay) is combined with *"qurдан"* (*"fast"*), forming a stable, two-component epithet. This model demonstrates two things: 1) coat color in Mongolian texts can easily combine with *"functional"* characteristics, and 2) sometimes, the combination is perceived as a ready-made formula, almost a cliché, where color and speed together mark a *"good horse"*. This is natural for nomadic culture, where a *"good horse"* is described by a set of characteristics, one of which is color.

It is also important to consider material in which the coat color is included in a horse's name, becoming part of its nickname or unique name. Examples include *"Qoŋγor šarg'a"* (*'khongor-sharga'*) (Kozin, 1941: 78-80), *"Khaliun"* (*'khalyun'*) (Kozin, 1941: 78-80); *"Eegel-kaliun"* (*'Eegel-khalyun'*) (Kozin, 1941: 78-80); *"Ebert-ünügen-cagaan"* (*'Evert-ünegentsagaan'*) (Kozin, 1941: 78-80). These names fundamentally show the boundary between *"suit as classification"* and *"suit as name"*. While *'Tsagaan mortoy'* is still a description, *"Evert-ünügen-tsagaan"* functions as an individualizer. The color component is linked to an image-based characteristic, including metaphorical associations, establishing uniqueness. In this sense, the Mongolian material is important for lexical-semantic analysis because it shows how a color term can transition from a purely descriptive function to an onomastic one.

Intratextual comments on the Mongolian material also document the cultural significance of color preferences. For example, it is noted that Mongols particularly valued horses with light red or yellowish shades (*"sharga"*, *"hongor sharga"*), as well as *"tsenher"* (*"light gray"*) and *"tsagaan"* (*"white"*) (Tsevel, 1966). Semantically, coat color designations encode a *"visible feature"* and a scale of values. This is fundamental to the analysis because coat color becomes a cultural category in this case; it is embedded in a system of ideas about favorability, beauty, strength, *"correctness"* and so on.

The Turkic material in the *"Irk Bitig"* reveals various mechanisms and confirms the cultural importance of master designations. In the fragment *"Aq bisi..."* (*"white mare..."*), the color is a favorable sign: *"If a white mare gives birth, it is very good"* (Irk Bitig, 1992: 68). Here, the color is directly incorporated into the text's evaluative modality (predictive function). Notably, *"aq"* (white) is combined not simply with *"at"* (horse), but with *"bisi"* (mare), and the text contains the morphologically formed construction *"aq bisi-si"* (with an indicator of belonging/correlation). This indicates that the combination is established as a typical expression. Thus, in the Old Uyghur runic monument, color is associated with the function of a *"sign"* rather than with describing a specific historical episode, as is often the case in Mongolian narratives.

Another example is “*Ala atliγ yol Teγri*” (“*God of the Road on a Piebald Horse*”) (Irk Bitig, 1992: 16). Here, the color “*ala*” (“*piebald, spotted*”) is introduced into a sacred context. This is important for analysis for two reasons. First, “*ala*” does not denote a “*simple*” color characteristic, but rather a type of color distribution (speckled or spotted). Second, the sacred scene shows that speckledness can be a symbolically significant feature rather than a “*defect*” or accident. In many traditions, “*speckled*” is viewed ambivalently, but the runic text shows that it can be part of a divine image without negative connotations.

The next context is “*Sariγ atliγ sabčī...*” (“*messenger on a yellow horse*”) (Irk Bitig, 1992: 18). The color “*sariγ*” (“*yellow*”) is also included in the formulaic description of the character (“*messenger*”), performing an identifying function. However, the accompanying cultural background is also important. In steppe symbolism, the color yellow/gold is often associated with the top, center, or power (in different variants of geosymbolism and color orientation). Thus, the “*yellow horse of the messenger*” may be a typical image established in tradition (corresponding observations on the role of color symbolism in the Turkic world are recorded in the research literature) (Kononov, 1975: 159).

The formula “*Jazyγ atliγ yalabač...*” (“*messenger on a piebald/spotted horse*”) is also indicative (Irk Bitig, 1992: 27). Here, we see the second term for variegation, “*jazyγ*”, which, in the context of “*Irk Bitig*”, is used as a color sign along with “*ala*”. Semantically, this indicates that there are at least two different lexemes in Old Turkic that express the idea of “*piebaldness/speckledness*”, confirming the high degree of differentiation in the field of coat color. The presence of competing nominations, distributed by shade or pattern type, usually indicates the practical significance of the distinction. If the difference were insignificant, the language would not retain so many specialized means.

Finally, the example of “*Aq at...*” (“*white horse...*”) (Irk Bitig, 1992: 61) confirms the repeatability of the white coat as a “*good*” or significant feature. Taken together, Old Turkic contexts show that (1) the white coat is included in positive assessments, (2) the yellow coat is associated with official social roles (“*messenger*”), and (3) variegated colors (“*ala*”, “*jazyγ*”) can be present in sacred and social-ritual formulaic descriptions. These findings suggest the existence of functionally distinct “*zones*” of color designation use in Old Turkic monuments: white is predominantly symbolic and evaluative, yellow is associated with status and service, and variegated colors are linked to the sacred and character/formulaic.

M. Kashgari’s “*Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*” provides lexicographical material that complements the existing information by recording colors as elements of lexical knowledge and classification. This shows the diversity and standardization of the corresponding names. The dictionary presents basic coat colors, transitional shades, and pattern types, as well as specialized terms for markings. For example, “*ūr at*” is defined as “*a horse whose coat is between chestnut and bay*” (DTS³, 1969: 65). This definition is significant because it demonstrates that, in the Turkic tradition, coat color is not only considered a distinct category, but also a continuous spectrum where “*intermediate*” states are recognized. These “*in-between*” states are a sign of a developed semantic system because society distinguishes between shades of color and language fixes these boundaries terminologically.

Similarly, “*ūy at*” is interpreted as “*a coat between white and bay*” (DTS³, 1969: 426), and “*ugar at*” as “*a coat between red and white*” (DTS³, 1969: 95). Together, these units demonstrate

³Drevnetyurkskij slovar' [Old Turkic Dictionary], 1969. Redakторы: V.M. Nadelyaev, D.M. Nasilov, E.R. Tenishev, A.M. Shcherbak. Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo «Nauka». Leningradskoe otdelenie. 715 p. [in Russian].

a three-dimensional scale: 1) the reddish-bay zone (“ūr”), 2) the white-bay zone (“ūy”), and 3) the red-white zone (“ugar”). In terms of analysis, the color terms in “*Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*” function as “nodes” on a map of shades; they define culturally significant intervals between “poles” (white, red, and bay). Semantically, this can be described as a regular model of “interval” meaning; the term denotes an interval, not a point, on the color continuum.

The “*Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*” also contains more “direct” horse names. “*Alān at*” is defined as “a piebald horse” (Kashgari, 2005: 44); “*qubān at*” means “a horse whose coat color is between bay and white” (Kashgari, 2005: 44); and “*qulān at*” means “a horse with a gray-brown coat” (Kashgari, 2005: 44). At the same time, “*qubā*” in the dictionary is functionally close to “ūy” (both describe the transition to white); however, judging by its inclusion as a separate term, it has its own nuances and typological features. Such “parallels” (several terms in one area of the scale) are important for lexical-semantic analysis because they indicate a high density of nominations in culturally significant ranges (e.g., the white-bay area).

The term “*tuquz at*” (“spotted/pied”) (Kashgari, 2005: 44) is another model – a term based on pattern type. Here, coat color is determined more by the “structure” of the color (speckled or mottled) than by the color pole, which brings it closer to the ancient Uyghur “*ala*” and “*jazyγ*”.

The term “*āk at*” (“white-gray, piebald, or light gray horse”) is semantically interesting (Kononov, 1975: 159). It shows that one term can represent several similar visual types, i.e., within the lexical tradition, “cluster” semantics are permitted: not one specific shade, but rather a group of similar colors. This corresponds to the general pattern of folk color vocabulary, which is not always “physically accurate” but functionally accurate in that it groups together what is perceived as similar in horse breeding practice.

The “*Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*” also records terms related to markings: “*yaldig at*” (“white-legged horse”) and “*qashqa at*” (“horse with a star on its forehead”) (Kashgari, 2005: 44). These terms demonstrate the expansion of the concept of “color” to include “body markings”: the color characteristic encompasses not only the overall color but also local features, such as white legs or a white mark on the forehead. This is fundamental to the analysis because, in the tradition of horse breeding, “coat color” is not just a word “about color” but rather a system for identifying features where markings almost serve as passports.

The “*toruγ at*” (“bay horse”) and “*qir at*” (“brown horse”) are recorded separately (Kashgari, 2005: 44). These are the “core” coat color meanings, around which transitional meanings are built. Together, they provide material for reconstructing the semantic structure of the field in Kashgari’s dictionary: the core (white, black, bay, brown, red, etc.), the periphery of shades (intermediate meanings), the periphery of patterns (spotted, mottled), and the periphery of markings (white-legged, star on the forehead).

A comparison of Mongolian narrative material and Turkic lexicographic material reveals differences in the “mode of operation” of coat color designations. In “*The Secret History of the Mongols*”, coat color is often woven into the action. The horse participates in exchanges of gifts, military episodes, and plot dynamics. Coat color simultaneously serves as an identifier and an “aesthetic-evaluative” amplifier. In “*Irk Bitig*”, coat color is built into predictive and sacred formulaic patterns. In these patterns, it is not the specific horse that is important but rather the culturally significant model (“a white mare will give birth – good”). In Kashgari’s dictionary, color is presented as standardized knowledge where differences in shades and

markings are systematized and “*explained*” through definitions. Thus, the same fragment of reality (the color of a horse) is recorded differently in three written genres: narrative, formula, and dictionary. This situation is convenient for historical lexicology because, by comparing these modes, one can separate typologically stable elements (the core of semantics) from genre-dependent ones (evaluative epithets and formulaic roles).

At the level of word formation and morphosyntax, several stable patterns can be identified in the material. The first is simple attribution, where the color is expressed by an adjective or color base (“*aq at*”, “*sariγ atliγ...*”, “*qara-qurdan...*” etc.). The second pattern is a derivation with the indicator “*-liγ/-liγ*” (“*atliγ*”), where the adjective forms a stable characteristic rather than denoting “*a horse of such-and-such a color*” (literally “*having a horse...*”). The color component precedes “*atliγ*”, which reinforces the meaning of belonging (Irk Bitig, 1992: 16; 18; 27). The third pattern involves complex epithets or composites in the Mongolian language. In this pattern, the color becomes part of the horse’s “*name*” and can be combined with figurative components (“*Ebert-ünigen-cagaan*” etc.) (Kozin, 1941: 78-80). The fourth pattern is the “*color + mark*” model characteristic of the dictionary (“*yaldig*”, “*qashqa*”), where identification is carried out on the basis of a local feature, and the color component may be implicit (Kashgari, 2005: 44).

The semantic differentiation of color designations in Turkic-Mongolian materials is evident in the division of “*color*” into several parameters: (1) basic tone (e.g., white, black, yellow, bay), (2) lightness/intensity (e.g., “*khongor*” meaning “*light red*”), (3) pattern (e.g., “*ala*”, “*jazyγ*”, “*tuquz*”), (4) transition/interval (e.g., “*ūr*”, “*ūy*”, “*ugar*”), and (5) markings (e.g., “*yaldig*”, “*qashqa*”). This ambiguity brings the field of coat colors close to “*professional*” terminology, as language serves the practice of differentiation because it is socially and economically significant.

The cultural-semantic layer of coat color designations is particularly evident in white and “*speckled*” coat colors. In Turkic materials, white is directly associated with positive assessments, such as “*very good*” (Irk Bitig, 1992: 68). In a broader ethnocultural context, white is interpreted as a sign of purity and holiness, an interpretation confirmed by research (including observations on the role of white horses in images of power and heroism) (Toktabay et al., 2005: 52-53). Mongolian sources also demonstrate the symbolic “*elevation*” of white through stable combinations and the narrative significance of white horses (Poppe, 1937: 57). Thus, in the Turkic-Mongolian tradition, white is not merely “*frequent*” but semantically significant.

Variegated coat colors (“*ala*”, “*jazyγ*” and “*tuquz*”) are interesting because they serve two functions: a classificatory function and a figurative-symbolic function. In the “*Irk Bitig*” written manuscript, a variegated horse appears in a sacred image as “*the god of the road on a dappled horse*” (Irk Bitig, 1992: 16), which removes any negative connotations associated with “*variegation*” and establishes it as significant in the sacred register. In the “*Diwān Lughāt al-Turk*”, the “*variegated/spotted*” coat color is recorded as a standardized unit (“*tuquz at*”) (Kashgari, 2005: 44), confirming its economic and practical significance. Therefore, variegation is not peripheral; it is included in the system as a separate type that requires its own name.

The term “*ala*” and its semantic extension occupy a special place in the analyzed material. In the ethnocultural tradition of the Turkic peoples, the proverb “*Adam alasy isinde, zhylyky alasy syrtynda*” (“*the diversity of a person is inside, the diversity of a horse is outside*”) uses “*ala*”

as a metaphor for hidden ambiguity or duality, not as a master sign. Research emphasizes that in this proverb, “*ala*” does not literally mean “*speck*”, but rather takes on the meaning of “*zhaman oy, zhaman pighyl*” (“*bad thought/bad intention*”). In other words, it acts as a semantic marker of internal “*opacity*” (Syzdykova, 2004: 31-34). This transfer demonstrates that master designations, as part of zoonomenclature, can form a language's metaphorical resource. For lexical-semantic analysis, this is an important confirmation of polysemy, as a color term becomes a carrier of evaluative and ethical meaning.

Polysemy is also characteristic of the term “*hara/qara*” (black). In the Turkic semantic tradition, “*qara*” can denote not only color but also figurative meanings, including evaluative and socially marked ones, as confirmed by research observations (Kononov, 1975: 159). In Mongolian, “*qara-qurdan*” (“*black-fast*”) (Tsevel, 1966) illustrates how “*black*” is incorporated into the description of a “*good/fast horse*”. Therefore, in the context of coat colors, “*black*” does not necessarily carry a negative connotation; it can be a neutral identifier or a positive characteristic (“*fast black horse*”).

Taking a comparative approach allows us to identify a common core of coat color designations that coincide typologically and lexically to some extent. The most obvious correspondences are white (“*aq - tsagaan*”), black (“*qara - har/hara*”), and yellow or reddish (“*sariγ - sharga, ukhaa, hongor*” in Mongolian shades), as well as variegated types (“*ala/jazyγ - alag/ala*”). However, coincidence does not always mean identity. The Mongolian “*khorongor*”, “*sharga*”, and “*ukhaa*” form a more detailed internal gradation within the “*yellow-red*” field. In the Old Uyghur monument, the functional role of coat color in formulaic structures, such as omens and images of messengers, comes to the fore. In the “*Diwān Lughāt al-Turk*”, on the contrary, subtle gradation is realized in the definitions “*between*” that is, through the lexical description of intervals (“*ūr, ūy, ugar*”), which is another form of “*subtle differentiation*”.

In the Turkic system, “*interval*” semantics (“*between bay and white*” etc.) play an important role (DTS⁴, 1969: 65; 426; 95). This demonstrates that the language of horse breeding is not limited to a set of discrete names. In practice, when identifying a horse, a person encounters subtle transitions; therefore, words denoting these transitions are culturally established. Mongolian texts often express this “*interval*” not through explicit definitions, but rather through a set of nuanced terms (“*hongor*” as “*light*” etc.) (Luvsandorj, 1986: 415). This difference can be explained by genre: a dictionary must explain nuances with words like “*between*”, while a narrative can simply refer to them. Additionally, the color designations in written monuments are closely related to a broader system of ethnocultural classification of colors and cardinal directions, as well as the symbolism of power and ritual. Research on the role of horse color in Kazakh tradition and Turkic geosymbolism demonstrates the consistency of connections between “*color-direction/status/ritual*” and confirms that color can serve as a “*marker*” in significant social actions, including military campaigns, ritual practices, and the display of power (Kononov, 1975). In this context, the designation of coat colors in early texts becomes “*information-dense*”: behind each word lies a cultural schema.

The ethnographic tradition of classifying suits in Kazakh culture also demonstrates the complexity of the field. Large groups of colors exist, such as “*qilan*” (light), “*baran*”, “*ala*”, and “*shubar*”, among others, with numerous subtypes within each group, including “*aqboz*”, “*shanqan*”, “*boz*”, “*ker*”, “*tory*”, and “*zhiren*” (Artyngbayev, 1969: 31; Toktabay et al., 2005:

⁴Drevnetyurkskij slovar' [Old Turkic Dictionary], 1969. Redaktory: V.M. Nadelyaev, D.M. Nasilov, E.R. Tenishev, A.M. Shcherbak. Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo «Nauka». Leningradskoe otdelenie. 715 p. [in Russian].

52–53). This classification practice is important for historical and linguistic analyses because it shows that the high differentiation of master names is not a “lexical coincidence” but rather a reflection of cultural needs.

Examining individual terms confirms the connection between wool names and material associations. In the Mongolian tradition, for example, “*khalyun*” is interpreted as a wool color compared to “*otter fur*” based on the quality and color of the fur. In the Kazakh tradition, color terms are often formed by analogy with metals, natural objects, and fabrics. For instance, “*altun*” means “*golden*” in complex definitions (Kozin, 1941: 78–80; Irk Bitig, 1992). This corresponds to the general pattern of color naming. Language easily assigns a shade by comparing it to a well-known “*reference*” object.

Several types of contexts can be identified in written monuments at the level of functioning of coat color designations: 1) Identificatory-descriptive: color distinguishes one horse/tabur from another (Mongolian lists and characteristics). 2) Evaluative-prestigious: color is included in the description of a valuable gift or “*good horse*” (“*sharga agt*” in gift exchange, “*qara-qurdan*” etc.) (Even Pop, 1994: 22; Tsével, 1966). 3) Sacred-formulaic: coat color is part of the image of a deity or a system of predictions (“*ala atlıy yol Teḡri*”, “*aq bisi - very good*”) (Irk Bitig, 1992: 16, 68). 4) Lexicographic-normative: horse color is established as a defined term and incorporated into the lexicon (“*Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*”) (Kashgari, 2005: 44). These contexts are important because they clarify the semantic structure; the same term can activate different components of meaning in different contexts.

At the analytical level, this leads to a general conclusion: the designations of horse coats in Turkic-Mongolian monuments are not “*peripheral vocabulary*” but rather a systematic and culturally significant layer. In this layer, classification by color and pattern, evaluative and symbolic connotations, and genre-determined methods of inclusion in the text all operate simultaneously. Mongolian material emphasizes the narrative and evaluative potential of color terms and their ability to name specific horses. Old Turkic material demonstrates the inclusion of colors in sacred and symbolic formulas. The Turkic lexicographical tradition records a high level of terminological differentiation, including transitional shades and marks. Together, these sources allow us to describe coat color designations as units that form part of the linguistic and ethnocultural worldview of nomadic societies, in which horses are central to economic practices and symbolic thinking.

In contrast to the Mongolian corpus, where horse coat colors serve as narrative characteristics with evaluative and symbolic connotations, Turkic written monuments exhibit a different distribution of functions. Here, horse coat color names are predominantly recorded in **formulaic contexts**, reflecting the ancient Turkic tradition, or in **lexicographical standardization**, as seen in the “*Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*” tradition. This makes Turkic material particularly valuable for reconstructing **models of naming and semantic differentiation** of the “*coat color*” feature (Kashgari, 2005; Ercilasun, Akkoyunlu, 2015).

In the Turkic-Mongolian written corpus, horse color designations function not as “*dictionary labels*” but as working units of description that simultaneously (1) name an external feature, (2) specify the animal's classification status, and (3) are included in culturally significant modes of narration. This is clearly visible at the form level: alongside single-word adjectives such as “*tsagan/aq/sariy/sharga/ala*” there are expanded constructions that consistently use the coat color as part of an extended description. This extended description clarifies markings, wool quality, and color distribution and sometimes uses an epithet that “*attaches*” an assessment or function to the horse. This “*load*” of coat color nominations is understandable. In a nomadic

society, a horse is not just a means of transportation; it is also a social resource and a status symbol. Thus, the accuracy and distinctiveness of coat color terms naturally increase and are supported by textual tradition.

By comparing Mongolian and Turkic materials, we can identify several “cross-cutting” parameters by which horse coat color designations are structured and developed.

The first parameter is reliance on basic color dominants. In Turkic materials, “aq”, “sariy”, “ala” and “altun” are regularly used as metaphorical “color-quality” designations, while in Mongolian materials, “tsagaan”, “sharga”, “khalyun” and “khar” are used. These terms demonstrate typological proximity, as white/yellow/spotted/black form the “framework” of the coat color lexicon, to which nuanced and clarifying elements are added.

The second parameter is the interaction of coat color with the horse's sex, age, and functional characteristics. Turkic forms such as “bisi”, “adyr”, “qulun” and “tayi” demonstrate that coat color can easily be associated with gender and age (not “abstract color” but “color + type of animal”). Mongolian material provides functional connections of a different type, such as coat color + epithet of speed/quality (“khar khurdan”) or coat color + exterior feature (“ogotor khongor”). In the Mongolian narrative tradition, color more often works with “applied” features of action and appearance.

The third parameter is the semantic extension of coat color terms beyond their literal meaning toward cultural metaphor. The most telling example is “ala”. In the “*Diwān Lughāt al-Turk*”, the word “ala” is recorded not only as a suit (“spotted horse”), but also as a figurative designation for “bad thoughts” or “hidden intentions”. This concept continues in Kazakh cultural knowledge through the proverb “*Adam alası ishinde, zhylqy alası syrtynda*”, in which “ala” is no longer exclusively a color, but rather a model of opposition between “visible/hidden” (Syzdykova, 2004: 31–34). For a lexical-semantic analysis, this is an “ideal” case: suit → visual variegation → metaphor of heterogeneity/duality → evaluative characteristic of a person/intention. It is important to note that this transfer is not arbitrary; it is motivated by the suit's observable property of variegation, which is visible from the outside, and then transferred to the human sphere, where “variegation” is hidden inside and no longer visible.

The fourth parameter is the degree of detail in the horse coat color system of the later Turkic (Kazakh) tradition. This system helps us “read” ancient data as part of a long cultural and linguistic lineage. Kazakh suit names demonstrate a developed system of single-word and compound designations supported by ethnographic knowledge. Suits are grouped into broad categories such as “aq”, “boz”, “qara” and “sary” and then refined by nuanced names (Artyngbayev, 1969; Qaydarov et al., 1992; Serikbaeva, 2009). This layer is important not as a “contemporary addition” but as a way to demonstrate the stability of the principle. The Turkic tradition preserves and develops the “base + refinement” model, and ancient written records (“*Irk Bitig*” and “*Diwān Lughāt al-Turk*”) appear to be early stages of the same logic of differentiation.

Results

A comparative analysis of Turkic and Mongolian written monuments revealed that the designations of the suits are not an “auxiliary” periphery of the horse-breeding lexicon but rather an independent fragment of the nominative system with high semantic density and cultural significance. The material allows us to document several dozen names and stable

combinations distributed according to several stable parameters: color (base), shade, transitional zones between “*basic*” colors, color distribution characteristics (variegation/spotting), and marked elements of appearance (e.g., marks on the head, whiteness of the mane). This multi-parameter nature confirms that, in the Turkic-Mongolian tradition, coat color is not described as “*a color in general*” but rather as a complex feature that is functionally significant for identifying and evaluating animals in culturally significant contexts.

Comparing Turkic and Mongolian data clarifies several key patterns. First, in both traditions, coat color acts as a “*high-frequency identifier*” of a horse. The color designation is not a neutral detail but is regularly included in stable descriptive formulas, along with gender and age in Turkic material and evaluative components, especially in Mongolian material.

Second, the general principle of semantic differentiation is consistent: the system is not limited to dichotomies such as “*white/black/red*” but rather, it develops transitional zones and subtle nuances. This can be interpreted as a linguistic reflection of the practical importance of accurately distinguishing animals under nomadic farming conditions. Third, the degree of “*lexicalization*” of coat color terms differs. Turkic sources more often demonstrate transparent constructions of “*color feature + horse*” and lexical fixation of features (including markings), while Mongolian monuments more actively use specialized epithets that function as stable naming designations. However, this difference does not destroy comparability. On the contrary, it shows that the typologically common need to describe and distinguish horses by external characteristics is realized through different genre-linguistic mechanisms: lexicographic listing and formulaic description in the Turks, and narrative individualization in the Mongols.

The distinction between “*color*” and “*color detail*” in Turkic materials deserves special attention because it shows how the linguistic system reinforces culturally relevant characteristics. The existence of separate terms for a white spot on the forehead and a white mane shows that in the traditional description of a horse, the color and its distribution are important, as are the details that make the animal recognizable. Later Turkic data (based on studies of the “*horse*” thematic field in Turkic languages) shows that this detail remains a significant component of the lexical-semantic system. This confirms the stability of this vocabulary fragment and its connection to cultural practice.

Mongolian material, in turn, emphasizes the evaluative and symbolic perspective of color nominations. Even within the corpus, it is noticeable that individual coat color terms do not simply state the color; they participate in creating the image of a horse as a socially and culturally significant object: coat color becomes an element of the “*language of prestige*”, the “*language of recognition*” and, at the same time, the “*language of memory*” (in a narrative sense).

These results allow us to make a significant generalization for comparative-historical lexicology and ethnolinguistics: color designations in Turkic-Mongolian written monuments form a system in which color nomination is structured on several levels: basic colors, shades and transitional colors, color distribution characteristics, and markings and individual details of appearance. The functioning of these units in the text is not limited to neutral naming. In both cases, color serves as a linguistic representation of the ethnocultural worldview, recording the ways of observing, distinguishing, and evaluating horses, which are central to the economic and symbolic systems of nomadic civilizations.

Conclusion

An analysis of the lexical and semantic representation of horse colors in Turkic-Mongolian written monuments reveals one key fact: these are not merely private “dictionary of colors” but rather systematic and culturally significant sections of vocabulary that serve as tools for accurately recognizing, classifying, and interpreting horses in the sources. For nomadic civilizations, horses are not merely decorative or a “detail of everyday life” but rather the functional core of their economy, mobility, military practice, and status relations. Therefore, language inevitably records not only basic horse-related names, but also subtly organized descriptive terms, in which coat color becomes a convenient and stable marker of “who this horse is” and “what it is like”. In Turkic and Mongolian data, coat color designations regularly appear in descriptive formulas, narrative characteristics, and dictionary definitions. They act not simply as an indication of appearance but also as part of an identification norm. A horse is named so that it can be recognized and distinguished from others based on cultural expectations established by tradition.

Comparative material reveals the general trend in semantic organization. In written traditions, colors tend to be described in detail rather than in crude “black/white” or “light/dark” distinctions. In Turkic-Mongolian monuments, “color” functions as a complex semantic category where the color base intertwines with salient observer parameters, such as shading, tone mixing, local areas of whiteness/pigmentation, and recognizable marks.

However, there are significant differences in the textual implementation of this semantic category. Turkic writing more often depicts color as an element of systematic classification, similar to a dictionary or formulaic description. In contrast, Mongolian writing depicts color as an element of artistic and historical narrative, where color becomes part of the image and evaluation.

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Authors' Contributions:

A. Baigazh defined the main idea of the study, developed its conceptual and theoretical framework, and carried out a historical-comparative analysis of the linguistic units of the monument.

A.M. Nurbayeva systematized the materials, prepared the translations, and performed the editing of the final version of the work.

A.Y. Rustemova participated in the collection and processing of linguistic material, conducted the analysis, and prepared an analytical review of the sources.

Авторлық үлес:

А.Байгаж зерттеудің негізгі идеясын айқындап, оның тұжырымдамасы мен теориялық негізін әзірледі, ескерткіштің тілдік бірліктеріне тарихи-салыстырмалы талдау жүргізді.

А.М. Нурбаева материалдарды жүйелеп, аудармаларды дайындап, жұмыстың соңғы нұсқасын редакциялады.

А.Е. Рустемова тілдік материалды жинауға және өңдеуге қатысып, талдау жүргізді және дереккөздерге аналитикалық шолу жасады.

Вклад авторов:

А. Байгаж определила основную идею исследования, разработала его концепцию и теоретическую основу, провела историко-сравнительный анализ языковых единиц памятников.

А.М. Нурбаева выполнила систематизацию материалов, подготовила переводы и осуществила редактирование окончательного варианта работы.

А.Е. Рустемова участвовала в сборе и обработке языкового материала, провела анализ и подготовила аналитический обзор источников.



Conflict of Interest.

There is no conflict of interest related to this article.

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