

## BINARY OPPOSITIONS IN TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF JAPANESE AND KAZAKH PEOPLE

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**Abstract:** *Identifying function of binary oppositions still remain actual in modern world, since binary oppositions are used in meaning-making and construction of sign processes. This study aims to examine binary oppositions, which form the basis of ethnic world-view of Japanese and Kazakh people. The research is based on semiotics approach, which considers language and culture as a single text formed by binary oppositions and contain “universal code” of national self-consciousness. In this study, binary oppositions are referred to as means that create culturally codified texts, where cognitive and conceptually significant relationship between cultural concepts, denoted by lexical antonyms, reflect language picture of the world as well as the world model of Japanese and Kazakh people. Sampling of binary oppositions was made on the basis of analysis of mythology and key cultural concepts of both nations. The results of comparative study made it possible to define core elements of ethnic culture of Japanese and Kazakh people that constitute fundamental factor in self-identification of both nations, and help to reconstruct their world model.*

**Keywords:** Binary oppositions, cultural text, cultural code, ethnic identification, world model, semiotics.

The concept of binary opposition, developed by Ferdinand de Saussure<sup>1</sup> within structuralism, is also a key concept in theory of sociology, anthropology and linguistics, which means that all elements of human culture can be understood only in relation to another and by the way they function within the larger system or entire cultural space.

Considerable amount of literature has been devoted to the study of binary oppositions. One common point stated in these works is that binary pairs are fundamental and universal characteristic of human mind and as such they serve as a core element of world-view of any nation.<sup>2</sup> Application of binary opposition is a „*first logical operation*” of human

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<sup>1</sup> F. De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, New York, Philosophical Library Inc, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*; M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History. The Myth of the Eternal Return*, New York, Harper&Brothers Publishers, 1954; A. J. Greimas, *Semantique Structurale*, Paris, Larousse, 1966; R. Jakobson, *Selected Writings (in 4 volumes), volume II: Word and Language*, Hague, Mouton, 1971; C. Levi-Strauss, *L'Origine des manieres de table. Mythologiques.3*, Paris, Plon, 1968; Y. Lotman, „At the turning point”, in *Literary newspaper*, no. 23 (11), 1991, p. 5.

being, which helps to understand fundamental ontological issues of life,<sup>3</sup> as being-non-being, harmony-chaos, good-evil and etc. Ferdinand de Saussure defines binary opposition as a necessary mean that form the value and meaning of language units, as one cannot conceive meaning of „good” without understanding of „evil”.<sup>4</sup> Greimas notes that thanks to perceptions of such „differences”, the world „takes shape”, where „relations” existing between binary pairs are more important, than binary oppositions themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Mircea Eliade<sup>6</sup> defines binary character of nature and society as a universal feature of human thinking, which is manifested in polarity, antagonism and complementarities. Eliade uses the notion of „polarity code” that means the way of „reading” of nature and human existence as well as a universal system-forming principle that encompasses entire diversity of binary and dualistic representations.<sup>7</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss<sup>8</sup> points out that territorial division of space into self-other is not the only one, since binary oppositions find their expression in other categories of thought like Heaven-Earth, Culture-Nature, life-death, male-female and etc. Baldick<sup>9</sup> describes binary oppositions as contrasting mutually exclusive concepts, such as left and right, up and down, dark and light.

Kyong Liong Kim<sup>10</sup> outlines three functions of binary oppositions, first, categorization, „black-and-white logic stems from this”, which include „basic binary oppositions” made by people; second, „meaning production”, when the meaning of one element determines the meaning of other one; third function, structural that help to define „part-whole” relations, where part characterizes the whole, while „the whole derives its meaning from its parts”. Barthes<sup>11</sup> acknowledging fundamental role of binary oppositions, note limitations of their universality. According to Barthes<sup>12</sup> „binary oppositions are the majority, but not totality”, and „the universality of binarism is not yet found”. Therefore it is not enough to explain the whole, since not

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<sup>3</sup> R. Jakobson, M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*, Mouton, Language Arts&Disciplines, 1956.

<sup>4</sup> N. Lacey, *Narrative and Genre*, New York, Palgrave, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> A. J. Greimas, *Semantique Structurale*.

<sup>6</sup> M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> C. Levi-Strauss, *L'Origine des manieres de table*.

<sup>9</sup> Ch. Baldick, *The Modern Movement: 1910-1940*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> K. L. Kim, *Caged in Our Own Signs: A Book About Semiotics*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996.

<sup>11</sup> R. Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, New York, Noonday Press, 1967.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

all concepts can be explained by its binary pairs and in some cases it is not possible to find conceptual pairing for a certain concept, for instance, „love”. Whereas Jack Goody<sup>13</sup> points out a „value-laden and ethnocentric” character of categorization of binary oppositions. Notwithstanding this fact, binary oppositions are still helpful in conceiving the majority of cultural text.

As Yuri Lotman<sup>14</sup> states, culture of any nation can be understood by revealing the structure of their unconscious mind through the study of binary oppositions, which has been formed in the context of unique socio-historical experience. The structure of unconscious is deeply rooted in mythological thought and language.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, identifying function of binary oppositions still remains actual in modern world. It can be said that binary oppositions are at the core of worldview of any nation, and meaning created by binary oppositions contain cultural codes that help form ethnic identity and distinguish one’s own identity from others as well as understand „socio-logic” of human mind, as it was outlined by Levi-Strauss.<sup>16</sup>

Adopting C. Levi-Strauss and Y. Lotman, we examine binary oppositions represented in traditional culture of Japanese and Kazakh people.

The literature review on binary oppositions has showed that the issue of representation of binary oppositions in both cultures has not been discussed in a comparative terms. Though, there are separate studies examining binary oppositions of Japanese and Kazakh traditional cultures within a broader anthropological, philosophical, linguistic and ethnographic studies.<sup>17</sup> With this in mind, we initiated this comparative research. The main source for the study was gained on the basis of content analyses of mythological and folklore materials.

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<sup>13</sup> J. Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977.

<sup>14</sup> Y. Lotman, *Articles about semiotics and typology of culture. Selected articles in 3 volumes*, Tallin, Aleksandra, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, C. Levi-Strauss, *L’Origine des manieres de table*.

<sup>16</sup> C. Levi-Strauss, *L’Origine des manieres de table*.

<sup>17</sup> A. Akishev, *Art and mythology of Saks*, Almaty, Nauka, 1984; V. M. Alpatov, *The history of linguistic teachings*, Moscow, Language of Slavic culture, 1998; J. Bachnik, *Introduction: Uchi/Soto: Challenging Our Conceptualizations of Self, Social Order, and Language. Situated Meaning: Inside and Outside in Japanese Self, Society, and Language*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1994; R. Barthes, *Mythologies (a selection from Mythologies)*, London, Cape, 1957; G. Sansom, *Japan: The short history of culture*, Saint Petersburg, Eurasia, 1999; T. P. Grigorieva, *Japan: The way of heart*, Moscow, Cultural center „New Acropolis”, 2008; Zh. K. Karakuzova, M. Sh. Hassanov, *The space of Kazakh culture*, Almaty, Eurasia, 1993.

Although Japanese and Kazakh people are Asian nations, they belong to different economic and cultural types: Kazakhs were nomads, whereas Japanese people were farmers and fishermen. Natural and distinctive geographic characteristics of Kazakhstan (continental) and Japan (insular) are different as well. Accordingly, the way of life, religion, and natural conditions have greatly influenced formation of their traditional worldview. In this sense, it can be said that comparison of traditional culture of such different nations, represented in binary oppositions, will help to reveal along with local peculiarities, some universal values that are common to all human beings. The study is important in terms of deepening intercultural understanding of worldview of Turkic people, represented by Kazakh culture, and Japanese people as well.

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted using one of the main provisions of semiotics, which considers language and culture as a single system (text) formed by binary oppositions that contain universal code of national self-consciousness.

The identification of semantics of these codes (signs) and their relations allows us to understand the meaning of cultural text. In this study, binary oppositions are referred to as means that create culturally codified texts, where cognitive and conceptually significant relationship between cultural concepts, denoted by lexical antonyms, reflect language picture of the world as well as the world model of Japanese and Kazakh people.

Sampling of binary oppositions in case of Kazakh culture was made on the basis of analysis of Kazakh mythology and legends as well as oral folk materials bearing key cultural concepts.

In case of Japanese culture, we referred to the oldest written mythological texts, *The Nihon Shoki* (or *Nihongi*, *Annals of Japan*), compiled in the VII-VIII centuries, as well as a key cultural concepts that exist in language mind of Japanese people.

As a result, binary oppositions found in cultural texts of both nations were divided into five main categories:

1) cosmological and ontological dimension that reflects binary oppositions used in explaining of creation of the world, supernatural, as life and death, Heaven-Earth, and so on;

2) kinship or genealogical dimension that reflects opposition pairings of self-other, in-group-and-out-group in terms of blood relationship;

3) socio-hierarchical dimension that reflects opposition of junior-senior, up-down;

4) axiological dimension that represents binary pairings on ethical level, for instance, socially encouraged values in contrast to condemned values, as good-evil, humanity-inhumanity and so on; and finally

5) ethnic dimension that expresses binary oppositions of self-other, in-group-and-out-group regarding members of ethnic group in contrast to others, representing different culture, civilization.

## Results

The results of comparative analysis of binary oppositions allowed us to find cultural codes in Kazakh and Japanese traditional cultures, most of them remain relevant up to date.

The Table 1 reflects the most basic binary pairings characteristic of Japanese and Kazakh people.

**Table 1: Representation of binary oppositions in Kazakh and Japanese traditional cultures**

Kazakh culture	Japanese culture
<b>Cosmological and ontological dimensions</b>	
Sky (Tengry) - Earth Harmony-chaos Impermanence -eternity Life-death Qut (Blessing, well-being) - zhut (literally, hard winter, hardships) Man -woman	Order - disorder Harmony-chaos Light-darkness Cause-effect Vertical (Sky-Earth) - horizontal (Sea, Land) Man-woman
<b>Kinship and genealogical dimension</b>	
In-group (concepts of „Zhetiata” (seven grandfathers), clan, zhuz (tribal division), shezhire	Uchi (inside, the concept „ie”) - soto (outside)

(genealogical tree) - out-group	
<b>Socio-hierarchical dimension</b>	
Up-down Junior-senior Aksuyek (privileged people) - karasuyek (ordinary people)	Purity-impurity of activity (i.e. heimin (ordinary citizen) - hinin (i.e. non-humans) Up-down Junior-senior Uchi (inside) -soto (outside) Honne (true self) - tatemae (public self) Omote (public face) - ura (private face)
<b>Axiological dimension</b>	
Ken (broad) -tar (narrow) Way, movement - stagnation Humanity - inhumanity Hospitality - stinginess	Purity-impurity Order-disorder Harmony (the way of Gods) - chaos Way, vocation, diligence - laziness
<b>Ethnic dimension</b>	
Kazakh-nomad - sedentary people Self - other (external enemy) Atameken (fatherland) - zhatzher (foreign land)	Self (Japanese) - other (non-Japanese, foreigner) Self (Japanese) - alien (foreigner of Japanese origin)

The Table 1 shows that binary pairings underpins the entire culture of Japanese and Kazakh people in all levels. In the next section paper discusses semantic content of these binary oppositions, in an order that is shown above.

## **Discussion**

### **Cosmological and Ontological Dimensions**

The act of creation of the world in mythology of different nations usually is presented in the form of primacy of disorderly chaos. In contrast, Kazakh people don't initially associate creation with chaos, but with the image of Tengry (Sky), which embodies the harmony of the whole universe. Since the world in mythological thought of Kazakh people was created via live music that represents the quintessence of any harmony. In this regard, cosmology of Kazakh people is linked with

„eternal philosophy” of Korkutata (hereinafter-Dede Korkut), the great philosopher not only of Kazakh people, but of the entire Turkic world and Asan Kaigy, revered by people as the greatest thinkers, fighters against fate, who were in eternal search for immortality. Eternal harmony and immortality of the Kazakh soul was found in the music of the boundless steppe, bestowed to Dede Korkut by Tengri.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, one of the essential embodiments of the world according to Kazakh people is „*kyi*”, which means „music” and referred as a state of the world. Therefore, it is no accident that in Kazakh language there is an expression „*konilkyi*” (music of the mood), which reflects the state of the soul and spiritual mood of a person. Accordingly, a person and the world are perceived as a single entity. As legends say, Dede Korkut with his life-giving music acts as a kind of mediator between the two worlds (Heaven-Earth), and connecting heavenly and earthly worlds, thereby ensuring universal harmony. Ancient Kazakh saying states in this regard: „*Olydesenohyemes, tiridesentiriemes, Kyi Atasy Korkut*”, which means „*Neither dead nor alive, Father-creator of Kyi (music) Dede Korkut*”.

Binary opposition of Heaven and Earth finds its unique interpretation in Kazakh mind. Kazakh people mark space with the notion „*Ken dala*” (spacious steppe), which ends with a line of horizon called „*Kokzhiyek*” (edge of the sky). It signifies the unity of the steppe and the sky. This archetype of unity of the world is embodied in the symbolism of Kazakh *ui*, traditional portable house of Kazakh people. The spherical shape of Kazakh *ui* is associated with the shape of celestial dome that is located over the steppe. Since for the nomadic Kazakhs, Kazakh *ui* and Aul (village) was regarded as a center of the boundless steppe. In addition, „*its assembly and disassembly during the migration to another place symbolized the onset of Chaos and the re-creation of Harmony*”.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Kazakh people in the process of their formation created its unique cosmology, based on the interaction of antitheses as Sky (Tengry)-Earth, harmony-chaos, impermanence -eternity, which reflect the understanding of unity of the world, impermanence of material world and eternity of spiritual life.

Ontological opposition of existence-non existence, universal harmony and chaos are the central issues in Japanese cosmology, too. It is expressed in binary oppositions of order-disorder, harmony-chaos, male-female, light-darkness, heavenly-earthly, heavenly-lower world (World of the Dead), and so on.

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<sup>18</sup> V. V. Bartold, *The book of my grandfather Korkut*, Moscow, Nauka, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Zh. K. Karakuzova, M. Sh. Hassanov, *The space of Kazakh culture*.

As it is seen from Japanese mythology, the opposition of Heaven-Earth-Lower World demonstrates a three-level system of dividing the world, where the upper level corresponds to the world of the Gods, or to the world of Ancestors, the middle world of living people; the lower one to the world of the dead. Sometimes the Land of the Dead is also designated in Japanese mythology by Western and Northern directions. In this regard, V. Toporov<sup>20</sup> notes that Japanese cosmology distinguish spatial binary oppositions: vertical (Heaven-Earth) and horizontal (Land-Sea) schemes of the world described by Y. Lotman.<sup>21</sup> H. Atsutane points out initial existence of male-female opposition in Japanese cosmology.<sup>22</sup> This „secondary binaries” presented by such pairings as light-darkness, order-disorder. Their cause-and-effect principles are fixed in the key principle of the Buddhist doctrine of karma. In support of this statement, it is possible to cite a well-known story about Amaterasu, who, enraged at her brother Susanoo’s disrespectful behavior, particularly for destroying the order in her kingdom, is disappeared into the underground grotto, and the Earth was plunged into darkness.

Japanese cosmology does not contrast divine and earthly as well as divine and human nature. It can be explained by Shinto principles, which states the presence of heavenly Gods along with earthly Gods in the form of myriad kami (spirits) of nature, forests, and mountains and so on. Moreover, according to Shinto there is no division into the living and nonliving, nature and material things, as they all considered living things, since divine kami lives in everything in nature and in human being as well. Therefore, Japanese people believe that they do not need to seek salvation somewhere else, since salvation is possible by simply merging with the kami and preserving harmony in daily live.

The representations of life and death oppositions are deeply symbolic in both Kazakh and Japanese cultures. Kazakh people, considering the opposition of existence-non existence, life-death place primary importance for search of spiritual immortality, eternal, infinite life, rather than the mortal world. In Kazakh mythology the image of Dede Korkut and Asan Kaigy symbolized the struggle for the higher ideals of spiritual search, eternal life.

In addition the very concept of „death” in Kazakh language can be denoted in two different words as „*olu*” (dying) and „*kaytisbolu*”, which

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<sup>20</sup> V. N. Toporov, *Model of the world. Myths of the World. Volume 2*, Moscow, Soviet Encyclopedia, 1982.

<sup>21</sup> Y. Lotman, *Articles about semiotics and typology of culture*.

<sup>22</sup> H. Atsutane, *Tama no Mihashira*, Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1998.



means leaving, returning. It means that a person does not die, but leaves to a different, more ideal world. For this reason, in ancient times, the Kazakhs buried the belongings of the person with him. Moreover, according to popular beliefs, the soul of the deceased could come not only in dream, but in reality as birds and animals. Therefore, killing of such birds as swan and swallow was prohibited. It can be said that Kazakh people's perceptions of life-death opposition was also based on Islamic principles, particularly, on dichotomy of „*this world*” and „*another world*”.

In case of Japanese culture binary oppositions of life-death, eternal-earthly are connected with the canons of Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism, which form the basis of spiritual life of Japanese people.

So death was perceived as a reunion with nature, while life was regarded as a transient one, embodied in a constant revival, expressed in the change of seasons, cycle of everything. This philosophy of life is conveyed by tradition of seeing cherry blossoms (hanami). From ancient times cherry blossoms meant the beginning of a new year, a new agricultural cycle, and reminded of the transience of life.

Moreover, it was believed that the deities themselves born and die, like people. To certain extent this explains tradition of rebuilding the sanctuaries, in particular the sanctuary of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu-Ise-Jingu, which is rebuilt every 20 years. Y. Tetsuo considers that this tradition signifies the dying of the „*old Deity*” and the reborning of the „*new*” one, which reflects an awareness of the transience of life in Japanese culture, resulting from an understanding of the transient nature of the deities themselves.<sup>23</sup>

Japanese people believe that spirits of dead became Buddhas, i. e. Deities, and represent strong cult of ancestors that exist in Japanese culture, which according to mythology goes back to the Sun Goddess Amaterasu. Folk legends narrate that the spirits of ancestors watch their descendants, and return to them twice a year for the New Year, and on the summer holiday of O-Bon.

Special attention deserves male-female opposition in both cultures, where one can observe both local differences and universal features inherent in the archetypes of male and female pairings. In Kazakh cosmology the Sky and the Sun are defined as male beginning, and the Earth and the Moon as a female one. It can be evidenced by the presence of such expressions as „*KokTaniri*” (Tengri of the Sky), „*Zher-*

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<sup>23</sup> Y.Tetsuo, *Three Keys to Unraveling Japanese Ideas about Life and Death. Modern view on Japan*, retrieved from: [www.nippon.com](http://www.nippon.com), accessed on 16.II.2018

*Ana*” (Mother Earth). The male- female opposition in Kazakh culture is also manifested in initiation ceremonies and traditional customs. Shakhanova<sup>24</sup> notes that it is customary to conduct certain rite for males, for instance „*sundettoi*”, ritual feast on the occasion of the Muslim rite of circumcision, „*atkamingižu*”, celebration of the first riding of a horse by the boy, and etc; and for females- „*kimesbek*” (a traditional headgear of married woman), ritual feast arranged for putting on the headdress of a married woman, „*kursaktoi*”, celebration of first pregnancy.

At the same time, in Kazakh culture we observe the cases of blurring of boundaries between male-female opposition, which can be explained by existence of multi-layered archetype of female in Kazakh culture. For instance, there is an image of a warrior woman in cultural text called „*batyrkyz*” (hero girl), where the word „*batyr*” neutralizes male-female opposition. Therefore, it illustrates the transition of function of men to women, as a brave warrior, reliable companion, along with her traditional image of mother and keeper of the hearth.

In Japanese mythology, male-female opposition is also clearly traced, which is observed in the history of creation in Japanese cosmology, when male-female opposition participate in the very creation of the world as divine couple Izanagi and Izanami, as well as Susanoo and Amaterasu. Usually Japanese archetype for men is warrior with its indispensable attribute of sword, while women are referred as being weavers and miko (a shrine maiden or a supplementary priestess) along with their universal archetype. Miko was regarded as a mediator between the gods and human, in contrast to Kazakh culture, where the role of mediators between the worlds was given mainly to men, as in the case of DedeKorkut, as well as baksy (healers) and shamans were mainly represented by men, as well.

### **Kinship and Genealogical Dimension**

Kinship, genealogical relations is especially strong in Kazakh culture, like in other Turkic people. It continue to serve as one of the key identifying principles in self-other opposition, presented in the form of basic cultural concepts as „*Zbeti Ata*” (seven grandfathers, ancestors). „*Zbuž*” (main territorial and tribal divisions in Kazakh culture), „*tribe*” and „*clan*”.

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<sup>24</sup> N. Shakhanova, *The world of traditional Kazakh culture*, Sketches, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 1998.

The concept „*Zhetiata*”, which means the knowledge of the ancestors up to the seventh line, and the concept „*Shezhire*” (Kazakh family tree), i. e. genealogical tree, serve as the main tool for self-identification of Kazakhs from other ethnic groups.

Kazakh wisdom says, „*If one remembers their ancestors up to seven lines, they hold in their hands the thread that connects them with their ancestors, so they will live and be protected by ancestors*”.

As for „*Shezhire*” it is an oral genealogy that not only helps to trace the family tree and distinguish ingroup from outgroup, but also help to recreate chronology of historical events of Kazakh nation as a whole.

The concept „*Zhuž*” includes three associations of Kazakh tribal groups, such as Senior, Middle and Junior Zhuzs, which is referred to identify in-group and out-group members in terms of tribal and territorial divisions. At the same time, there is a separate category of persons called „*Tore*”, representing the descendants of Genghis Khan, who are not part of the Kazakh zhuz structure.

Thus, the tribal structure of Kazakh people, united among of the concepts „*Zhuž*”, „*Zheti Ata*”, „*Shezhire*” realizes opposition of self-other, in-group-out-group in terms of kinship and genealogical dimension.

Turning to Japanese culture, it is undoubtedly that opposition of self-other and in-group-out-group is highly manifested in Japanese language picture of the world. This opposition is constructed mainly by the concepts of „*uchi-soto*” (inside-outside), where „*uchi*” refers to family, i. e. ingroup members, while „*soto*” refers to all those, who are beyond this group, i. e. out-group.<sup>25</sup>

The concept „*uchi*” is most directly connected with concept „*ie*”, which means „*home, family*”. „*Ie*” is regarded as an embodiment of unbroken chain of family groups, passing from generation to generation. Japanese people have a saying: „*Agattesandai, sagattesandai*”, which is translated as „*three generations up, three generations down*”. This expression is a stable metaphor characterizing traditional Japanese family. Y. Kunio, the founder of ethnic and folklore studies in Japan, notes that „*if the three generation system disappears, it may be difficult for us to explain to ourselves why we are Japanese, because as individualism develops in our society, there is a threat that we cannot distinguish our history from the history of other countries*”.<sup>26</sup> By noting this, Yanagita Kunio expresses his concern regarding diminishing of three generation type traditional family system of nowadays Japan.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> V. M. Alpatov, *The history of linguistic teachings*.

<sup>26</sup> Y. Kunio, *NHK SoogooHoosoo Bunka Kenkyuujo*, Tokyo, 1972.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

In old days, everyone who entered the Japanese „*ie*” system, were included into the house book. This list represented a conceptual entity of social institutions regarded as „*ie*”, which was used to distinguish ingroup from outgroup members. Here, we can notice some similarity between Kazakh people, with their concept „*Shezħire*” (genealogical tree). But while the concept „*Shezħire*” included strongly the direct ancestors on blood kinship, in contrast Japanese „*ie*” concept might include not only members of traditional Japanese family, but also those, who were connected with main household in terms of work and activity, like servants, workers and so on.

However, in Japanese culture the tribal opposition of self-other is not so strongly manifested in comparison with Kazakh culture. Although Japanese history shows existence of clan division, but mostly it was manifested in the struggle for power, for instance as the famous struggle between the clans of Taira and Minamoto at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, depicted in the famous Japanese literary work *The Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari*). Instead, Japanese case of opposition of self-other, as we discuss later, was more likely due to the nature of occupation and activity, as evidenced by the medieval caste system created in Japan during the Tokugawa era, where the society was divided into four castes: samurai, farmers, artisans and traders.

### **Socio-Hierarchical Dimension**

Socio-hierarchical dimension of binary oppositions self-other in traditional Kazakh culture is represented mainly by colour symbolism, particularly in contrasting of white and black. For instance, concepts „*Aksuyek*” (white bone) and „*Kara suyek*” (black bone), which mean opposition of rich-poor. Hence, the concept „*Aksuyek*” was referred to the privileged circles of Kazakh clans, respectively, „*Kara suyek*” meant ordinary people. In addition, there exist another concept that distinguish especially revered people and their descendants in society termed as „*asyltek*” (sacred (jewelry) origin), and „*asylsuyek*” (sacred bone), which indicate sacred origin of a person. It is common to call descendants of high-respected family as „*asyldingsinigi*” (literally „*a piece of sacred jewelry*”), thereby expressing special respect for the person and his ancestors.

Opposition of junior-senior also can be traced in ancestral worship of Kazakh people, as evidenced by the concept „*Ata žan*” („*Laws of ancestors*”), such as „*Yesimkhannineskizħoli*” („*Yessim khan’s Old Way*”), „*Kasymkhanninkaskazħoli*” („*Laws created by Kasym Khan*”), and „*Zhetizħargi*”

(„*Seven Charters*”), which represent a set of ancestral codes and basics of nomadic diplomacy.

Junior-senior opposition can be seen in color symbolism, as „*Aksakal-Karasakal*”, which literally means „*white-bearded-black-bearded*”, therefore indicating the eldership system in society. Food symbolism of Kazakh people also clearly demonstrate junior-senior opposition, when the meal are served strictly taking into account the seniority, social status of guests. There is also a custom when the elder Aksakals (seniors), present some part of offered meal to the youngest guests (juniors). In doing so elder person expresses some wishes, which indirectly motivate the younger generation to socially approved values.

This tradition emphasizes and highlights the role of Aksakals and elders, as the most revered personalities, who are considered as guardians of the people’s wisdom and ancient knowledge. Junior-senior opposition in Kazakh culture is additionally expressed in inheritance institute. Kazakhs usually call the youngest son as a head of Shanyrak (the circular opening at the top of the Kazakh ui, the traditional portable home), i. e. home. Thus, in Kazakh culture, the younger son is entrusted with a special moral obligation to represent family in society and to bear responsibility for its further destiny and welfare, unlike Japanese people, who entrust this role to the eldest son.

In terms of Japanese culture, binary oppositions of senior junior, up-down compose the cornerstone of traditional Japanese culture.

In the Middle Ages in Japan, there was a division of people according to the type of activity based on perception of purity and impurity in Shinto, as well as Buddhism, with a well-known taboo on making harm on all living things. So, there were groups of „*Eta*” (literally means „*a lot of dirt*”). This group was engaged in so called dirty activity, such as the animal slaughter, making leather, collection of garbage and so on. Also there was a group of „*binin*”, literally „*non-humans*”, represented mostly by executioners, prisoners, homeless artists, fortune tellers and beggars. Hence, it was those Japanese who were outside the 4-level caste system of Japanese society. Thus, „*Eta*” and „*Hinin*” groups were contrasted with „*heimin*” group (ordinary people). People from this group had to live in separate places.

With the enactment of law on abolition of the caste system in 1871, the concept of „*Eta*” was abolished and replaced with the notion of „*burakumin*” (hamlet people), which officially began to denote people, who lived in special settlements. However, in the minds of Japanese

people „*burakumin*” remained at the level of „*Eta*” and certain prejudices towards them persisted until recently.

Binary opposition of self-other unfolds a number of culturally codified binary contrasts as „*uchi-soto*” („*inside-outside*”), „*bonne-tatema*” (literally, „*true sound*” and „*built in front*”, respectively), „*omote-ura*” („*public face-private face*”), which regulate language communication depending on social-hierarchical status of people. The degree of courtesy in Japanese language depends on age, social relations, social status, gender, group, and the very context of communication.<sup>28</sup>

So, „*bonne*” (true self) can be manifested only in relation to inner-group, i. e. „*self*”, which is connected with „*uchi*” („*ingroup*”), while „*tatema*” (public self) assumes polite behavior towards „*others*” from „*soto*”, i. e. outgroup. Opposition of „*omote-ura*” (public face-private face), indicates the degree of proximity between „*self*” and „*others*” as well as the formality of communication.<sup>29</sup> In this connection it should be mentioned one of the key concepts of Japanese culture called „*aimai*” (ambiguity), which means indirectness, ambiguity of speech, characteristic of Japanese language. In Japanese society, it is commonly believed that ambiguity contrasted to straightforwardness is the best mean for maintaining harmony in relations with people. Hamabata states that Japanese people showing respect for others fulfills their *giri* (debt), i. e. social responsibility before the group.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, Japan has a language for self and other; in this regard dialects often are used as language for self,<sup>31</sup> while literary language is mostly considered as a language for „*others*”, including foreigners.<sup>32</sup> Thus, we see that the concept of „*uchi-soto*” (in-group-out-group) is a unique cultural construct that regulates relationship between self and others in interpersonal communication.

### **Axiological Dimension**

As for the ethical dimension of binary oppositions in Kazakh culture, we again turn to the concept „*Ken dala*” and Tengry. The concept of „*Ken dala*” is a symbol of nomads, which means the infinity, expressed in the opposition of „*ken-tar*” („*broad-narrow*”). For instance, there are

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<sup>28</sup> O. Mizutani, N. Mizutan, *How to Be Polite in Japanese*, Tokyo, Japan Times, 1987.

<sup>29</sup> J. Bachnik, *Introduction: Uchi/Soto*.

<sup>30</sup> M. M. Hamabata, *Crested Kimono: Power and Love in the Japanese Business Family*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1990.

<sup>31</sup> W. Grootaers, „Dialectology and Sociolinguistic: a General Survey”, in *Lingua*, no. 57, 1982, pp. 2-4.

<sup>32</sup> V. M. Alpatov, *The history of linguistic teachings*.

expressions like „*ken duniye*” („*broad world*”)-„*tar duniye*” (narrow world), as well as characterization of a person of broad soul by the words „*etek-zheni ken adam*” which means literally „*person with a broad hem of the sleeve*”, whereas „*tar bolu, tarylu*”, (literally, to be narrow) is used to denote stinginess, resentment.

The custom of clans to live away from each other in space as a way of resolving conflicts is also specific for Kazakh people. People say „*it is better to respect each other from afar*”, which expresses the peculiarity of nomadic diplomacy based on the extent of the steppe. R. Tursaitova states that, „*in the boundless steppes, Kazakh people did not seek solitude, but meetings*” which is confirmed by special hospitality of Kazakh people.<sup>33</sup> This leads us to a new secondary antithesis of hospitality and stinginess, breadth and narrowness of mind. This opposition is traced in the stories about Kozha Nasyr, a folk hero common to the whole Turkic world, where the main plot is inequality and injustice between rich and poor.

The absence of fences in traditional Kazakh village is also connected with the concept of „*Ken dala*”. The length of the nomad is revealed in terms of spaciousness, height, distance, and depth, whereas in Japanese culture a tatami (mat) can serve as a yardstick. In this respect, the Japanese have a saying: „*One tatami is enough to sleep, half tatami is for work*”, which is indicative in case of space perception peculiarities in both cultures.

The breadth of the soul and perception of the world of Kazakhs is also reflected in folk songs and melodies played on traditional instruments like dombra, kobyz, etc. One of the main concepts in traditional Kazakh world-view is the notion of „*path*”. In this regard, it can be noted basic oppositions as „*zholbolu-zholbolman*”, „*ashyke-zhabykezhol*”, which means an open-closed path. The way, the road in this case reveals significance of dynamism, freedom and movement for nomadic people. So, Kazakh people wishes travellers „*Akezhol*” („*white road*”) and „*zholbolsyn*” (literally, „*may one have road*”), which means the wishes of open and bright road and good luck, respectively. Next main virtue of Kazakh people is humanity, as Abai (1845-1904) called for humanity by saying: „*Atanninbalasybolma, Adamninbalasibol*”, which literally means „*Do not be the son of grandfather, but be the son of people*”. Thus, Kazakh people strove for such virtues as breadth of soul, humanity, hospitality and freedom.

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<sup>33</sup> R. O. Tursaitova, *Speech tolerance in the bilingual text (based on the Russian-language Kazakh fiction and journalism)*, The dissertation author's abstract on competition of a scientific degree of the doctor of philological sciences, Yekaterinburg, 2007.

Ethical in Japanese sense is very closely intertwined with aesthetic concepts, as seen from the binary opposition of order-disorder and purity-impurity, therefore it can be said that harmony in Japanese understanding is more associated with order. According to Shinto, the world was created by itself, and the regulating power comes from the world itself, and therefore the world is good and perfect in itself. Therefore it is believed that a person is able to achieve universal harmony by following the Path of the Gods that is comprised of four basic principles: harmony of people with kami, harmony between man and nature, person and society, people with the emperor. If the path in Kazakh worldview was associated with the road, dynamism, freedom and boundlessness of nomadic spirit, in Japanese culture the path involves finding oneself, one's true vocation, which calls for constant self-improvement, respect for work, diligence and discipline.

As it can be seen, the moral and ethical worldview of Japanese people, based on Shinto, Buddhism and Confucian thought, is concentrated mainly on binary oppositions of purity-impurity, order-disorder, harmony-chaos and senior-junior.

### **Ethnic Dimension**

Opposition of self-other in terms of ethnic dimension in Kazakh culture can be expressed in contrasting nomads and settled people. Kazakh people were open to interaction with other; the passage of the Great Silk Road through territory of Kazakh land confirms that.

Nevertheless, in the people's memory there exist self-other opposition, particularly, perception of „other” as an external enemy, an ominous aggressor that is embodied in the image of Jungars invasion. The song „*Elim-ay*” („*My people*”) most accurately conveys this perception, where the Jungar invasion was associated with „*Zhut*” („*harsh winter, famine*”), one of the most important cultural concepts with antithesis of „*Qut*” („*Blessing, well-being*”) as goodness, while „*Zhut*” meant something sinister, all-consuming evil. In this term, we can observe another opposition of self-other, when the Zhuz (tribal unit), along with all Kazakh Batyr (Heroes) and Sarbaz (warriors) were opposed to external enemies, embodied in the image of Jungars.

In this light, the cultural concept „*Atameken*” („*place where the ancestors were lived*”) deserves special attention, which represents opposition of native land and foreign land, called „*Zhatzher*”. Concept „*Atameken*” reveals primordialism (blood and soil) in self-identification



of Kazakh people, which indicate the birthplace of the ancestors, the fatherland. In turn, it additionally embodies male-female opposition, in which the priority is given to the male (the land of grandfathers, ancestors).

The first encounter of Japanese people with „Others” as opposite to „Self” was when they met with Europeans in the face of Portuguese and they were called „*nambanjin*”, i. e. „*Southern barbarians*”. After the opening of country to the outside world, foreigners from the West began to be called „*jin*” (another person) or „*ikokujin*” („*a man with another homeland*”). After the Meiji Restoration, officially all foreigners begin to be called „*gaikokujin*” („*foreigner*”). In this term, people’s memory has an image of „*black ships*” arriving in Japan from the West, especially of Commodore Perry. Hence, the term of „*black ships*” has remained in Japanese language mind as an indication of „*other*”, something evil and dangerous.

In addition to opposing self to others (foreigner), there is another opposition of „*self*” with „*others*”, which can be given in line with a scheme proposed by V. Lukov and V. Lukov,<sup>34</sup> „*self-other-alien*”. In this case, unlike „*other*”, „*alien*” is represented by „*foreigner of self origin*”,<sup>35</sup> i. e. by foreigners of Japanese origin. Opposition of self-other continue to be strong in Japanese culture.

## Conclusions

As it is seen the notion of binary opposition is a universal concept of any culture, including Japanese and Kazakh people. In addition to representation on linguistic level, binary oppositions act as a category of cognitive thinking. Its origins go to the mythological thought of each culture, which tries to find solutions and explain the very creation of the world and supernatural by using the universal dichotomy of Heaven-Earth, harmony and chaos, good and evil, self and other and so on. However, due to the distinctive differences in their formation as an ethnos (nomads-farmers, Muslims-syncretism of Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism), Japanese and Kazakh people have developed their unique perceptions of the world with the means of binary oppositions. Moreover natural conditions of Japan with its frequent earthquakes, tsunami and hurricane, as well as harsh winters of nomadic Kazakh people that is associated in people’s mind with Zhut (sinister, all

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<sup>34</sup> V. Lukov, V. Lukov, *Thesaurus. Subject organization of humanitarian knowledge*, Moscow, Publishing house of the National Institute of Business, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> P. Moshniaga, *Globalization of Japanese culture*, Moscow, Max Press, 2010.

consuming evil, hardship), had greatly influenced on development of special attitude to the perception of life, instilled a deep humility and ability to adapt to given environment. That found its expression in their cosmology and philosophy of life. Japanese and Kazakh people put their own specific meaning with regard to each category of binary oppositions as it can be seen in this study. Thus, they have created their own image of the world, their own 'socio-logic' described by Levi-Strauss<sup>36</sup> (1968).

Summing up, it can be said that binary opposition underpins the picture of the world of both culture, and serves as an invisible tool for maintaining harmony in people's life, via indicating immutable „*principles*” of social order and foundations of the world perceptions of the nation as a whole. Understanding of this codes and sociocultural norms of conduct as well as related basic cultural concepts revealed in the form of binary oppositions help to develop intercultural competence and tolerance required in international communication.

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<sup>36</sup> C. Levi-Strauss, *L'Origine des manieres de table*.