

## ARTISTIC TRADITIONS OF THE EAST AND WEST IN CONTEMPORARY KAZAKH DESIGN

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### *Abstract*

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of the article is to determine the degree of interaction of the eastern and western art schools in the practice of Kazakh design and to identify their role in the formation and development of design in Kazakhstan.

**Methodology:** The study is based on a complex methodology determined by an interdisciplinary approach involving the use of the methods of historicism, systematization, stylistic analysis, and comparative analysis. The methodology was based on research concepts of T. Stepanskaya, R. Yergaliyeva, E. Balabekov, B. Amanov, A. Mukhambetova.

**Main Findings:** Based on the studied sources, the authors can draw the following conclusions: 1) The interaction of artistic traditions of the East and West is due to the fundamental unity of the human race, ensuring the permeability of cultural boundaries; 2) The diversity of creative individuality, originality of modern approaches combined with the achievements of traditional culture are the distinguishing features of the professional values of contemporary Kazakh design.

**Applications of this study:** Thus, the scientific and practical significance of the study consists in the fact that: - the results can be the basis for the development of lecture courses in the framework of educational programs of higher education institutions for the specialty “Design”; - the conclusions can serve as an impulse for creative development in the modern practice of transmitting national traditions in design.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** The originality of the research is associated with the identification of trends and prospects for the development of fashion, advertising, interior, and environmental design in the modern cultural environment of Kazakhstan, as well as the establishment of the importance of spiritual and aesthetic foundations of color scheme in the disclosure of the figurative components of design projects. The novelty of the research consists in determining the influence of the traditional color scheme of Kazakh decorative and applied arts on the shaping and color scheme in the products of modern design, many of which are the main bearers of the regional ethno-semantics.

**Keywords:** *Fashion Design, Artistic Design, Textile Industry, Applied Arts, Traditional Culture.*

### INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the topic under study is related to the rapid changes in the development of design in the 20th century. The processes of cultural globalization have resulted in the formation of global design. The study of the history of Kazakh design, based on the features of the historical development of the country, its geographic location, natural and climatic conditions, and multinational character resulting from the synthesis of various esthetic and cultural-historical components occurring in the process of mutual influence and interaction of eastern and western cultures, seems relevant.

The topic under study was considered by Kazakh and foreign scholars including L.N. Mironova (1984), G.M. Guseynov and V.V. Yermilova (2004), N.V. Serov (2004), G.N. Gamarnik, S.B. Abdygapparova and G.K. Akhmetov (Gamarnik et al., 2004), A.Sh. Alimzhanova (2004), L.I. Nekhyvadovich, I.V. Chernyaeva, and L.V. Balakhnina (Nekhyvadovich et al., 2014, 2016, 2018), N.E. Kamzina, J.I. Mazina, and S.S. Turganbayeva (Kamzina et al., 2016), etc. Of particular note are publications concerning the development of Kazakh design by the president of the Kazakh Designers Association T.B. Suleymenov (2008). The features of Kazakh folk costume design were presented in the works by R.V. Zakharzhevskaya (2008), E.V. Kireyeva (1976), R.M. Kirsanova (1998), and others. Works, devoted to the history of Kazakh clothing and development of fashion in Kazakhstan and based on the experience of the Republican Fashion House, were written by S.Zh. Asanova (Asanova, 1994; 1995; Asanova et al., 2014).

The research information basis consisted of both published (collections of documents and periodicals) and unpublished sources (archives of the Symbat Fashion Academy and Kazakh Designers Association).

### METHODOLOGY

During the research, techniques of the comparative-historical, cultural-historical, and historical-typological methods were applied, which allowed us to study the history of the development of design in Kazakhstan and determine the general trends of its development.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Historical foundations and artistic traditions of Kazakh design

Design as a phenomenon of modern culture began to form in Kazakhstan in the second half of the 20th century. Europeans, namely Russian, trends dominated the early stages of the development of Kazakh design. The term “design” became a prerequisite for the emergence of derivative concepts and definitions: “designer”, “design form” (visual appearance of an object), etc. The term “design” is used in relation to the activity of a designer in the field of modeling mass industrial products and creating, on this basis, an object environment. The spectrum of the definition of the recently created term “design” in world practice is wide. The definition of “artistic design” has changed to “object design”.

The achievements of medieval “designers” predetermined the appearance of modern forms. For example, nomads, namely the Xiongnu, invented trousers (Serov, 2004: 38). The invention of wallpaper by eastern peoples, which “was borrowed by the West only in the 18th century” (Dobrokhotova, 1991: 43), turned out to be a very democratic discovery, especially for the poor: the paper was more accessible and any pattern could be reproduced on it. The design of such utilitarian items as spoons, saddles, and two-handed swords belongs to nomads.

The ancient roads of the Kazakh steppes connected not only the Kazakh (or Early Turkic) tribes. They brought together the East and the West, whole states located at a great distance from one another. The Silk Road played a decisive role in the mutual enrichment and interaction of various cultures. The range of goods transported along this caravan route was wide: various fabrics, precious and semiprecious stones, and silver, medicines and dyes, birds and animals intended for sale and as rare gifts (ostriches, falcons, peacocks, elephants, cheetahs, rhinos). The mutual influence of numerous cultures spread via the Silk Road, including the art of dance, music, painting, miniature, and architecture. Religious ideas spread via the Silk Road as well: Christianity, Manichaeism, Buddhism, and Islam. Cultural dialogue contributed to the spread of the achievements of different peoples, including in the field of proto design.

### The development of fashion design in Kazakhstan in the second half of the 20th century

In the period of formation of Kazakh design, an important role belonged to the Kazakh school of fashion design. From the first stages of the work of designers, the focus on ethnic design was prominent.

We will illustrate the first steps in the development of Kazakh fashion design with the history of the Symbat Fashion Academy, which managed to preserve the ethnonational character and origins of the Kazakh costume while developing the form and composition of the modern costume by constantly implementing fashion trends.

The Academy, founded in 1947 on the basis of the sewing laboratory “Republican Fashion House”, changed its name to the Center for the Development of Assortment, Fashion, and Culture of Clothing “Symbat” in 1988. In 1992, it was reorganized into the Symbat Fashion Academy. The main tasks of the Fashion House were to develop new models of clothing and to supply the market with high-quality clothing, knitwear, and footwear. This also included cooperation with more than 60 large enterprises of light industry. Annually, designers developed more than 2,000 models of clothing, knitwear, and footwear with regulatory and technical documentation for servicing sewing factories in Kazakhstan. To introduce the developed models into production, design and research work was carried out. Representatives of light industry enterprises were provided with a choice of models at arts council meetings of the Academy. When working on clothing, which is an object of design (i. e., part of the objective environment, such as furniture, tableware, etc.), designers developed mass-produced consumer goods.

The 1960s are considered to be the period of the formation of Kazakh design. The experience of specialists of the All-Union Fashion House helped to quickly and successfully master design skills: “...its artists and designers worked for months on business trips, where they taught emerging teams the basics of the profession. These seminars were not only a school but also an incentive for creative competition” (Dobrokhotova, 1991: 103). Seven years later, after these seminars and applying the developed skills in the field, at the First Moscow International Fashion Festival held in 1967, Kazakh fashion designers showed their collections to be at a high professional level. Processes and trends in the development of the objective environment, industry, and consumption, as well as progressive changes in artistic, engineering, architectural, and philosophical worldviews, led to the appearance of the first wave of modern Kazakh design.

In 1958, the Fashion House started publishing the advertising and information magazine “Symbat” in the Kazakh and Russian languages. The magazine presented ways to develop the creative potential of designers through fashion trends, modeling clothing based on folk motifs, clothing, knitwear, and footwear design, sewing technology (supplied with sewing patterns). The magazine helped to spread the ideas of the Kazakh school of modern clothing design, which reflected the works of Kazakh fashion designers. The developed models of clothing were easily distinguishable from models of other designers of the union republics due to their preservation of the traditions of Kazakh national clothing, representation of the image of folk costume in the context of the interpretation of modern fashion, and stylized ethnic motifs. At the same time, the influence of Western European fashion on folk traditions in clothing was noticeable. Designers combined creative categories of modern technological forms in a single artistic style.

Around the same time, the very concept of design appeared in Kazakh creative circles. According to the scholars G.M.

Guseynov and V.V. Yermilova, in the 1960s, design began to be associated with the creation of an industrial collection of clothes. High fashion was attributed to the sphere of elite design. The work of both dressmakers and stylists began to be related to the field of fashion design ([Guseynov & Yermilova, 2004: 14](#)).

### **The role of the USSR in the development of Kazakh textile industry and applied arts**

To a large extent, the development of Kazakh design in the middle and second half of the 20th century was influenced by the decisions of the Soviet Government. The resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR dated September 30, 1966 “On measures for the further development of local industry, arts, and crafts” delegates the responsibility to the councils of ministers of the union and autonomous republics, executive committees of regional, city, and district councils of people’s deputies, ministries, and local industry departments to provide “a significant expansion of the production of consumer goods that meet the tastes and needs of the population, taking into account the national, climatic, and other local conditions” ([The care of the party and the government for the welfare of the people, 1974: 186-187](#)). The resolution also points to the need for “research, experimental, creative, design, and technological work in the field of the production of arts and crafts” ([The care of the party and the government for the welfare of the people, 1974: 190-191](#)).

Due to the implementation of a number of measures, the production of local arts and crafts began to grow at a rapid pace. In Almaty, the factory “Souvenir” was built, the factory “Tuskiiz” was established, and the Almaty factory of artistic ceramics was renovated. In 1965, 950 thousand roubles in goods were transferred to retail chains and in 1973, products worth 7 million roubles were manufactured ([Poznyakova & Sinenkaya, 1976: 9](#)).

In 1967, at the Fashion Festival in Moscow, an exhibition of clothing by Kazakh fashion designers took place. Leading enterprises of Kazakh light industry took part in the preparation: the Symbat Fashion Academy, Almaty Fur Factory, Dzerzhinsky Knitwear Company, May 1 Sewing Association, and the Bolshevichka Semipalatinsk Sewing Production Association. The presented models were distinguished by the unity of the material and decoration in the purpose and form of clothing. In the search for more expressive means of design, the designers introduced the motif of the traditional Kazakh ornament into the typical geometrized silhouettes of the time, highlighting the rhythmic component and visual effects and accentuating the compositional center. The exhibition was a definitive moment for the development of Kazakh design. According to the fashion designer I. Dobrokhotova, by the middle of the 1970s, new principles for creating clothing had emerged: design focused on mass production, accessibility to potential consumers of any income level. The fashion economy was concentrated in mass production ([Dobrokhotova, 1991: 82](#)). The wardrobe of a person consists of articles of clothing – skirts, blouses, jackets, trousers, vests, which can be combined to create different sets of clothes. This allows one to personally experiment and become a participant in the creative fashion process. In this context, of great importance are accessories (scarves, stockings, shoes, hats, gloves, jewelry). The period of industrial and cultural growth resulted in a new, deeper and more active process of development in fashion design. As S.Zh. Asanova, the president of the Symbat Fashion Academy writes, “The main factors in the formation of the industrial complex were the needs of the indigenous population of the republic for production resources and the development of national culture, as well as economic and cultural relations between Kazakhstan and foreign countries” ([Asanova, 1995: 46](#)). Achievements of designers of the Academy have been presented on the international fashion stages: Russia (Moscow, Samara, Saint Petersburg), Italy, France, Belgium, Switzerland, USA, Germany, UK, India, China, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia. The shows have been repeatedly broadcast on international television: Fashion Channel, Style, World of Fashion, Caspionet, Moda, TVC, TDK, NTV, Rossiya. The archive of the Academy contains numerous certificates, awards, and diplomas.

### **Activities of the Kazakh Designers Association on the creation of state symbols**

In 1987, the Kazakh Designers Association was established and the term “design”, understood as “project and artistic support of any activity”, received an official status in Kazakhstan. The development of the Association occurred with the direct participation of the accomplished artist T.B. Suleymenov. The period of economic and production growth spurred the growing need for professional designers. Along with inner culture, aesthetic emotions, and artistic competences, professionals needed the ability to think systematically, analyze the problems of expediency, and conduct methodical work.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Designers Association faced a number of tasks, connected primarily with large state orders. The newly independent Kazakh government ordered the development of the design of the country’s first national currency. The national tenge was created by the designers T. Suleymenov, A. Duzelkhanov, Kh. Gablialilov, and M. Alin. The content and color scheme of the banknotes reflected the national features and culture of Kazakhstan. The one-tenge banknote featured the portrait of Al-Farabi. The influence of the American dollar on the composition of the tenge is clear. The basic design of dollar bills was approved in 1928. They feature portraits of US statesmen. The dominant element in the composition is an oval portrait, occupying the central third of the banknote. The frame features a floral ornament. The color scheme includes white, deep green and muted grey-green. The light area of the banknote contains the denomination. Similar to the dollar, portraits of prominent personalities occupy the central third of the banknote and the lighter area contains the denomination. The back of the banknote has a lot in common as well: geography of the area, significant buildings and structures, etc. However, the brightened warm and cold color scheme is unique. The same goes for the alternating portraits of prominent personalities on the banknotes: Al-Farabi, Suyunbay, Kurmangazy, Shoqan, Abai, Abul Khair Khan. In this relation, of interest is the color interpretation given by one of the creators of the tenge M. Alin: “The

name of the new banknote series is “Abai – Vivaldi”. Each of these great people has their own “four seasons”. When creating the 200, 500, 1,000 and 2,000-tenge banknotes, I thought about the eternal, something as natural and constant as the change of seasons: 200 tenges – a monochrome banknote, soft and warm like autumn; 500 tenges – cold winter; 1,000 tenges – spring; 2,000 tenges – dawn, summer. At the same time, all banknotes are unified by the portrait of Al-Farabi – the historical figure, equally honored by all peoples living in the country. The 5,000-tenge banknote radically changes both the color and format, which is a global tradition, “a higher-value banknote is larger in size as well and carries positive information about the country on the rise” (Donskikh, 2003: 5). The choice of the color red for the 5, 50, 5,000-tenge banknotes is not accidental but natural. The association with “5” (“A”) at school distinguishes this number. The red color dominates the yurt and is associated with the hearth and warmth. The sacral meaning of the color red is a reproduction, fertility, health, and well-being. Combined with white (the denomination is placed on the white background), red forms a “life-affirming pair”, symbolizing benevolent forces, honor, power, and wealth. “Muslims considered the color red sacred, magical, and possessing great vitality. That’s why precious stones of red color were particularly valued – rubies, etc. It was believed that they give the owner strength, energy, and fearlessness. It symbolized passionate love as well” (Mironova, 1984: 76). The 3, 10, and 2,000-tenge banknotes are mostly green, which is a symbol of awakening nature and the favorite, “sacred” color of Muslims. The rest of the banknotes – 1, 100, 500 tenges – are in blue and violet. According to L.N. Mironova, for Muslims, these are colors of mystical contemplation and communion with the divine essence.

### **The synthesis of eastern and western traditions in contemporary Kazakh design**

At the end of the 20th – beginning of the 21st century, design activities greatly expanded: graphic design, interior design, environmental design, landscape design, etc. Fashion design remains an actively developing area. The objects of modern architecture and the urban environment vividly reflect the changes, which characterize the development of design at the present stage: the shapes, materials, and ideas of modern buildings organically combine national traditions and avant-garde fantasies and innovations. The attraction of foreign specialists and use of the architectural and construction experience of Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and other eastern countries by Kazakh architects, as well as the use of new design solutions, forms, and materials (for example, glass cladding, dissolving the outlines of buildings that look spectacular due to their unusual advanced design), enriched the image of the cities of Almaty and Astana. During the development of the capital construction project, an international competition was held, with the award going to the Japanese architect K. Kurokawa. Based on his theory of metabolism, developed in the 1960s, he substantiated the need to organize a self-developing structure of the city. The factor distinguishing Kurokawa’s project from other projects of new capitals constructed in the 20th century is the separation of the construction of urban ensembles from the formation of urban infrastructure. The largest construction companies in the Astana market are the Swiss “Mabco Construction” and the Turkish “Baytur”. Buildings, constructed over several years, created the image of the capital as a unique, hospitable, and both traditional and innovative city.

The relationship between traditions and innovations in contemporary design is based on internal impulses and external influences. The miniature model of Istanbul and the ethno-memorial complex “The Atameken Map of Kazakhstan” in Astana serve as examples of such symbiosis. The educational art complex “The Atameken Map of Kazakhstan” is an implemented project of the Kazakh Designers Association, which represents a miniature model of the country and introduces visitors to its history and the study of its historical, cultural, and spiritual values promoting the achievements of Kazakh culture. The project reflects the diversity of all-natural zones of Kazakhstan: stylized mountains, steppes, forests, and lakes, as well as symbolically designated major cities, the architectural identity of which is reproduced in great detail in terms of color and proportion.

### **CONCLUSION**

Thus, the study of the development of Kazakh design and analysis of the mutual influence of the eastern and western schools in Kazakh design allows us to note the following:

1. The multifaceted nature of the development of Kazakh design is related to the historical development, geographic location, and natural and climatic conditions of its territory.
2. The multinational character of the country resulting from the synthesis of various esthetic and cultural-historical components occurring in the process of mutual influence and interaction of the eastern and western cultures, as well as numerous international connections of the country’s leadership, determine the development of Kazakh design.
3. The diversity of creative individuality, excellent artistic taste, and originality of modern approaches combined with the greatest achievements of traditional culture and its unique sense of shape and colour are the distinguishing features of the professional values of contemporary Kazakh design.

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