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Gender semiology in folklore traditions: Russia, China and Adygea


ГЕНДЕРНАЯ СЕМИОЛОГИЯ В ФОЛЬКЛОРНЫХ ТРАДИЦИЯХ: РОССИЯ, КИТАЙ И АДЫГЕЯ

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Abstract


The article presents an analytical analysis of the linguosemiotic features of the female portrait in the folklore fund of the linguocultures of Russia, the North Caucasus and China in the aspect of the intergender dichotomy "male-female" as the implementation of the policy of "soft power" of the ethnos to preserve its vitality. Hypothesis: The dichotomy of masculinity and femininity in traditional culture is presented as the result of the interaction of ethno-cultural strategies of the ancestral cult, in which the role of a woman is defined as the keeper of the knowledge of the people with the competencies of a housewife who needs help and care from a man. The relevance of the study is due to the growing research interest in the vitality of traditional cultures, which continue to influence the lives of modern women. Chinese, Adyghe and Russian folklore for the first time becomes the object of comparative analysis of the linguosemiotic


Абстракт


Статья представляет аналитический разбор лингвосемиотических особенностей женского портрета в фольклорном фонде лингвокультурах России, Северного Кавказа (Адыгея) и Китая в аспекте межгендерной дихотомии «мужское-женское» как реализация политики «мягкой силы» этноса для сохранения его витальности. Гипотеза: Дихотомия маскулинности и феминности в традиционной культуре представляется как результат взаимодействия этнокультурных стратегий культа предков, в котором роль женщины определяется как хранительницы знаний народа с компетенциями хозяйки дома, которая нуждается в помощи и заботе со стороны мужчины. Актуальность исследования обусловлена ростом исследовательского интереса к витальности традиционных культур, которые продолжают влиять на жизнь современных женщин.

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characteristics of the image of femininity in the form of "feminine" folkloratives identified for the first time. The methodology uses a linguosemiotic approach and the theory of complex metagraphs in modeling the speech-behavioral gender matrix of women through the prism of folklore. The results show that folklore is a reproducible mechanism of "soft power" of gender regulation in the ethno-cultural practice of folk art.

Keywords: semiotics of the female image, traditional psycholinguistic characteristics of a woman, "feminine" folklorative, semiotization, signs of femininity, Adygea, China, Russia, ethno-cultural mechanism of "soft power".

Introduction

Semiotic verbalization of the gender stereotype of femininity actualizes the experience reflected by the collective consciousness (Xiaoxiao, 2022), which plays a key role in understanding the history of the development of the linguistic picture of the world in traditional communities, which include speakers of Adyghe, Chinese, Russian linguistic cultures with the dominant standards of traditional society. At the same time, the uniqueness of the role of verbal markers in the folklore subcorpus from this point of view practically remained beyond the attention of researchers. As a rule, the situation of the vitality of tradition was considered in the situation of distraction and separation of the ethnic group (Kudaeva, 2021; Ruan, & Karabulatova, 2021).

In this regard, "each element, being included in the system, acquires a new quality, a new significance, i.e. system properties, therefore it is logical to assume that each reference word of the folklore text receives an additional semantic load determined by the structural properties of the "folklore picture of the world" (Khrolenko, 1992: 19).

Thus, for speakers of the Abkhaz-Adyghe languages, which include Adygs, Abkhazians, Kabardians, Circassians, the study of this fragment of the traditional linguistic picture of the world is the most important key to understanding the specifics of their ethnocultures (Bizheva 2017; Gutov, 2022; Unarokova, 2019). At the same time, the Chinese traditional picture of the world reflects a slightly different view of femininity and the tasks of women in

Китайский, адыгейский и русский фольклор впервые становится объектом компаративного анализа лингвосемиотических характеристик образа женственности в виде впервые выделенных «феминных» фольклоративов. Методология использует лингвосемиотический подход и теорию сложных метаграфов в моделировании речеповеденческой гендерной матрицы женщин через призму фольклора. Результаты показывают, что фольклор есть воспроизводимый механизм «мягкой силы» гендерного регулирования в этнокультурной практике народного творчества.

Ключевые слова: семиотика женского образа, «феминный» фольклоратив, цифровая лингвофольклористика, Адыгея, Китай, Россия, этнокультурный механизм «мягкой силы».

ethnoculture, thanks to the verification of gender policy in Chinese society for thousands of years and the acceptance of the diversity of gender roles, which is demonstrated by the traditional Beijing opera (Chen, 2020). At the same time, the Russian gender line, despite statements of adherence to tradition, reveals lability and variability under the influence of external factors (Lezhnina, 2014). Femininity in the conceptual linguistic picture of the world of the traditional ethnosocium is one of the forms of reflection of mentality and ethnic consciousness in relation to a woman, explicating the source of ethnic identity of various forms of spiritual life of the traditional community.

Literature Review

The dispute about the mechanism of gender in human sociocultural practice is predetermined by interest in studying the role of social, biological, psychological and ethno-cultural factors in the formation of gender stereotypes in a particular society (Dicke et al., 2019; Gasanova et al., 2016; Anah, C., & Okere, M., 2019; Courteau, 1991; Hongru, 2022; Khachmafova et al., 2017; Novikov et al., 2023; Xiaoxiao, 2022; Vykhristyuk, 2022, etc.). The relevance of the study is predetermined by the choice of a semiotic approach to the study of the category of femininity as a prototype of a woman in traditional linguoculture, which allows us to identify and describe stable ideas about gender behavior and semiotic characteristics of a woman determined by the ethnoculture of the Adygs, Chinese and Russians.

The study of the features of the formation of gender stereotypes in the ethnosocium, depending on cultural patterns, contributes to the theoretical understanding of the features of the formation of an axiological picture of the world. Scientific research aimed at describing cultural codes within the framework of linguistics focused on the anthropocosmos (Belousova, & Bairamova, 2020; Bizheva, 2017; Bulegenova et al., 2023; Guketlova, 2009; Tintin, 2022; Khakuasheva, 2014; Maslov, 2020; Ryko, 2017), as well as the study of gender in language and discourse (Gasanova et al., 2016; Khachmafova et al., 2017; Xiaoxiao, 2022; Chen, 2020; Vykhristyuk et al., 2022) confirm this position.

As a rule, the literary form of the language levels the genetically primary properties of identity, revealing the determinism of the ethnic worldview of the language. In this regard, it is preferable to analyze paremiological, phraseological and folklore material, where the internal form of the language has been preserved to a greater extent (Bizheva, & Ulakov, 2011; Vykhristyuk et al., 2022).

Consider gender-typed fit the theory gender schema (Dicke et al., 2019; Kurochkina & Shakhmatova 2014; Starr & Zurbriggen 2017; Su et al., 2009), which evolving perceptions of it standards in modern society with sustainable traditional paradigms (Fleming & Agnew-Brune, 2015).

Semiotic markers of nonverbal human behavior are aimed at translating psychophysiological standards of response in a particular society through body movements and voice (Eckland et al., 2019; Unarokova et al., 2023). The principle of the influence of the processes of conceptualization and mediatization is fundamental for the formation of the cognitive matrix of the ethnosocium on the formation of the gender conceptsphere in traditional linguistic cultures (Starr, & Zurbriggen, 2017).

The feminine folklore of TV is embedded in the speech-behavioral matrix (Karabulatova et al., 2015), reflecting the value system of an ethnic collective, which may well be represented as a kind of cognitive map (Olyanitch et al., 2019), "the dimensions of which reflect the semantics of concepts and related values. This can be done if you know (i) how to define map dimensions and (ii) how to distribute concepts in these dimensions" (Samsonovich, & Askoli, 2007: 1).

Materials and methods

Based on this postulate, we used as a practical material lexical and phraseological unit containing ethnocultural signs and characteristics inherent in the female image, extracted from the folklore of the Adyghe corpus of the language, as well as folklore of Chinese and Russian languages, which gives grounds to identify universal features of femininity characteristic of traditional ethnic communities in its implicit opposition to masculinity.

Based on the selected typological characteristics, the "feminine" folklorative was first identified, which means the collective image of the feminine principle in traditional folklore. The introduction of the term "folklorative" makes it possible to formalize the linguocognitive characteristics of the traditional gender code represented in the folklore subcorpus of languages with traditional cultural dominance.

A detailed list of thematic folklore markers of femininity was compiled thanks to such digital platforms as Adyghe Corps, Semantic Scholar, RSCI, Google Scholar and such special platforms as the Casket of Fairy Tales, with descriptions of specific feminine folkloratives that are contained in the folklore of traditional linguistic cultures. The search queries included the following keywords: the magic wife, Chinese fairy tales, Adyghe fairy tales, North Caucasian Nart epic, Circassian and Russian fairy tales, a hero woman, a swan princess, a peony girl, a birch girl, etc. This made it possible to identify about 198 documents with keywords characterizing femininity in the repertoire list. At the same time, these feminine folkloratives were grouped according to the methods and types of representation, which made it possible to build a multigraph system for the implementation of the "soft power" of the ethnos in the formation of a reproducible speech-behavioral gender matrix in the folklore.

Feminine folkloratives are considered based on the dualism of masculine and feminine in their polar realizations in oral folk art in traditional cultures. The methodology of the analysis is based on the principles of consistency and anthropocentrism. To achieve this goal, the following scientific research methods were used: descriptive method (observation, typologization, interpretation and generalization); semiotic analysis, which made it possible to identify clusters of signs that actualize the stereotypical image of a woman in traditional linguocultures; linguoculturological analysis, which identified

and described gender-marked phraseological units as code representatives of femininity in traditional linguocultures.

Results and discussion

Semiotic grounds for studying the gender stereotype of femininity in traditional linguoculture allowed us to establish and describe stable, determined by the analyzed ethnolinguocultures, ideas about the external, behavioral and status-conditioned characteristics of a woman, which we consider as signs of femininity in the "feminine" folklore we highlight. The need to distinguish such a terminological unit as a folklorative is due to the very fabric of the folklore work, which is characterized by stable imagery. Under folklore,

we propose to designate a folklore-conditioned stable image that has typological features that characterize the speech and behavioral standard in a particular ethnic society. In turn, the folklorative can be referred to as the sphere of animated characters – subjects, (such as: the red maiden – in the Russian folklore tradition; the blue-eyed peacock – in the Chinese folklore tradition; slender as a chamois – in the Adyghe folklore tradition, etc.), and inanimate objects (such as a painted portrait, a mountain river, an extinct stove, etc.). In addition, folkloratives, as a rule, have dual characteristics, reflecting the traditional duality of the world. Thus, the feminine folklore as a stable image of femininity in folklore is contrasted with the masculine folklore as a stable image of masculinity in the folklore subcorpus (fig.1).

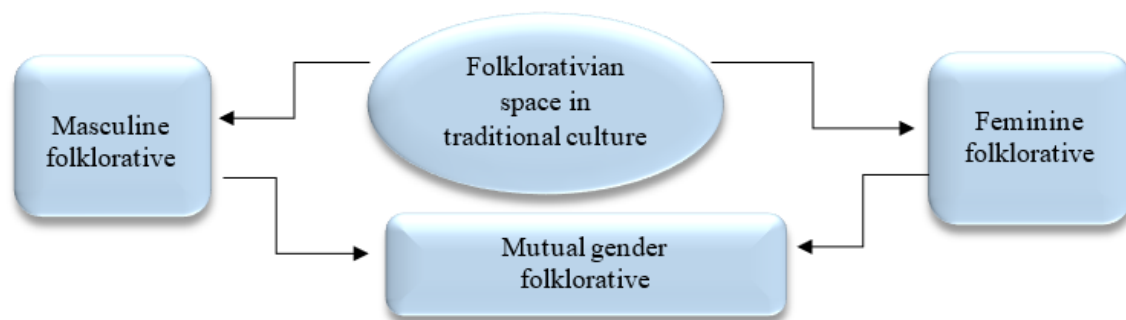


Fig.1. Systeme of gender in traditional folklore.

At the same time, female power often exceeds male, which is reflected in both Adyghe and Chinese, Russian folklore. In this connection, images with features of mixed gender appear in traditional folklore, which ensures the development of a dramatic conflict in a folklore work due to the mixing of gender roles (Fig. 1).

Despite the criticism of the constants of traditional culture, it is impossible not to admit that traditional cultural codes have preserved the recognition of the power and worship of female power, as an originally laid tradition of feminism, which has preserved echoes of the knowledge of matriarchy. So, the Russian *Marya Morevna* / *Tsar-Maiden*/ *Blue-eyed* has not only beauty, but also wisdom, remarkable physical strength, witchcraft magic, which allowed her to defeat *Koshchei the Immortal* himself. She is the daughter of the ancient Slavic goddess *Mary/Morena*, who ruled cold, winter and death (*Dobrynya*, (n/d)). It is not by chance that her daughter *Marya Morevna* acts as a warrior, a hero, as the ancient Russian forerunner of feminism: her husband *Ivan* becomes a householder, and the virgin-hero *Marya* herself

(not *Maria*, namely *Marya*, which has a reference to the pronunciation of the variant of the name *Morena* / *Mara* – Z.Kh., etc.) goes to war.

Russian fairy tales usually refer to a man as *Ivan*, but the Russian female anthroponymicon reveals a variety: *Marya Morevna*, *Marya the artist*, *Nastasia Mikulishna*, *Vasilisa the Beautiful*, *Vasilisa the Wise*, *Elena the Beautiful*, *Tsar Maiden*, *Alyonushka*, *Varvara-beauty long braid*, *Snow Maiden*, etc.

The Adyghe fairy-tale anthroponymicon is even more diverse and variable:

Diguliph - the daughter of the Abkhazian god of fertility *Digul*;
Dzagash (variants: *Dzeguashch*, *Dzegashch*, *Zagvash*) – the woman-leader of the army;
Kiyshchkyhan (*Chishkhan*, *Chishchkhan*) – the patroness of blacksmithing crafts, etc.

If the European man of that time defined the world from the angle of religion and faith in God, then the Adygs looked at the world differently, namely, through the prism of the so-called

"Adygeism", which means a comprehensive moral and ethical system of an ethnic group characterized by absolute value, since it served as the main regulator in all spheres of life, subordinating even religious consciousness, which makes it similar to the system of Taoism. These Chinese features appeared due to active cooperation with the Kalmyk princes on the battlefield against neighboring tribes and peoples (Koltsova, 2022). Adygs (Circassians) This is how religion's place in the hierarchy of spiritual values is determined in the proverbial fund: "Religion can be changed, you can't change the nation." Self-identification at the level of belonging to an ethnic group was invariably higher than self-identification by religion. The mythology of the Adygs, imprinted in the monuments of oral folk art, in the past was the main carrier of cultural traditions in the language (Afaunova, 2019).

In Adyghe folklore there is an image of a female hero *Lashin*, who fights with a hero enemy. However, she can not only masterfully wield a club and a sword, but also heal the sick. This shows the strength and power of the feminine principle, which can be both aggressive in overcoming obstacles, and creative, pacifying to recreate balance and harmony. Her name has been characterized as a name with an unclear etymology (Namitokova, 2012), however, some researchers suggest the Turkic etymology of the anthroponym in a distorted version: *Lyachin* "falcon" in the Tatar language (Buhurov, 2018).

In our opinion, we have an interpretation in the direction of interpreting the female name *Lashin* from a male point of view. An interesting fact is that in folklore the falcon acts only as a masculine folklore, as a solar symbol (as in the culture of Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, Ancient Russia, etc.). If we look at the falcon among the Slavs, then according to the beliefs of the Slavic peoples, the falcon is a god-the first bird and the first God in the male hypostasis as opposed to the female hypostases in the form of a swan or a duck. In Indian mythology, the falcon is one of the deities that appeared from a lightning strike, and therefore the falcon is a sign of Agni. Ancient Egyptian myths brought to us the image of the god of light and heaven Horus, which is represented in the form of a falcon or a man with a falcon's head. In Arab countries, the falcon is also a symbol of courage, freedom, and the status of masculinity (Morozova, 2021). In this regard, the version about the falcon as the designation of a woman in the Adyghe culture is unfounded. The phenomenon of interlanguage paronymy, implying the sound similarity of

words of two languages, which led to a misunderstanding when trying to interpret the name *Lashin*. This discrepancy with zoomorphic folkloratives reflects the "obscured" etymology of the name *Lashin*, as pointed out by R. Namitokova (1976).

In folklore, the role of a warrior is not ordinary, since tradition ascribes to her the preservation of the biologically predetermined role of a guardian and mother, therefore, the unusual and forced behavior of a woman as a warrior is always emphasized. For example: *Nastasya Mikulishna – polenitsa*, or the hero maiden, the daughter of the epic hero *Mikula Selyaninovich* and became the wife of *Dobrynya Nikitich*. Her speech-and-speech profile is described in the fairy-tale epics "*Dobrynya and the Serpent*"; "*The marriage of Dobrynya*": "*Nastasya Mikulichna's daughter took out of the leather bag of the hero here and began to say these words: 'If the hero is old, I will cut off his head. If there is a young hero, I will take him prisoner. If love appears in me, I will get married. If I don't love you, I'll squeeze in one palm and press the other on top...' (Russian folk tale "Dobrynya" (n/d)).*

The Adyghe warrior woman *Lashin*, the wife of the boastful, arrogant young dzhigit Kurgoko, also acts similarly: her strength is equal to the strength of three men, and her figure resembled a jug, she could throw a cow over the fence with one hand. She enters into battle with China Khan (Shartanov, 1977). Regarding pragmatic labeling with the help of symbol names, it can be noted that anthroponyms do not always correlate with a real historical character. Although some researchers believe that either Genghis Khan's troops, Tatar tribes, or Nogai neighbors are hiding under the name of Kitai Khan (Buhurov, 2018). Reconstruction of events recorded only in the oral tradition is difficult. However, the facts of the use of the Buddhist 12-year animal cycle in the culture of the North Caucasus and the activity of the Great Silk Road for several centuries in this territory were naturally reflected in folklore. The creation of branches of the Great Silk Road has made a great contribution to the development of the culture of the North Caucasus (Koltsov et al., 2019; Tikunov et al., 2018).

Such symbolic names (*Lashin*, *Kitai-khan*) can create a narrative of understanding the intersections of Chinese, Russian and Adyghe folklore as a mythopoetic history of intercultural communication of these peoples, so far apart from each other. So, in Chinese linguoculture, the image of the goddess *Lishan Laomu*, the daughter of the first creative goddess *Nyuva*, is

especially revered. This image of the goddess Lishan is interesting because she is represented in Chinese folklore as the heavenly wife of the northern barbarian prince Xuyuan/ 胥 轩, descendants from this marriage who represented the Shang dynasty (17th-11th centuries. BC) and Zhou (11-221 BC) were able to rule the peoples who lived far to the west. In the image of the holy mother *Lishan*, real and fantastic features were intricately intertwined, which allowed her to be attributed to one of the hypostases of the *Heavenly Mother Guan Yin*. It is quite possible that the images of *Lishan* and *Lashin* have the same basis on the basis of contamination. This is supported not only by the connection of the names *Lishan* and *Lashin*.

Chinese folklore has preserved the names of five warrior heroines, some of them were real historical persons who were sacralized in the Chinese fairy tale tradition:

- 1) *Hua Mulan*/ 花 木 蘭, whose image has been repeatedly filmed by the Disney film company. This image echoes the Russian beauty Nastasya Mikulishna, who also changes into men's clothes and goes to battle;
- 2) *Fan Lihua*/ 樊 梨 花 is a female warrior, a popular image in traditional Chinese opera. It acts as an allegory of feminist heroism in traditional Chinese culture, becoming the basis for various post-interpretations in our time. The fairy tale tells how, in the name of love, Fan abandoned her family, her homeland, giving her land to enemies for love, so in Chinese culture she acts as a symbol of all-consuming passionate love, the personification of the fire of love;
- 3) *Mu Guiyin*/ 穆 桂 英 female warrior, is a collective image of women with leadership qualities of the Yang family. One of the important feats is not only the victory over the terrifying military formation of the Heavenly Gate and the repulse of the invasion of Western Xia, but also the support of her husband, the general, whose work Mu Guiyin continued after his death;
- 4) *She Saihua*, or *She Taijun*/ 佘 賽 花, the matriarch of the aforementioned Yang clan. In Chinese folklore, she is portrayed as elderly but defiant matron with a dragon-headed staff. The staff, as the legends say, was given to her by the Emperor of Song. However, this heroine is considered a real historical character in contrast to the fictional image of Mu Guying. The mythologization of the image of She Saihua

contributed to the consolidation of the symbol of loyalty, devotion, perseverance and female courage behind him;

- 5) *Liang Hong Yu*/ 梁 紅 玉, also a real historical character who has undergone mythologization, is considered a symbol of patriotism, since she managed to pay off the debt of her father, who sold her into slavery, with her military skills. While in slavery, she met her husband, with whom she defended the independence of China.

In this regard, it is interesting to consider the archetypal representation of women in the traditional value codes of a particular linguistic culture we are considering (Ryko, 2017). So, folklore nominees of gender identity in traditional linguocultures do not so much refer to the designation of biological sex (such as: *bzylfyg*/ woman in the Adyghe language; 女人/ nǚrén - woman in Chinese), as they indicate a social role in society according to the criteria of social belonging: *orphan*, *girl*, *widow*, *wife*, *bride*, *mistress*, *daughter-in-law*, *mother-in-law*, *girl*, etc. Thus, the archetypes of a woman in the Adyghe linguoculture are verbalized by nominating signs that have emoticems of a positive or negative attitude towards a woman in a particular ethno-linguistic culture: *Shykheageus* (wife), *Shyuguashche* (mother-in-law), *Nyse* (bride), *Kyese bzylfyge* (mistress), *Schyuuage* (angel, beloved woman), *Tyuan* (rival). It should be noted that the Adyghe language taboos the concept of a virgin, using instead the euphemism *ipsheshashkhye zeresht* – meaning "as beautiful as in her youth."

Chinese folklore is also characterized by a special attitude to the virginity of the heroine. So, according to legend, a quarter of all varieties of tea in China are still collected exclusively by virgins, or young girls who are considered as such, are not married. In this regard, in China there is such a concept as 茶 处 女/ chá chù nǚ / *tea virgins*. A reverent attitude to tea was formed in ancient times, it is believed that the useful properties of Shen-Nong tea were discovered (about 2700 BC), who is also revered as the founder of the culture of plant care and herbal medicine (Krayushkina, 2013).

At the same time, in the Russian folklore we will not find the designation of a mistress. But the following will be more widely represented: *orphan*, *stepdaughter*, *stepmother*, *grandmother*, *princess*, *merchant's daughter*, etc. The status and class affiliation of a woman are indicated by the following linguistic signs: *goschepshash*

(princess), *orkpshash* (noble girl), *fekol1pshash* (peasant), *une1ut pshash* (young maid), etc.

In the Chinese folklore subcorpus, such nominations as: *herbalist*, *healer*, *pharmacist*, *peasant*, *townswoman*, *mother*, *old woman*, *single woman*, *bride*, *mother-in-law*, etc. are widely represented (Yellow Stork (n/d)).

The correlation of the influence of the mechanisms of ethno-cultural and gender identity on the formation and reproduction of the speech-behavioral matrix in traditional linguistic cultures has been actively developed recently, taking into account in-depth modeling in neurotargeting (Corbett, 2006; Tintin, 2022; Luchinskaya et al., 2018). The analysis of gender differences in the aspect of social semiotics makes it possible to understand the socially approved palette of gender behavior in traditional linguistic cultures from the point of view of stable and floating gender identity.

According to the fair statement of U. Eco, the code is "a system of communicative conventions that paradigmatically connect elements, a series of signs, with a series of semantic blocks (or meanings) and establish the structure of both systems: each of them is governed by a rule of combinatorics that determines the order in which elements (signs and semantic blocks) are arranged syntagmatically" (Eco, 2019). And the culture of an ethnic group is a space of cultural meanings that are verbalized in the form of signs and codes in the language (Astafurova, & Olyanich, 2008; Khachmafova et al., 2017). In this regard, an important perspective for studying the ethnocultural specifics of the gender stereotype of femininity is the analysis of verbalized markers of femininity with semiotics, since it operates with basic concepts in the form of a sign and a code.

In principle, these cultural codes translate the ideas accepted in a certain ethnic society, ensuring the constant reproduction of tradition (Karabulatova et al., 2017). Semiotic mechanisms of gender actualization in communication have recently become in demand in scientific research of various profiles (Afaunova, 2019; Anah, & Okere, 2019; Vykhrystyuk et al., 2022). The code of culture in semiotics is understood as a set of signs and mechanisms formed by stereotypes of linguistic and cultural consciousness, i.e. a matrix that determines the way of thinking and designations.

Cultural codes, according to V.M. Savitsky, "when verbalized, they turn into linguistic and

cultural codes that function in speech communication and are the verbal embodiment of cultural codes" (Savitsky, 2016: 57). He notes that cultural codes are assimilated by native speakers in the process of ontogenesis together with their native language.

Conclusion

The semiotics of gender juxtaposition is vividly represented in the folklore subcorpus, therefore, the analysis of the initial sign structure itself is important, which can implicitly represent the components of the cultural paradigm of the people, with the peculiarities of their thinking and speech-behavioral standard. The linguistic and cultural approach taken in the article is aimed at identifying a system of unique archetypes and images of femininity in different structural languages, which captures the values that make up the architecture of the identity of the people, in which mentality and spiritual and moral attitudes play the role of connecting links.

The presented analysis of the features of the semiotic representation of the image of a woman as a feminine folklore in the traditional linguocultures of the East and West in Eurasia allows us to trace the process of gender dichotomy in the linguocognitive map of the ethnos.

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