

## ANNOTATION

thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)  
Specialty «6D020900-Oriental Studies»

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### **«General and Specific in the Life-Cycle Rituals of Kazakh and Japanese Peoples: Semiotic Aspect»**

**General description of the work.** In this research, a comparative analysis of cultural traditions of Japanese and Kazakh peoples in terms of semiotic approach has been conducted. The similarities and differences of traditional culture and customs of two peoples, its modern manifestations and continuity of cultural traditions, as well as the issues of preservation of national identity has been examined.

**The relevance of the research topic.** In the conditions of the crisis of traditional values, preservation of national identity has become one of the most pressing problems of our time.

In the article of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev entitled «The future of Kazakhstan in the ideological unity of its society» was stated: «We must pay maximum attention to the research and revival, preservation and study of our historical values and ensure its continuity to our future generations».

The relevance of studying cultural traditions in the modern era is mainly determined with the following factors, firstly, cultural traditions, including traditional culture, concentrate normative values that regulate social relations; secondly, they contain national values, as well as universal moral values characteristic for all the humanity, which are necessary for the formation of the younger generation as responsible citizens with an ethnocultural identity; thirdly, cultural traditions to some extent serve as a protective mechanism preventing the penetration of certain undesirable elements of mass culture.

The comparative study of cultural traditions of Japanese and Kazakh peoples has not yet been the subject of special scientific research in Kazakh and world historiography. Of course, it would be insufficient to perceive the existing similarities in cultural traditions of two peoples from the point of view of only universal human values.

Therefore, despite the fact that Japanese and Kazakh peoples due to their geographical location are very far from each other and belong to different cultural and civilizational types, it should be highlighted that the languages of two peoples belong to a common Altai language family. This, in turn, leads many scientists to hypothesize that in ancient times the peoples under consideration by their origin could have a single prototype.

In addition, many studies track the great influence of Indo-European peoples on the formation of Japanese nation.

Based on the findings of scientists on significant cultural influences across the Korean peninsula of the Altai and Indo-European peoples on Japan, and their impact on the formation of Japanese ethnocultural identity through their material and spiritual and cultural traditions, it is important to consider and analyze the similarities in cultural traditions of Japanese and Kazakh peoples not only from the point of view of universal human values, but mainly from the perspective of interaction of ancient Japanese with nomadic tribes of Altai and Indo-European cultures.

The abovementioned served as the basis for choosing this research topic, and the studying this issues is relevant, first of all, due to the theoretical and practical significance of solving complex task facing modern Kazakhstani society – the spiritual and cultural revival of the nation.

**The object of research:** cultural traditions of Japanese and Kazakh peoples.

**The subject of research:** cultural traditions of Japanese and Kazakh peoples, including national customs and beliefs that form the basis of life-cycle rituals. In particular, semiotic aspects of traditional culture, including life-cycle rituals associated with birth, marriage, and death.

**The purpose of research:** Identification of similarities and differences in cultural traditions of Japanese and Kazakh peoples on the basis of a comparative analysis of semiotic aspects of ritual culture of the peoples of this two countries.

**Research objectives:**

- consideration of theoretical aspects of the study of cultural traditions;
- studying the achievements of Kazakhstani and Japanese scientists in the field of cultural traditions;
- studying the history and modern manifestations of the formation of traditions and customs in cultural traditions of peoples of the two countries;
- conducting semiotic analysis to determine the basic structure of traditions and customs of Japanese and Kazakhs, determining ideological basis of cultural traditions;
- revealing the semantic meaning of cultural traditions as an important tool for ensuring continuity of national identity;
- identification and analysis of commonalities and differences in cultural traditions of peoples of two countries;
- identification of similarities in cultural traditions of peoples of the two countries, which are reflected in life-cycle rituals;
- determining the nature of preservation of cultural traditions in national identity of peoples of two countries in modern times, analyzing their place and role.

**The chronological scope** of the study is determined by the material on cultural traditions of Japanese people dating from VII century to present day. Ethnographic materials on cultural traditions of Kazakh people belong mainly to XIX century and the present times, nevertheless all sources, which refer to the

ancient stages of the history of development of cultural traditions of these two peoples and ancient forms of national traditions, have been cited in the thesis.

### **The methodological basis.**

The theoretical basis of the study is determined by the scientific findings of domestic and foreign scientists. The author applies the methods of analysis and synthesis, and the method of identifying patterns of various structural elements of cultural traditions and ritual culture. The study is also based on widely used scientific methods such as historical-comparative method, content analysis and structural analysis. These methods allow us to identify structural similarities and differences in cultural traditions of peoples of the two countries.

The empirical basis of the study was composed by the results of a specially conducted survey and interview. The survey was done among representatives of various age categories of Japanese people. The data obtained as a result of empirical research, including observation and interviews with specialists, significantly supplemented the source base of dissertation work.

The thesis is based on theoretical concepts of semiotics. The advantage of this theoretical concept is that in semiotics life-cycle rituals are considered as a single «text», which allows analyzing ritual culture from three aspects: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. The author of this methodological basis is one of the founders of the science of semiotics – Charles Morris.

Yu. Lotman's theory of «semiosphere» is also used in the dissertation, which allows us considering cultural traditions as a single unique space. This theoretical approach is based on the concept that traditional culture of peoples compose a single cultural space with its internal and external borders and a unique source.

The thesis was also based on theoretical approach of A. Van Genep, who examined traditional culture from the point of view of a «theory of transition», consisting of three ritual complexes – separation, transition, and reunion. In addition, in the study of traditional culture, the mythological theory of A. Potebnya is of great importance, since mythological consciousness forms the basis of any cultural tradition and it is reflected in linguistic consciousness of the nation. Of great value were the concepts of «symbol» and «properties of symbol», proposed by one of the founders of semiotics E. Cassirer.

**Source base of research.** The source base of the thesis consists of seven groups. The **first group** included ancient written sources – «Kojiki», «Nihon Shoki», «Shoku Nihongi», «Manyoshi», «Fudoki», «Genji Monogatari», «Mumedoshi», «Ezosimaki»; the **second group** of sources consisted of ancient written information and memoirs of scholars, who travelled Japan and wrote about Japanese cultural traditions and the peculiarities of their worldview – these are the works by Gerazima Ryan «Wakan Sansai Zue» and «Matsumae kiko:» written by Hiraio Rosen; the **third group** includes the state strategic programs dedicated to preserving and popularizing cultural traditions of two countries – «Cultural Heritage», a program article by the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, «A Look into the Future: Modernization of Public

Consciousness», the concept of cultural policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the program «People in the stream of history», dedicated to the study of the history of Kazakh people; «Cultural Policy» of Japan; Statemen’s speeches made up the **fourth group** of sources, which include, the Message to the People by the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev «Kazakhstan-2050 Strategy – a New Political Course of the Established State» and President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev «Abay and Kazakhstan in the 21st Century», and a speech by the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, on the «Reiwa era»; the **fifth group** includes ethnographic materials demonstrating the life of ancient Ainu, presented mainly in the National Ethnographic Museum of Osaka, Japan; the **sixth group** of sources consisted of the results of field trips, including observations, interviews and special surveys; the **seventh group** contains information materials published in Kazakh and Japanese Media about the cultural traditions of peoples of two countries. For example, articles published in the official print media of Kazakhstan – «Egemen Kazakhstan» and in Japan – «Asahi Shimbun». Media materials are mainly taken from online sources.

**The theoretical significance of the study.** The main results of the study can be useful in the development of educational materials and manuals for University students in the specialty of Oriental studies, Cultural studies, Ethnography and Regional studies.

**Main provisions for defense:**

1. The study of sources related to the cultural traditions of Japanese people made it possible to conduct a comparative analysis with cultural traditions of Kazakh people and to reveal similarities and differences in the ritual cultures of peoples of two countries.

2. The similarities and differences revealed in traditional culture of Japanese and Kazakh peoples are explained by differences in their cultural, civilizational and economic types of management, as well as peculiarities of their geographical location;

3. The comparative study of cultural traditions of Japanese and Kazakh peoples reveals similarities in the rites of childbirth, upbringing, rites of passage, wedding and funeral rites, as well as in ancestor worship, which represent the basis of their traditional culture. The similarities in life-cycle rituals of two peoples are explained by their belonging to a common Altai and Indo-European language family, which is due to the linguistic proximity of peoples of two countries and the presence of a common prototype of Japanese and Kazakh peoples;

4. Differences in cultural traditions, reflected in cultural rituals of peoples of two countries are mainly associated with differences in their economic structure, in particular, sedentary agriculture and fishing of Japanese people, and the nomadic way of life of Kazakhs; differences in religious beliefs are based on the predominance of Shintoism and Buddhism in Japan, and the predominance of Tengrism and Islam in Kazakh people, as well as the characteristics of relationship

of these peoples with neighboring nations and the peculiarities of their geographic locations;

5. The similarities and differences revealed on the basis of semiotic analysis of cultural traditions of two peoples are explained by the proximity of semantic and pragmatic content of ritual rites of Japanese and Kazakh peoples (parenting, initiation rites, marriage, funeral rites, etc.), as well as syntactic differences in the structure of cultural rites (rite of passage, adulthood, wedding, burial rituals, etc.);

6. Under the conditions of globalization, in Japanese and Kazakh societies, there can be observed a significant weakening of traditional culture with introduction of new modern elements, and the loss of semantic meaning of traditional customs leads to the threat of weakening the educational value of cultural tradition;

7. It has been established that the cultural traditions of two peoples are still an important system-forming mechanism for the formation of national identity of peoples of these countries and are the main tool contributing to the formation of a unified worldview and a unique symbolic complex in Japanese and Kazakh societies;

8. The comparative study of cultural traditions of Japanese and Kazakh peoples, mainly since antiquity, can serve as a basis not only for determining the similarities and differences between the life-cycle rituals and traditional cultures of two peoples, but also helps to study the spread and influence of nomadic cultures, in particular the nomadic peoples of Eurasia, and their relationship with other peoples.

**Main results and conclusions of research.** Studying the semiotic aspect of life-cycle rituals, the author identified the archaic ethnocultural and religious components of traditional culture of these peoples based on the characteristics of their civilizational worldview that serve as prerequisites for their cultural and historical development, as well as their economic structure and lifestyle.

Based on the analysis, the author comes to the conclusion that cultural concepts that are found in the life-cycle rituals of the studied peoples, in addition to demonstration at language level, are also represent the categories of cognitive thinking, and allow identifying the national ways of thinking, as well as general features of their worldview and structural features of their traditional culture.

The knowledge of cultural concepts helps to expand understanding of traditional norms, sociocultural norms of behavior, ethnic culture as a whole, and also it contributes to the formation of a tolerant personality with developed intercultural competence necessary in modern times.

The results of the study allowed reconstructing their world model and deepen understanding of the role of life cycle rituals in the traditional culture of two peoples.

Life-cycle ceremonies remain a key mechanism for ensuring the continuity of the traditional spiritual values of Japanese and Kazakh peoples.

The main findings of research are as following:

- For the first time, an attempt was made to make a comparative analysis of the traditional culture of Japanese and Kazakh peoples in oriental science.

- For the first time, Japanese sources on cultural traditions have been examined in the context of the study of Kazakh ethnography;

- For the first time, the similarities identified on the basis of analysis of ethnographic materials in cultural traditions of Japanese and Kazakh peoples have been explained on the basis of Altai and Indo-European theories;

- For the first time, on the basis of the analysis of semiotic aspects of ritual culture of two peoples, semantic and pragmatic similarities in the life-cycle rituals have been revealed;

- Based on a comparative analysis of cultural traditions of peoples of two countries, it was established that ritual culture is an integral part of the formation and development of national identity of Japanese and Kazakh peoples;

- Based on the analysis of modern processes in cultural traditions of Japanese and Kazakh peoples, there were revealed some transformations in the structure and syntax of ritual culture in connection with the development of technology and the growing urbanization.

#### **Approbation of scientific work.**

The main findings of the thesis have been presented and discussed at the following Republican and International Conferences:

1. International scientific conference: «Dialogue of cultures of the West and the East through the prism of unity and diversity for continuity and modernization of public consciousness: ancient world, middle ages, new and modern times», Russia, Kazakhstan, April 28, 2016;

2. IV International Farabi Readings, Kazakhstan, April 10, 2017;

3. IX International Scientific and Practical Conference «History, Political Science, Sociology, Philosophy: Theoretical and Practical Aspects», Novosibirsk 2018.

**Publications.** The content and conclusions of the dissertation work were published in 8 scientific articles, 3 of them were published in publications included in the list of the Committee for Control of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and 3 articles were published in materials of international scientific-practical and republican conferences. 2 papers were published in foreign journals indexed by Scopus Database.

The above set goal and objectives determined **the structure of doctoral thesis**, which consists of three chapters, appendix and the list of used literature.

The volume of this doctoral thesis is 166 pages.