

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF SOME ASPECTS OF THE NATIONAL CULTURE IN KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

The article considers some aspects of the cultural life in the realities of the Kazakhstani society through the prism of the semiotic theory of Umberto Eco, the Italian philosopher and writer, the founder of the first department of semiotics in Europe. According to him, all the cultural values obey the laws of semiotics and should be studied from the semiotic point of view, based on the conventionally established codes. It deals on the reconsidering of the basic cultural codes, the issue of the ideology and of a principally new conduct of behavior as the mixture of nations, languages and cultures causes the problem of spiritual state of the nation and its identity. In the frames of the national program "Course towards the future: modernization of public consciousness" national traditions and culture should be rediscovered and revived in order not to dissolve in this huge world. The authors discuss the importance of educating the young generation spiritually rich and strong, knowing their own roots and an indispensable tool in this regard is presented by semiotics widely used today in cultural studies, accepting everything as a sign, teaching how to interpret the information hidden behind it correctly.

Key words: Kazakh, Culture, Code, Sign, Semiotics, Interpretation, Umberto Eco.

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Reference to this article:

Khassenova R.T.,
Sarkulova M.S.
Semiotic Analysis of Some
Aspects of the National
Culture in Kazakhstan //
Adam alemi. – 2023.
– No. 2 (96). – P. 3-13.

Қазақстандағы ұлттық мәдениеттің кейбір аспектілерінің семиотикалық анализі

Аннотация. Ұсынылып отырған мақалада қазақ ұлттық мәдениетінің кейбір аспектілері Европада ең алғашқы семиотика кафедрасын ашқан итальян философы және жазушысы Умберто Эконның семиотикалық теориясының призмасы тұрғысынан қарастырылады. Атақты семиотиктің ойынша, барлық мәдени құндылықтар семиотика заңдарына бағынады және оларды семиотика тұрғысынан қарастырған дұрыс. Мәдени код, идеология мәселесін жаңадан қарастыру, түбегейлі жаңа көзқарас қажеттілігі сөз болады, себебі бүгінгі таңда орын алып отырған көптеген ұлттар, тілдер және мәдениеттердің өзара қарым-қатынасқа түсіп, тығыз араласуы ұлттың рухани деңгейі, өзіндік болмысы және мәдениетінің жаһандану заманында жойылып кетпеу мәселесін күн тәртібіне қойып отыр. «Болашаққа бағдар: рухани жаңғыру» ұлттық бағдарламасының аясында біз осы кең әлемде өз орнымызды сақтап қалу үшін тарихымызды қайта зерделеп ұлттық дәстүрлерімізді жаңғыртуымыз қажет. Авторлар өз мәдениетін, өз тамырын білетін, рухани бай ұрпақ тәрбиелеу жолында мәдени зерттеулерде кеңінен қолданыс тауып келе жатқан, барлық құбылыстарды белгі ретінде қарастыратын, белгі артында жасырылып тұрған ақпаратты дұрыс интерпретациялау қабілетін қалыптастыруда семиотика таптырмас құрал екенін сөз етеді.

Түйін сөздер: қазақ, мәдениет, код, белгі, семиотика, интерпретация, Умберто Эко.

Семиотический анализ некоторых аспектов национальной культуры в Казахстане

Аннотация. В предлагаемой статье некоторые аспекты казахской национальной культуры рассматриваются сквозь призму семиотической теории Умберто Эко, итальянского писателя и философа, основателя первой кафедры семиотики в Европе. С точки зрения итальянского семиотика все культурные феномены подчиняются семиотическим законам и для лучшего понимания

их нужно изучать с семиотической точки зрения. Речь идет о пересмотре основных культурных кодов, вопроса идеологии и совершенно нового поведения, так как смешение наций, языков и культур ставит на повестку дня неотложные вопросы духовного состояния нации и сохранения ее идентичности. В рамках национальной программы «Взгляд в будущее: модернизация общественного сознания» необходимо пересмотреть свою историю и возродить национальные традиции, чтобы не раствориться в этом огромном мире. Авторы затрагивают тему воспитания духовно богатого молодого поколения, знающего свои корни, и в этом отношении прекрасным средством обучения является семиотика, воспринимающая все как знак, широко используемая в культурологии, обучающая правильно интерпретировать информацию, скрытую за знаком.

Ключевые слова: казахский, культура, код, знак, семиотика, интерпретация, Умберто Эко.

Introduction

In 2021 Kazakhstan celebrated 30 years of its Independence. In the course of these years much attention was paid to culture, as the root of the national values is in culture. Culture is the power of the nation, spiritual identity, formed across centuries. 'Madeni mura' program has been implemented since 2004 to restore Kazakhstan's cultural landmarks. Due to the program 'Khalyk tarikh tolkynynda', introduced in 2013 many documents on culture and history were collected and studied from the world's archives.

The Third Modernization of Kazakhstan was launched in 2017. It was proclaimed that the large-scale reforms should be complemented with advanced modernization of the nation's identity. One of the conditions for successful modernization is the preservation of national culture and traditions. "We must build on the best traditions and make them important pillars for future success. <...> Without national and cultural roots, modernization will be left hanging in the air. <...> It is a platform which connects our past, present, and future" [1].

In this regard relevant is the semiotic theory of Umberto Eco, whose concept is construed to explain all the cultural phenomena, called because of it 'imperialistic'. Eco's structure of the sign is given within the theory of codes and at the same time extends the notion of the sign beyond the purely linguistic model [2, p. 97].

According to Eco semiotics studies all cultural processes as processes of communication and when the destination is a human being, or "addressee", a process of signification takes place, made possible by the existence of a code, which should foresee an established correspondence between that which "stands for" and its correlate [3, p. 8].

In semiotic studies there are two main approaches, the first connected with the ideas of Ch.S. Peirce and his American followers, and the second characteristic mostly for the European scientists, developing the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure. The present work addresses the issue of culture in Kazakhstan and reflects on the ideas of the Italian philosopher and semiotic U. Eco.

Saussure investigated signs and their relations within linguistic systems, considering both expression and content on the language plane. His sign model is dyadic. Peirce's sign is triadic, as there is also an object in his sign model. We support the semiotic theory of Umberto Eco, which is also dyadic, as he also, continuing Saussure's tradition places attention on the relation between the expression and content of the sign. But according to Eco, on the basis of this correlation is the conventionally established code [3, p. 48].

Originally the term "semiotics" comes from the Greek "semeion"-sign, used to signify something absent temporarily. The term comes from Greek stoics, which in their turn take it from medicine, defining diagnosis and prognosis as sign processes. Thus, semiotics can be defined as a science of signs. It was J. Lock who called this science "semiotics" [4, p. 695].

Any phenomenon can be seen as a semiotic where the sign interaction and information transfer take place. Today, the task of semiotics is not only the description of signs, but explaining their reasons, accepting an interpretative character.

In Kazakhstan considering culture from the semiotic perspective is gaining a high importance, connected to the renewed interest to one's roots and necessity to identify one's national code. A. Kajgali studied Kazakh ornaments, H. Argynbayev, Zh. Abikenov and

S. Kudaibergenov considered semiotics of the cultural values, and N. Aljanova analysed the semiotics of the Kazakh communicative culture. The works of K.Nurlanova, N. Shakhanova, T. Gabitov, H. Argynbayev, N. Aljanova, Z. Nauryzbaeva, A. Malayev can also be mentioned in this regard. Reflecting on the national idea K.Nurlanova writes in her works, that once being identified the national idea enables to understand the national character and psychology, the principles of behavior and norms of life. N. Shakhanova reflects on the key symbols of the Kazakh national worldview, T. Gabitov investigates mythology and symbols in culture, H. Argynbayev reveals the semiotics of the cultural values and N. Aljanova in her turn analyses the communicative culture of Kazakhs. Though the field of the semiotic research is vast, strong interest is to the works on crossroads of philosophy and linguistics.

The growing interest to the topic reveals its importance and justifies the necessity to appeal to the works of the known Italian semiotician Umberto Eco and his ideas of interpretation of culture. According to him, semiology is a science of sign systems and studies all the phenomena of culture, considering them signs and culture as communication. And one of the most important issues of semiology is, if it really wants to find the keys to all the diverse cultural notions, to respond whether all of them could be interpreted from the view point of communication and whether it would help to define and better understand their functions [5, p. 15].

Methodology

For the methodological basis of the research is taken the semiotic interpretation theory of Umberto Eco, called one of the fathers of this science [3, p. 2]. He founded the first department of semiotics in 1975, his ideas are widely cited and hotly discussed all over the world. Then semiotics was understood as structuralism and it cost Eco many efforts to explain that all things could be interpreted like cultural ones. A sign is everything, which can be accepted as a significant substitution of something else. It is not important, that this "something else" exists in fact and in this sense semiotics is a

discipline, which can be used to lie [6, p. 26].

Starting with a thorough analysis of the theories of the founders of semiotics, Eco managed to develop them further and formulate a semiotic theory that embraces all the modern cultural phenomena. Umberto Eco's interpretative semiotics have become the subject of numerous studies, considering it from different angles: semiotics (R. Garcia 1980; E. Lewis 1985; J. Johansen 1993; M.Caesar 1999; U. Volli 2003; A.M. Lorusso 2005, 2015; C. Farronato 2009; M. Danesi 2015; C. Bianchi & M. Ghieri 2009; E. Brazgovskaya, 2019; B. Hoxha 2022), signification (A. Usmanova 2000; M. Leone 2020), poetics of openness (L. Corry & R.Giovanolly 1992; C. Campbell 2018) and popularization of the semiotic theories in his novels (S. Sallis 1986; D.Richter 2005; G.S. Lloren 2019; C. Hale 2011; E. Shilling 2019).

Eco names five reasons to consider semiotics:

1. It is an autonomous discipline.
2. It has a set of standard methodological instruments, which enable to answer the questions like-what does it mean, why does it mean and how does it mean.
3. It has a capacity to put forward hypothesis on semiosis and analyze its products.
4. It can make prognoses, like how the society and culture will evolve through semiosis.
5. Its data can lead to the change of the current state of affairs in the world [3, p. 354].

He defines the task of semiotics as twofold: on the one hand, the cultural codes must be analyzed, on the other hand, the way in which people use signs must be described. It leads to the distinction between signification and communication. Codes are for Eco-sign systems, which are a necessary prerequisite for communication processes. A semiotics of signification examines the codes that, as socially or culturally conventionalized systems, reduce the entropy of information and thereby enable sign processes.

It is crucial for the evaluation of Eco's theoretical concept that these two systematic large areas of general semiotics only mark separate areas of investigation in

methodological terms. In fact, signification and communication are always intertwined. The process of interpretation and the genesis of meaning-constituting, cultural units of distinctive signification systems can only be explained circularly, in mutual recourse to each other, and Eco outlines a dynamic cultural model of changing codes and ever new rules.

The review of the semiotic literature identifies linguists (F. de Saussure, R. Jakobson), philosophers (Ch. S. Peirce, Ch. W. Morris, U. Eco), literary scholars (M. Bakhtin, R. Barthes, Y. Lotman), anthropologists (Claude Lévi-Strauss) as the classics of semiology.

The well-known Russian semiotician V. Ivanov underlined the big role semiotics play for a correct orientation in the history. He wrote that different sciences and approaches should supplement each other, facilitating the creation of a common picture of signs and texts, building the history of the human culture [7, p. 795].

In this research we apply semiotics as a method of research and consider signs of culture in regard of cultural phenomena, which keep information and pass it via signs. These signs in complexity make up texts, not only written messages, but any objects and artefacts of culture, considered as the carriers of information. The surrounding world is read like a text and the human with all his knowledge presents a dictionary in deciphering this information.

The tasks and goals of the article are to consider the issue of the semiotic interpretation of culture in the present realities of the globalizing world, when keeping the nations' identity is crucial for the spiritual modernization, patriotic upbringing of the young generation and for creating links between the present, past and future.

In his works, beginning from "Opera aperta", Eco advocates the active role of the interpreter, important under the current conditions of life, full of fake news. Such an approach is needed while engaging with any discourses and sign systems. The reader should know that every image and phrase is open to numerous senses, which he has to reveal, using proper codes [8, p. 14].

One of the main ideas Eco elaborates in his writings ("A theory of semiotics", "The role of the reader", "Semiotics and the

philosophy of language") is the Peircean idea of unlimited semiosis. According to Peirce, semiosis is "an action, or influence which involves an operation of the sign, its object, and its interpretant". As Eco writes, the sign is the origin of the semiotic processes, and there is "no opposition between the 'nomadism' of semiosis and ... immobility of the sign. The semiotic process of interpretation is present at the very core of the concept of the sign" [9, p. 1].

Thus, the Model Reader of Eco should connect the text and intertexts, identify the codes and decode them, exercise the processes of unlimited semiosis. The space of semiosis is encyclopedia, which on the one hand guarantees the stability of meaning and, on the other, admits the alterations passed by the common code. Of great importance is also the abductive inference, representing one of the first steps in the metalinguistic operations, enriching the code [10, p. 211].

Semiotics of the Headdress Saukele

More than thirty years have passed since Kazakhstan declared its Independence. Big results are achieved in many spheres of life. What about culture?

If we begin with the state language, the symbol of the Independent Kazakhstan though Kazakhs make almost 67,98% in the country and 79,01% in Astana, the capital city, the Russian language is still predominant in all the spheres [11].

It is the legacy of the past, when there was only one national school even in a big city. The mosques were closed, the majority of national writers and poets were forbidden for many years. The multi-vector policy is chosen in International affairs and trilingualism is promoted as the key to success. But the issues of the state language and national culture can not be neglected either. As a result now and then our society is shocked by such incidents, like the video of a naked Kazakh girl in saukele (national headdress) or a group of young people breaking the national instrument dombyra, laughing and taking video of their "heroism". Many people watched these videos, subscribing and putting likes. It is frightening to imagine the number of

minors among them. Thus, this research investigates national headdress *saukele* and *dombyra* in semiotic ways, regarding them as signs, to see what they mean for Kazakhs.

Kazakhs have always respected the headdress as something sacred, believing that disrespect to it can cause misfortune. There are many taboos, regarding the headdress: it is forbidden to twirl it round, to wear it backside, to throw it at the feet, to gift and even to try it on, as it was believed to affecting one's luck. *Saukele* is the bridal headdress. It is a symbol of farewell to childhood. Its place is the most respected in the house. *Saukele* is kept and passed from generation to generation. *Saukele* is made in the shape of a cone around 70 cm high made of white felt, edged with red velvet, silk and other fabrics. Red has a symbolic meaning of fertility, wish of a big family with many children. *Saukele* ornated with valuable stones is not worn just for beauty. It is the honor of the nation. According to some sources men also wore *saukele* in the past. The "golden man", found near Almaty, in Issyk, the symbol of Kazakhstan, had a headdress, decorated with golden images of snow leopards, horses and birds, similar to *saukele*. Scientists still argue who was found there - a Saq king or a quin.

Saukele is the mirror of the nation's richness, culture and art, its ethnographic property. The girl's social status was valued by her *saukele*. Poor made it from satin, decorating with glass, while rich ornated it with ruby, pearls and corals. The edges of *saukele* are decorated with fur-mink, fox; silver and golden coins, small birds and ornament. All this had a semantic meaning. Ornaments used on *saukele* are mostly flowers and wings. Silver, ruby and coral have to protect from the evil eye and magic, pearls from walleye, carnelians symbolized well-being and joy. The well-known ethnographer Mashkhur Jusip Kopeiuly describes Baisakal biy's *saukele*, made for his daughter, which cost 500 horses. It shows high respect towards the daughters in the Kazakh family. Some of such unique *saukeles* are found today in the museums of St-Petersburg and Tashkent.

Saukeles were not identical. They were ordered from the jeweler a year before the wedding. Besides, they had regional

peculiarities. Southern *saukeles* had more visible textile decorations, while in the West they were more massive and had more anthropomorphic metal linings in the central part. On the top of *saukele* one can see *uki* (owl feathers). *Uki* is a sacred bird in Kazakh culture, defending from evil. Silk tapes-*karkara*, decorated with stones come down from the top. *Saukele* is covered by a long decorated silk cloth [12, p.189].

The research [13, p. 29] made on *saukele* reveals a deep symbolic meaning. This cone-shaped headdress is connected with the archetypal images of the World Tree, World Mountain and compositional structure of the national Kazakh costume. According to the concept of trinity, headdress, belt and skirt relate accordingly to the upper, medium and inferior world in the hierarchy of the world order. The most sacred thing is *saukele*, representing the macrocosm. It is found also in the costume of the Saq period, on stone reliefs of the Behistun inscription, on cast and metal Scythians vessels from the Black Sea and in the costume of the Golden Man from Issyk.

Saukele originates from "saule" (transl. ray), meaning "sun" in the past. It dates back to the ancient Turk worldview, worshipping the sun. In some cultures it is called "Sol", "Sole". Other people connect it with the words "chokila", shoshak, shokigan, "shoshaigan borik" - meaning "a high headdress". The etymology splits it into two parts: "sau" and "kele", meaning accordingly "safe and sound" and "head", "tower". As the bride had to pass long distances to arrive to her bridegroom, when she eventually arrived in her fantastic *saukele* everyone was happy and festivities began.

Being a product of culture every text points at other texts, which in their turn had also been affected by the previous ones. Any message is linked to other messages, which it responds and which respond to it in their turn [14, p. 260].

Every definition constitutes some other linguistic or visual message, which can be clarified by other signs, which in their turn have to comment other cultural units, carried by the preceding messages. Such series of clarifications which circumscribed the cultural units of a society in an infinite progression make a chain, called by Peirce

interpretants [10, p. 115].

There are many epos, myths, poems, songs and films glorifying saukele. One of them is linked with *karkara*, mentioned above. A girl dropped her *karkara* and precious and beautiful stones from her saukele spread across location, turning into mountains, lakes and birds. Since then the place has been called Karkaraly. Another myth is mentioned in the novel "Amanai and Zamanai" by S. Zhunisov, depicting the peak Saukele. It is a high peak, a pinnacle always white, uniquely rising among the low hills. It really reminds a saukele. Even the stones, sticking up the hill, remind the girly headdress. In summer the peak is surrounded by beautiful white clouds like a shawl, and in autumn the peak rises in the mist.

Kadyr Myrza Ali depicts saukele in his poem "Symbol":

Koz aldimda sonau kone konystar.

Saukele bop, bastaryna qyzdardyn

Qona kalgan ukili bir konustar.

Transl.

In front of my eyes ancient cones,

Saukele on the heads of girls,

Cones with uki on their tops.

The duet Raim & Artur also devoted a song "Saukele":

Zharasady ozine

Basyndagy saukele

Transl.

It suits her very well

Saukele on the head.

Unforgettable is the final scene with saukele, floating on the water, in the film "Kyz Zhibek", by Shaken Aimanov, symbolizing the tragic death of the girl.

Knowing such things causes more respect to culture and changes people's attitude to it. Kazakh culture has deep roots, which should be rediscovered. One can begin it exploring the national language, in which each word is the source of wisdom and has a deep symbolic meaning. Semiotics pave way to search and research symbols and codes. Eco popularizes semiotics in his novels. Reading his novel "Il nome della Rosa" one turns into Sherlock Holmes, actively searching for the murderer. The book begins with the phrase that in the beginning of everything there is a WORD [15, p. 1].

Kazakhs highly appreciate the power of the word. They say: "Kiz eldin korki, gul

jerdin korki", transl. A girl is the beauty of the country, a flower is the beauty of the earth; "Kizga kirik uiden tyuu", transl. Forbid a girl from forty houses. Girls should be protected like the nation's treasure.

In this regard, the work of the club "Syrgalym" can be mentioned. It has worked at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University since 2014. The main idea is to educate the young generation in the spirit of the national traditions, to make them feel that they are the traces of real noble mothers, that the future of the country is in their hands. Numerous events were held, literary and musical parties, where guests answered any questions of interest, burning issues were discussed. Inappropriate behavior and clothing were touched among other issues as well. Kazakh National dress was demonstrated on the university walls to see that they are also appropriate in everyday life. The event "Start with yourself" became popular among the students [16].

Any nation is proud of its national costumes. Indians' sari is always at hand. Japanese highly respect their kimono, which is believed to have its own spirit. Kazakh national costume has its own individuality and harmonious luxury too. Recently they have been put on production on a good price and very nice design. National values are being revived to a new level. Earlier it was not easy to find things, decorated in the national style. Today there are lots of workshops and national fashion houses and the demand on the national goods is increasing.

A serious issue is using ornaments on the national clothing, like saukele, kimeshek, kokirekshe, kamzol, kazekey, kebis-masy, jelek. Women's clothes were traditionally sewn, depending on the age: for girls, women, middle-aged women and elderly women. Each piece of clothing had its own meaning. One should be very careful, embroidering ornaments on them. There are ornaments of the upper world, under world and the earthly world. Some ornaments can't be placed below the waist, while others don't rise above the waist. There are male and female ornaments. There are ornaments, used in funeral rituals. Shoe ornaments can't be used for head cover. All this dates back to the Tengrian faith, which is an integral part of our identity. E. Kozhabayev, the professional

Kazakh artist and designer expresses his regret about the ignorance of ornament semantics and using pictograms - ornaments of the underworld. Kazakh ornaments were investigated both by local (A.Margulan, T.Bassenov, E.Massanov, M.Mukanov), and foreign scientists (V.Kurrer, F.Kugler, S.Ivanov, V.Stasov, F.Volkov, A.Bernstam). Foreign scientists investigated with interest the motives of the ornaments like horns, moon, leaves and geometric figures. Ornaments are found in old books, works of folklore, archeological excavations, men equipment, personal and ru tanba (national subdivision signs), making the ethnographic legacy of the nation. Ornaments were used as a means of communication. People could differentiate status and origin through them [17].

A specific Kazakh ornament is *qoshqar myuiz* (sheep horns), symbolizing eternity and abundance. In Mongol and Chinese culture a sheep is one of the symbols of Sun. It is a sacred animal for them. Thus, they use it on clothes. In Kazakh culture and philosophy horse and camel are believed to be sacred animals. Therefore, *qoshqar myuiz* is used only on shoes, belonging to under world. On headdress can be used only horns mixed with flowers, wings. Otherwise we change our philosophy and attitude to life.

Concluding, we can say, that *saukele* is one of the brightest indicators of the rich legacy of Kazakh culture. *Saukele* means more than a simple headdress. It is an invaluable legacy, example of the richness of the Kazakh nation, its culture and art.

Nagyż qazaq qazaq emes. Nagyż qazaq - Domyra

One of the main symbols and great instruments of the Kazakh musical culture is *dombyra*. This traditional pear-shaped, long necked, two-stringed instrument and the Kazakh art of *dombyra kui* (tune) is inscribed in the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List and in the Guinness Book of Records. For Kazakhs it is more than just a piece of music. They say: "*Nagyż qazaq qazaq emes, nagyż qazaq - dombyra!*", transl. "a real Kazakh is not a Kazakh, a real Kazakh is *dombyra!*". *Dombyra* is one of seven Kazakh national treasures. One of the first monuments to this instrument is

located in the village *Qalbatau*. It is a seven meters high monument, with the image of *dombyra* on a tree branches. According to the author N. Kaliyev, the idea is - the succession of generations. Number 7 has a special meaning in Kazakh culture. There is a notion of seven treasures for a Kazakh, which are: a brave man, a wise, beautiful wife, a fast horse, an eagle, a dog, knowledge. In 2007 local scientists identified seven unique cultural phenomena that contributed to the spiritual development of the nation. Except *dombyra*, the list includes stone paintings of *Tamgaly*, the mausoleum of *Khoja Ahmed Yassau*, underground mosques in *Mangistau*, Kazakh yurt, the *Baiterek* monument, and the *Golden Man* found in *Issyk*. *Dombyra* is like a sounded page of the history of the nation, its customs and culture. No event has taken place without it since the nomadic times. Often *dombyra* was played before battles to create the mood. Its sound conveyed deep thoughts without any words. *Ilyas Zhansugirov* said: *Til jok deuge bola ma? Tilden anyq un barda!* (Can you say that it does not have a tongue, when it has a voice clearer than the tongue!) In 2018 the first President of the country proclaimed *dombyra* "a sacred heritage ...the brand and passport of the Kazakh people" and declared the first Sunday of July as *National Dombyra day*. What is there behind this sign of culture?

Many epic tales and legends found their musical reflection in Kazakh *kui* (tune), performed on *dombyra*. *Kui* is translated "condition", "mood". According to the legends, the creator of ancient *kuis* is *Korkut* - one of the founders of the musical culture of Turks. The best examples of *kuis* are left by the well-known *kuishi* (*kui* performers) and composers like *Kurmangazy*, *Dauletkerei*, *Tattimbet*, *Ykylas* and *Sugur*. Their *kuis* touch the very soul of the listeners, connecting them to the Creator. Kazakhs say: "*Kyi Tanirdin sybyry*" (the whisper of Tengri). *Kuis* are the pages of the Kazakh history, written in tunes. Music connects people to their historic roots and traditions, engaging the audience at a spiritual level. One of the widely spread legends is connected with *Genghis Khan* and the tragic death of his son *Jochi Khan*. A brutal execution awaited the black messenger as *Genghis Khan* had

promised to pour molten lead into the throat of the person, who would inform him on the tragedy. "Aqsaq qulan" kui was played, conveying the harsh truth to the Khan. Genghis Khan, remembering his words, orders to execute dombyra. This is the story of the hole on the surface of dombyra - the trace of the molten lead and "Aqsaq-qulan" is one of the most beautiful Kazakh legends, glorifying the power and immortality of art.

According to some sources, this instrument has 4,000 years history. In 1989 in Almaty region, high in the mountains on the plateau "Maitobe", professor S. Akitaev found a rock painting with an image of a musical instrument and four dancing people in different poses. The image depicted by an ancient artist reminds dombyra. What is more interesting it has a feather of an owl, the tradition kept up today. This drawing dates from the Neolithic times. Kazakh dombyra can be one of the first stringed instruments in the history of the humankind. Now the drawing is found in the Ykylas Dukenuly Museum of Folk Instruments in Almaty [18].

The first investigations on dombyra started in the beginning of the XX century, regarding it from the archeological and ethnographic points of view. Besides, it was studied by music and folklore specialists, linguists. Among them: Al-Farabi, A.Zatayevich, A.Zhubanov, Al-Mashani, T.Assemkulov, Zh.Babalyquli, S.Kaskabasov, A.Seidymbekov. Dombyra is mentioned along with sybyzgy, synrai, qobyz by Abu Nasr Al-Farabi. Another image, a nine stringed dombyra this time, depicted on a stone was found in 1994 in Mangystau oblast by Zh. Babalykuly. It is dated XVII century. The tribes, inhabiting Kazakh territories in the VII-IV centuries B.C. were called Saqs by Percians and Skiffs by Greeks. They left a rich musical legacy. The modern cradle melodies, like Aqqu, originate in that period [19, p. 7].

V.Pitertsev [20, p. 10] reflects well the importance of this instrument in Kazakh culture:

Gasyrlar dausy bar....
Dalanyn muninday....
Tagdyrlar aluan.....
Dombyram zhan dosym.
Ozinmen syrlasam.
Uly babam murasy.....

Kielim, dombyra.

Transl.:

You have the voice of centuries....

You are like the sorrow of the steppe....

You keep many fates.

My dombyra - my soul friend.

I tell you my secrets.

The legacy of the ancestors.

Holy dombyra.

There are various hypothesis regarding the origins of the word dombyra. The word combines two words: "dom" and "bura". There is a word "dombigu", meaning "freeze", "swell" from cold. In Central Kazakhstan there is an ancient Dombauyl mausoleum to a well-known historic personality. "Bura" means twisting. The other Kazakh musical instrument – kobyz - is linked with shaman belief. Probably, dombyra originates similarly. They say: dombyra tart, kyui tart, where "tartu" means connecting. These musical instruments may have a similar origin, meaning connecting with Tengry, Heavenly Creator [21, p. 5].

Another myth is known as "Kos ishek" (Two strings). It tells about a hunter, who lived by hunting deer. One day after hunting he leaves the animal intestines on the branches of a tree. Some months later returning to that place, he hears a nice melody. He understands that it comes from the intestines, hanging like strings on the branches of the tree. He takes them and makes some kind of instrument. Having touched the strings he hears the melody again. Dombyra is the soul of nomads. From Altay to Anadoly all the Turkic nations have dombyra instrument. Kazakhs, Bashkurts, Uzbeks, Nogays call it dombyra, Turks - tombr, Tajiks - domburak, Buryats - dombro, Mongols-dombor. According to S.Karjaubaiuly, dombyra originates in Altay region. There on the Zhargalant-Kayirkan slope of the Mongol Altay mountain was found an ancient two stringed musical instrument [22, p.102].

A poem-devotion to this instrument we find by Miras Assan, which abounds with metaphors.

Dombyra sunkar edi baldaktagy
Dombyra tulpar edi tugyrdagy
Dombyra kyzyl bori, kyzyr kagan,
Dombyra tilsim agash nur sipaty
Arymnin ai didarly, ku'n sipaty
Dombyra arkadagy Akan seri

Dombyra sen Abaisyn so'z patshasi.

It is only a tiny part of the poem, but it shows that dombyra is associated for a Kazakh with all the best in his life – *sunkar* - eagle, *tulpar* - horse and *bori* - wolf, *Kagan* - Ruler and Allah (Nur is one of 99 names of Allah), Sun, honor, Akan Seri and Abay (the most famous jirau and poet).

According to Eco metaphors are one of the phenomena of semiosis and instrument of constructing knowledge. Metaphors teach to see, to notice similarity of things. The language is in its nature metaphoric and it activates every linguistic activity defining the human as a symbolic animal [23, p. 161].

Today, when we are experiencing the loss of language and culture, dombyra remains an eternal value and reminds Kazakh people on them. Real culture, especially spiritual culture is manifested in the national, ethnic features and it develops and becomes stronger when they are risen high and driven further.

S. Seitman writes:

Argy atamnyn kozin korgen kauimnan

Kozi tiri dombyra goi ayauly.

Transl.: *One who saw my forefathers,*

The only witness, dear dombyra.

The poet calls the nation not to lose oneself:

Qazaq bolyp qaldy mangi dombyra,

Dombyra bop kalsa eken-au ar qazaq.

Transl.:

Dombyra remained forever a Kazakh,

May each Kazakh also remain a dombyra.

This instrument, as we see, has witnessed all the battles and victories, sorrows and hardships, it stood and survived together with the nation. It explains the love of Kazakh towards this instrument.

The theory and practice of communication, as Eco writes, tries to turn everything into the sign systems, and it is right, as it is impossible without it to imagine oneself any 'presence'. The essence of culture, is in imparting meanings to the surrounding world, turning the presence into signification. People in different cultures live in different universes. Distance between interlocutors, feeling of warmth, tactile sensations, smells, sensual universe – everything matters and acquires a cultural meaning. Ours is the epoch of restoring the memory, as Eco concludes [5, p. 286-364].

Conclusion

In this research we have tried to extrapolate Eco's theory of semiotics in the Kazakhstani context. His ideas are actual today, as the Italian semiotician reflects in his works on the meaning of such notions like aging, reconstruction and memory. Human memory never turns over the basis of culture. Codes and proper keys to dead forms should be found, which help not only to feel the spirit of the past and revive the antiquity but giving it the new connotations of the present day.

In our research we deliberated around the headdress *saukele* and the national musical instrument *dombyra*. We see that semiotic ideas of Eco work well, revealing much information behind the things, being considered like signs. The costume, as the shell of the human body, plays not only utilitarian, aesthetic and a socially differentiating role, it represents a complex structure, that embodies the mythopoetic representations of the people. And *dombyra* as we have seen is an ancient and quintessential piece of Kazakh culture and identity. An in-depth study of the national costumes and instruments, the identification of their code meanings, properly organized, enriches modern culture, helps to reveal the spiritual and aesthetic foundations of Kazakh musical, decorative and applied art and determine the factors, that shape ethnic identity. Many aspects of this issue expect thorough studies. Being done from the semiotic angle it would disclose the relationship of a number of elements of the artistic-figurative structure of the traditional costume and musical instruments with a whole complex of mythologies and archetypes common in nomadic culture, which have not yet been traced. Such an approach is needed while implementing the program "Course towards the future: modernization of Kazakhstan's identity", directed to understand the origins of the culture in all its depth and complexity.

Our nation has started to consider cultural and spiritual legacy as the only source to understand its identity. Lack of education and culture in the epoch of mass media and show business, imprinting their own symbols and codes, which are accepted sometimes without

any reflections, can lead to a catastrophe. Denial of the proper history and achievements happens because of the ignorance. Nothing is built on an empty place. Culture is built on the traditions of the eternal development from antiquity up today.

Yes, in every culture there is a huge load of things, ossified and torn out, which sometimes poison our life, but not all the values are obsolete. Eco pictures an old automobile, which still moves, but not as fast as desirable. Then you need styling, while keeping functions to communicate new connotations to the eternal denotation, which is constant as well as the deep foundation of any culture, based on producing mechanisms and their effective use. The same way we have to explore our national code and to return to our essence, empowering ourselves in this way.

Summarizing we want to emphasize that when there is no culture, no cultural values, it is barbarism. Like a tree without roots, we deprive ourselves from the power of the ancestors, their experience and knowledge. Invaluable legacy of the past interpreted with semiotic methods, being excellent means of text and context analysis, enables us to see and analyze any complex phenomena of everyday life.

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