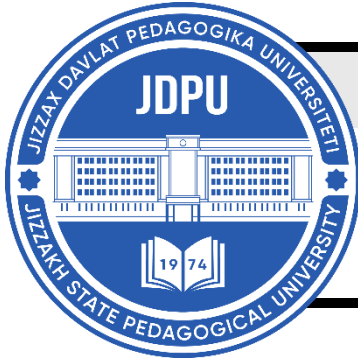


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THE OCCURRENCE OF "TOASTS" IN THE RUSSIAN CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: This paper examines the cultural phenomenon of "toasts" within the context of Russian social gatherings and festivities. Rooted deeply in the traditions of Russian hospitality, toasts serve as integral components of various occasions, ranging from formal banquets to casual gatherings among friends and family. Through an exploration of historical, social, and linguistic perspectives, this study seeks to elucidate the significance and evolution of toasts within Russian culture. It delves into the traditional practices associated with offering and responding to toasts, highlighting their role in fostering camaraderie, expressing respect, and reinforcing social bonds. Furthermore, the paper investigates the linguistic intricacies of toasting, including common phrases, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances embedded within toast etiquette. Drawing from a diverse range of sources, including literature, folklore, and contemporary observations, this research sheds light on the enduring tradition of toasting as a cherished aspect of Russian cultural identity. Ultimately, it underscores the importance of toasts as not only verbal expressions of goodwill but also as symbolic reflections of communal values and customs in Russian society.

INTRODUCTION

The act of proposing toasts, or "тосты" (tosty) in Russian, holds a prominent place within the rich tapestry of Russian social customs. From grand celebrations to intimate gatherings, toasts serve

as ritualized expressions of camaraderie, respect, and shared experiences. Rooted deeply in Russian history and tradition, the practice of toasting embodies the principles of hospitality and conviviality that are intrinsic to Russian culture. In this paper, we embark on an exploration of the occurrence of toasts within the Russian cultural environment, aiming to unravel the significance and evolution of this cherished custom. Throughout the centuries, toasting has been a ubiquitous feature of Russian social life, permeating various spheres of interaction, from formal banquets hosted by nobility to humble feasts among peasants. The ritual of proposing toasts has been intricately intertwined with the fabric of Russian society, serving as a means of forging and strengthening interpersonal connections. As such, understanding the nuances of toasting offers valuable insights into the dynamics of social interaction and the values that underpin Russian communal life. In this study, we delve into the historical roots of toasting, tracing its origins to ancient Slavic customs and exploring its evolution through different epochs and cultural shifts. We examine the roles of toasts within specific contexts, such as weddings, birthdays, and holidays, elucidating the unique customs and conventions associated with each occasion. Furthermore, we investigate the linguistic aspects of toasting, analyzing common phrases, idiomatic expressions, and cultural symbols embedded within toast etiquette. By examining toasts through a multidimensional lens encompassing history, sociology, and linguistics, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of their significance within the Russian cultural milieu. Through this exploration, we seek to illuminate the enduring importance of toasting as a reflection of communal values, interpersonal relationships, and cultural identity in Russian society.

THE MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Epidictic speech, also known as ceremonial or demonstrative rhetoric, often serves the purpose of praise or accusation, spoken on special occasions. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle divided rhetoric into three genres, and epidictic speech is one of these genres. Over time, various genres of developed epidictic speech appeared. We prefer to divide epidictic speech into the following types:

1. Festive speeches: Festive speeches are included in ceremonial speeches. Ceremonial speeches are the main genre of epidictic rhetoric. A formal speech is intended to celebrate a person, event, or achievement. For example, speeches at school prom, speeches at award ceremonies, congratulations at weddings. In these speeches, the tone is usually positive, and the speech focuses on the qualities and achievements of a person or a group. Festive speeches use vivid images, beautiful sentences, and such speeches serve to cheer up and inspire the listeners.

2. Speeches of praise: A eulogy is used at a funeral or memorial service. Praise speech constitutes a subgenre of epidictic speech. In such speeches, it is possible to commemorate the life of the deceased and remember his good deeds. Eulogies often include personal thoughts and

expressions of sadness. The purpose is to commemorate, bring closure to a person's life, acknowledge their legacy, and comfort their grief.

3. Inaugural speeches: Inaugural speeches are an important genre of epideictic speech, usually delivered during the swearing-in of political leaders such as presidents or heads of state. These speeches are delivered in a solemn tone. In such a speech, the views, values and aspirations of the leaders are determined. Inaugural speeches often mix elements of epideictic and polemical rhetoric, inspiring citizens and addressing the challenges ahead.

4. Memorial speeches: Commemorative speeches are given at events celebrating historical events or anniversaries. These are used in opening ceremonies of monuments or celebrating national holidays. The goal is to reflect on the significance of the event, honor the participants, and create a sense of collective memory. Through the use of rhetoric, commemorative speeches connect audiences to the shared history and values associated with the event.

5. Acceptance speeches: When accepting awards or accolades, people often give acceptance speeches. Although these speeches are similar to celebratory speeches, they also contain an element of humility and gratitude. Acceptance speeches provide an opportunity to thank recipients, acknowledge supporters, and convey the personal significance of the recognition.

So, epideictic speech genres include different situations, each of them has its own purpose and tone. From the celebration of holidays and commemorations to reflections on life and death, epideictic rhetoric plays a crucial role in articulating shared values, fostering a sense of community, and honoring important moments in the human experience. As a type of epideictic speech that developed with the times, the following types of toasts were also developed: short toasts, funny and humorous toasts, birthday toasts, anniversary toasts, wedding toasts, parenting toasts, women's and girls' toasts, as well as, love toasts.

In the Russian cultural environment, "toasts" are said around the communal table, as in other nations. This tradition has existed in Russia for a long time. During this period, etiquette rules for some words appeared in Russia:

- At large events, greetings are given in turn, starting with the host, the speaker and the presenter.
- A couple can make a wish together in the "Family Glass of Words". In this case, the woman may not speak.
- The first word is spoken 10-15 minutes after gathering around the table.
- Ceremonial toasts begin with greetings or thanks.
- It is not allowed to eat, drink, talk or engage in any other activity while praying.
- It is not necessary to finish the drink from the glass.

- If there is a small group around the table, you can clink a glass with everyone, in official events it is enough to clink with the people next to you, even this tradition may not be followed.

- A good speech should be memorable and emotional. It can be humorous, but not rude or sarcastic. If you can't find an original word of your own, you can use a ready-made template.

- Toasting an empty glass or a container full of soft drinks is considered insulting.

Pouring alcoholic beverages around the table in front of the guests is a strong tradition in the Russian people. Behaving at the table and following the rules of etiquette apply to both hosts and guests. It is considered a bad sign if those gathered around the table do not follow the rules of etiquette, if they make a mistake. In general, the Russian people also have various taboos on drinking alcohol. For example, in Russian people, pouring a drink over the hand into a glass is equivalent to wishing for misfortune, illness, or even death. The remnants of such superstitions have been preserved to this day, even the list of such superstitions has increased. It is said that pouring a drink over the hand can cause the following evils:

- turning his life in a negative direction;
- calling a disease to oneself;
- lose vital energy;
- bringing unhappiness to the household.

To prevent such disasters, it is necessary to spill a few drops of drink on the ground with good intentions. Usually, such a tradition begins with making sacrifices to the spirits of departed ancestors and saints.

Superstitious people believe that raising a glass to drink by hand will lead to economic decline. Therefore, drinks are poured into glasses while they are standing on the table. Ethnographers give different conjectures about the origin of such rituals. Among them, one of the most common is related to Russian nobles giving gifts of honey and wine to the people in barrels. The nobles sat at the table and drank from glasses, while the common people drank directly from the barrel into the corresponding vessel. From this came the associative concept of poverty, that pouring a drink while holding the glass in the air causes poverty.

In another story, they attribute it to the arbitrariness of the landlords in the serf period. Servants were ordered to fill the glasses carefully so as not to spill a drop of expensive wine and not to stain the table. This is difficult to do while it is still in the air, so they carefully poured the bottles on the table. Servants were punished, flogged or put to hard labor for spilled alcohol.

Ethnographer Vasiliy Tarasov has studied the folk art of Western Siberia for many years, and as a result of his research, he cites the following narration. During the expedition, he hears such a story about a woman. A woman asks a healer to cure her alcoholic husband. The sorceress agreed to help and performed a certain ritual to separate the man from the drink. The drinker enters the tavern

again and asks the innkeeper to pour him a glass of vodka. But a glass of vodka seemed so heavy that his fingers would break if he couldn't lift it. Although the mystical history has been forgotten, the traces of its influence have reached the present day.

In the culture of the Russian people, toasts are said around the table on the occasion of various events. We can divide the words used in Russian culture into the following types according to the events they are used for:

1. Short toasts of wisdom that can be used in any event.
2. Toasts used in anniversary events.
3. Toasts of honor used in wedding events.
4. Toasts used in birthday events.
5. Toasts used at the New Year's event.

It should be noted that no matter what occasion the words of the cup are spoken, they have age and gender characteristics. The specific characteristics, signs, achievements, experiences, dreams and desires, obligations of each age period, each gender are reflected in the words.

A few words. It's best to keep the conversation short at any dinner table, because a long-winded speech will bore the listener. For this reason, it is best to express a few words through a short speech. Short speeches can be divided into the following types:

- ✓ Common toasts.
- ✓ Private toasts.

Common words are used when gathering with friends and sitting around the table. Including, Друзья мои, нельзя пить индивидуально, давайте будем напиваться коллективно. За великую силу коллектива! (Friends, it's not good to drink alone, let's drink as a team. For the great power of team!).

Дорогой друг, желаю, чтобы у тебя всегда было легкое сердце и тяжелые карманы! (My dear friend, I wish you always lightness in your heart and weight in your pocket!).

Дорогие друзья, давайте выпьем за страсть! Страсть как хочется выпить! (Dear friends, let's drink to the lust! How good it is to satisfy the lust of drinking!).

Давайте выпьем за дружбу, ведь именно она умножает радости и разделяет печаль! (Let us drink to friendship, for it is that which makes us happy and share our sorrows).

Говорят, что человек, достигший вершин власти, потерял для друзей. Поднимем бокалы за то, чтобы дружба не умирала даже у вершин власти! (They say that when a man rises to the top of power, he loses his friends. Let's raise a glass to the fact that friendship does not disappear even at the top!).

Drinking alcohol around the table is common among Russian people. In rural areas, alcohol is prepared from various fruits and grain products in every household. They developed different

methods of preparing these drinks. Those gathered around the table may have gathered for a variety of reasons. For this reason, common words can be on different topics. For example:

Давайте выпьем за то, чтобы у нас осталось столько горя, сколько капель останется в наших бокалах. (As many drops are left in the glasses, as many sorrows! So let's raise a glass!)

Пусть в вашей жизни будут люди, за которых хочется выпить, а не те, из-за которых хочется напиться! (Have people in your life that you want to drink to, but not the ones you have to drink from their cup to get drunk.)

Говорят, что молодость – это недостаток, который проходит. Мне же хочется, чтобы время проходило, а недостаток оставался. Выпьем за всех мужчин с таким недостатком! (They say youth is a fleeting flaw, I wish time would pass, but a flaw would remain. Let's drink to men with such a flaw!)

Я желаю тебе кучу денег, море любви и уйму времени, чтобы насладиться этим! (I wish you lots of money, love like the sea and endless time to enjoy them).

The examination of toasting practices within the Russian cultural environment reveals several key findings that shed light on the significance and evolution of this cherished custom. Firstly, our investigation into the historical roots of toasting demonstrates its deep-seated presence in Russian society, dating back to ancient Slavic rituals of hospitality and feasting. Over time, toasting evolved into a highly ritualized form of social interaction, governed by a set of unwritten rules and conventions that reflect the values and norms of Russian culture. One notable aspect of our analysis is the role of toasts as vehicles for expressing camaraderie and solidarity among participants. Through the act of proposing and responding to toasts, individuals establish and reinforce interpersonal connections, fostering a sense of belonging and community within social gatherings. Furthermore, toasts serve as opportunities for individuals to showcase their eloquence, wit, and cultural literacy, as they craft and deliver speeches that resonate with the audience. Our examination of toasting practices across different contexts reveals the versatility and adaptability of this custom within Russian culture. Whether at a formal banquet or a casual dinner party, toasts play a central role in structuring social interactions and creating meaningful moments of shared celebration. Moreover, the linguistic aspects of toasting, including common phrases and idiomatic expressions, reflect the rich tapestry of Russian language and folklore, further reinforcing the cultural significance of this tradition.

Through our interdisciplinary approach, we have gained valuable insights into the enduring importance of toasting within the Russian cultural milieu. From its historical origins to its contemporary manifestations, toasting remains a cherished aspect of Russian social life, embodying the values of hospitality, conviviality, and mutual respect. As such, the tradition of proposing toasts continues to thrive as a symbol of communal unity and cultural identity in Russian society

Historical Evolution: The practice of toasting in Russia has evolved over centuries, influenced by various historical events, cultural exchanges, and social transformations. For example, during the reign of Peter the Great in the 17th and 18th centuries, Western European customs began to influence Russian society, including the manner in which toasts were proposed and responded to. Understanding these historical shifts provides valuable insights into the development of toasting rituals and their adaptation to changing social dynamics.

Symbolism and Meaning: To propose a toast in Russia is not merely a social gesture; it carries profound symbolism and meaning. Each aspect of the toast, from the choice of words to the raising of glasses, is laden with significance. For instance, the clinking of glasses during a toast is believed to symbolize the unity and camaraderie among participants, while the content of the toast itself often reflects shared values, aspirations, and sentiments.

Cultural Context: The occurrence of toasts is intricately tied to the broader cultural context of Russian society. Different regions of Russia may have distinct toasting traditions, influenced by local customs, dialects, and historical legacies. For example, toasting customs in the Caucasus region may differ significantly from those in Siberia or Central Russia. Exploring these regional variations provides a more nuanced understanding of toasting practices within the diverse tapestry of Russian culture.

Social Significance: In addition to serving as markers of celebration and camaraderie, toasts also play a role in navigating social hierarchies and demonstrating respect for others. The order in which toasts are proposed, the individuals honored in each toast, and the manner in which they are delivered all reflect complex social dynamics and etiquette. Understanding these nuances is essential for navigating Russian social gatherings with grace and tact.

Contemporary Trends: While rooted in tradition, the occurrence of toasts in Russia continues to evolve in response to modern trends and influences. In today's digital age, for example, toasts may be shared via social media platforms or virtual gatherings, reflecting the adaptation of traditional customs to new modes of communication. Exploring these contemporary trends provides insights into the resilience and adaptability of Russian cultural practices in the face of societal changes.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of toasting practices within the Russian cultural environment illuminates the enduring significance and richness of this cherished custom. From its ancient origins to its contemporary manifestations, toasting serves as a cornerstone of Russian social interaction, embodying the values of hospitality, camaraderie, and mutual respect. Throughout history, toasts have evolved alongside Russian society, adapting to changing social dynamics while retaining their core symbolism and meaning. Whether at grand banquets or intimate gatherings, toasting rituals provide opportunities for individuals to forge and strengthen interpersonal connections, fostering a

sense of belonging and community. Moreover, the occurrence of toasts in Russia transcends mere verbal expressions of goodwill; it serves as a window into the soul of Russian culture, reflecting its depth, complexity, and resilience. Through the language of toasting, individuals articulate shared values, aspirations, and sentiments, weaving together the fabric of communal identity. As we conclude our examination of toasting practices within the Russian cultural milieu, it becomes evident that toasts are more than just ceremonial gestures; they are expressions of the human spirit, forging bonds of kinship and solidarity that transcend time and space. In an ever-changing world, the tradition of proposing toasts remains a beacon of tradition, unity, and cultural continuity in Russian society. As such, it is a tradition worth celebrating and preserving for generations to come.

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