

CONSTRUCTIVE AND COLOURISTIC PECULIARITIES OF THE NATIONAL COSTUME: THE PHENOMENON OF THE KAZAKH MATERIAL CULTURE

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Abstract: With the help of the archetypal approach the authors of the article examine constructive peculiarities and colour palettes of the national Kazakh costume. They prove that the development of the traditional dress and decorative and applied arts goes through the following historical stages: an everyday item – a museum piece – the style of life (fashion) – the object to be transformed into modern design. The article is mainly concerned with the recreation of artistic values in new historical environment which is also the reproduction of a certain ethnic and cultural identity in modern days. In this respect, the Kazakh national costume is analysed as a piece of traditional art that is implemented in modern culture due to specific stylistic, expressive and constructive methods. This methodology calls for thorough knowledge of the Kazakh history, the development of the national costume, its construction and colour palette, the study of ancient technologies and the introduction of new ones which can enrich projective and constructive methods as they inherit cultural and historical experience. As a result, the authors conclude that the Kazakh national costume is a system of spiritual, aesthetic and artistic values of its respective ethnoses.

Keywords: archetype, symbol, colour traditions, costume, construction, the system of values, the Kazakh ethnoses.

THE COLOUR PALETTE, CONSTRUCTION AND MATERIALS OF THE TRADITIONAL KAZAKH ART: THE HISTORICAL ASPECT

The Colour Palette

The article presents up-to-date data on the problems of artistic and cultural traditions which form the national identity, namely the Kazakh colouristic preferences influenced by economic and geographical (the conjunction of migration and trade routes of Eurasia), economic and social (nomadism), natural and climatic, artistic and religious factors. The concept of the unity of man and nature originated in traditional mythological consciousness, left an impact on the spiritual life and defined the indigenous culture of nomad tribes. Colouristic peculiarities were associatively connected with the image of surrounding environment. Toponyms have certain colouristic characteristics, they express aesthetic notions and peoples' ideas about beauty. Since the national artistic features have been preserved in the modern Kazakh art, it enables researches to solve scientific, cultural and ideological

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problems. This article demonstrates regular and specific stages of forming the art of colour, the ways this process was influenced by social, economic, geographical, religious and other factors, and the combination of Eastern and Western aesthetic tools for expressing colours in modern Kazakhstan. The problem studied in this article is interdisciplinary. In the scientific literature the following Kazakh and Russian authors have touched upon this matter: S.K. Sadyrbaev (Sadyrbaev, 1990), M.S. Mukanov (Mukanov, 1979), I. Ibraev (Ibraev, 1994); E.A. Klodt (Klodt, 1939), R.V. Zakharzhevskaya (Zakharzhevskaya, 2008).

Valuable opinions on the problem of colour perception are expressed by such Kazakh scholars as U. Karabaev (Karabaev, 1991) and K.S. Vasil'tsev (Vasil'tsev, 2007). They wrote plenty of works concerned with the colouristics of national costumes.

The historical aspect of this research is based upon the study of the Kazakh colour palette as it was used in their items of clothes and other products made of soft materials. All these exhibits are kept in state museums, with the biggest collections being displayed in the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan, the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography under the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan and the State Art Museum named after A. Kosteev. The Kazakh national costumes exhibited in these facilities serve as the main source of information in this article.

Materials and Construction

The construction of national costumes is analyzed in the books of the following authors: N.V. Polosmak, L.L. Barkova (Polosmak, & Barkova, 2005), S.Zh. Assanova (Assanova, 1994), Sh.S. Turganbayeva (Turganbayeva, 2011), V.V. Florenskaya (Florenskaya, 2009) and some others. They emphasise such peculiarities of the construction used in national costumes as static, stable, fixed composition, and new forms of traditional constructions that appear due to changing historical conditions. This tendency greatly influences the ecological trend in contemporary art, modern clothes design and ethnic design. Traditional materials for the Kazakh national costume include leather and felt. The modern Kazakh culture becomes closely connected with design since this country has its own ancient traditions of protodesign and its well-developed system of national costumes.

METHODS

The authors of this article have conducted their research with the help of common scientific methods and the archetypal approach. Archetypes convey complex meaning that has been forming for several archaic cultural layers. In mythology they have numerous connections, and a mythological image expresses the worldview of a certain epoch and its primary symbols.

THE KAZAKH NATIONAL COSTUME – THE SYSTEM OF SPIRITUAL, AESTHETIC AND ARTISTIC VALUES OF THE KAZAKH ETHNOS

Constructive Peculiarities and Materials of the Nomad Costume

The Kazakh national costume is a valuable asset of the world material culture, and it is distinguished by a well-proven form, artistic structure and composition, unique construction, ornamental embellishments and jewellery encrustments.

The items of material culture manufactured by settled craftsmen and nomadic breeders always had common features. The artistic peculiarities of nomad tribes can be traced in their handiwork. Thus, the constructive and colouristic features of the Kazakh national costume are greatly influenced by ancient nomads, namely by the Sakas and Scythians.

Ancient nomad tribes invented trousers and patchy skirts (pieces of horizontal cloth sewn together). This theory has been proved when scientists searched the Pazyryk graveyards in the Altai Mountains (600-500 B.C.) and found their clothes left almost intact due to permanent frost. Among the garments of ancient breeders there were “white ties” made of sable fur and the Chinese silk (they got this name because of similar cut), and caftans (a unique founding from the Katanda burial in the Altai Mountains that is currently exhibited in the State Historical Museum in Moscow).

Scientist found the grave of a Saka warrior (500 B.C.) in the Issyk burial (the foothills of the Ile Alatau). His clothes consisted of a red chamois jacket and red leather trousers, tucked into boots. All the garments were covered with triangular golden plates that imitated plate armours. This design amazed researches by its aesthetic perfection. The combination of red and yellow in the clothes of the so-called “golden warrior” showed that ancient Eastern tribes worshiped the sun. The glow of golden details symbolised the sun rays, dawn and dusk.

The Pazyryk female costumes included a skirt, a shirt (with long sleeves, an oval neck hole decorated with a red cord and lace), a mullet fur coat called “chapan”. This festive fur coat was adorned with applied leather ornaments and ringed with painted fur. The found corpses had high white boots-stockings made of felt (the prototype of modern jack-boots). Their upper part was embroidered in zoomorphic patterns. A woman’s hair style looked like a triangular construction topped with figures of birds, deer and Capricorns. This design could be created only by a real professional.

Functional and constructive peculiarities of the national costume have been attained with the following methods:

- the combination of rectilinear and curvilinear details in a shekpen (homespun caftan), a shirt and other garments;

- the prevalence of horizontal lines and the use of different colour schemes in a patchy skirt;
- the observation of constructive segmentation and various decorative techniques;
- the balanced use of trimmed and fluffy fur;
- the compilation of natural silk and fluffy fur;
- the adjustment of felt and leather;
- the fusion of different fur types, including finished fur without a fleshing;
- the correspondence of composition, construction and decoration with the norms of statics and symmetry.

The Colour Palette of the Kazakh National Costume

The colour aesthetics can be clearly seen in the items of the Kazakh material and artistic culture. Colours play a major role in the Kazakh national costume since its constructive and colouristic formation was greatly influenced by the clothes of ancient nomads. Archaeologists managed to find a unique burial in the Altai Mountains: graveyard 1, the burial Ak-Alakha 3. There they came across a female costume including a skirt, a long-sleeved shirt, a lightweight fur coat decorated with leather patterns and white felt boots-stockings embroidered with zoomorphic figures.

The Eastern nomad civilizations produced many artistic items, with clothes holding a special place among them. Red was a dominant colour since it stood for power and authority. Colours and ornaments are two basic and complementary factors that create the artistic image of the national costume. Ornaments rhythmically combine geometrical figures and decorative symbols. Each of these elements has a real prototype: a circle and a cross (the symbols of the sun), a square (the symbol of earth), a spiral and a zigzagging line (the symbols of movement and development). The ornamental art does not copy real objects, but display their content in an abstract form, for instance, it depicts one significant detail on a metonymical basis. The development of ornaments was conditioned by the need to mark things belonging to a family, kindred group or tribe. These items became symbols and acquired their own decorative design, with colours being a major part of their style (Assanova *et. al.*, 2014). The Kazakhs picked their colours very carefully to arouse positive feelings and associations. Nature served as a main inspiration and helped them to create original ornamental compositions. The Kazakhs adopted natural forms by transforming real objects into abstract and simplified images. Creative work of all national craftsmen implies the choice of the right colour. The colour of ornaments is determined by the master's phantasy and his belief in the magical power of one or other tone. However red is used as a major colour in most cases. If we are to range the colours used in the Kazakh ornamental costume, red will take premier

place, black will secure the second position and white will come the third. Other colours like maroon, yellow, green, dark blue, orange and light blue can also be seen in the Kazakh design but they are not so popular. The constant triad “red-black-white” proves that folk art is based on longstanding traditions and tries to preserve the artistic ideals that had been achieved in the past. The colouristic symbolism in folk culture can convey different meanings (religious, moral, humanitarian) and define the creative concept of national costumes. The Kazakh national costume is build around the colour contrast. Red, black, white, green, yellow and dark blue are dominant tones of the Kazakh traditional dress which are closely connected with ancient archetypes. Nowadays this colour palette serves as an inspiration for modern fashion designers.

The colour palette of the Kazakh national costume expresses indigenous artistic values that were formed in decorative and applied arts under the influence of surrounding environment and later determined the spiritual and aesthetic beliefs of the corresponding people.

According to numerous sources, the costume of nomad tribes is a complex construction painted with unique natural colouring materials. The thorough analysis of red and blue colourants have shown that the Pazyryk textile comprise authentic purple dye, carmine, kermes, madder dye, indigo and represents an unmatched artifact of colouring art dated back to 600-500 B.C. N. Kononov states that ancient craftsmen used indigo to paint wool blue and purple dye or alizarin to make it red. In order to change the textile colour people also used scale coccines – thermo- and hydrophilic insects that contain red colourants. Gold was always of special importance in both cultural and aesthetic spheres. “In its highest purity yellow always carries with it the nature of brightness. Accompanied by glow pure gold has a serene, gay, softly exciting character”, I. Goethe wrote.

In the 19th century the German traveler and researcher von Schwarz said that “the peoples of Central Asia are more proficient in combining colours and expensive fabrics than European artists who got used to leady skies above their heads” (Radkevich, 1997).

The idea that the choice of colours is determined by a national identity was supported by I. Goethe. He stated that “sometimes you only need to see a familiar combination of colours to identify the ethnic origin of this material object” (Goethe, 1957).

There are sufficient data that the red colour was regarded as a dominant one in many ancient cultures. This colour prevailed in male, female and children clothes found in the Pazyryk burials (female and male baggy trousers, seams at the shirt shoulders, female dresses, and woolen children hats).

The clothes of the nomad tribes, who lived near Lop Nur Lake at the turn of 2000-1000 B.C., were also dyed different tones of red (sometimes brown or yellow-

grayish). The dress-down found in the Ak-Alaha 3 burial is a skirt sewn from three horizontal pieces of cloth. Each of these parts has its own reddish tone, for example, the upper one is maroon. In order to hold this skirt in place women used a braided cord with red and orange tassels. It is worth mentioning that many peoples consider the red colour to be the symbol of power and authority.

For several centuries people have been using colours in their clothes to make their appearance more expressive and informative, to reveal their character and aesthetic preferences and, mainly, to convey symbolic meanings. Here are some examples. Many Turkic peoples called the first shirt of a child “it-koilek” (literally, “a dog’s shirt”). This shirt was made of multi-colour cloth rags in accordance with the “kurak” technique (Turganbayeva, & Stepankaya, 2014). Before this shirt was given to a child it was put over a head of a dog or a puppet. This fact explains the nickname of the shirt. If children kept dying, then family members sewed the first clothes for a child using seven different fabrics which were taken from seven houses. This costume was characterized by an archaic style. Its hem and sleeve rims were not sewn on. As a rule, mothers made these shirts for their children. Even members of one extended family could not be entrusted with such work.

Containing multi-colour rags, this shirt was believed to have a magical effect on children and protect them from measles (red), yellow fever (yellow) and whooping-cough (blue). The “it-koilek” shirt was not decorated with any talismans or embellishments. It was usually accompanied by a white bonnet. The white colour was chosen as it stands for purity, nobility, harmony, piece and intelligence.

The first smile of a child was marked by a bracelet against evil eye. This “kozmonshak” comprised black beads with small white dots. The combination of black and white became a powerful amulet. Generally, Eastern peoples have many similar symbolic elements. For example, “the Eye of Horus” is a popular Egyptian talisman made in the shape of an elongated eye. According to popular legends, “when Set and Horus were fighting, Set gouged out Horus’ left eye. However Thoth, the god of wisdom and healer, gave him the Eye of Providence. Hence, the eye of Horus was often used to symbolise sacrifice, healing, restoration, and protection since Horus lost his eye while fighting evil powers”. The authors think that the Kazakh amulet is the symbol of a human eye, with a black bead being an eye-ball and a white spot being an iris and a pupil. The latter element reflects baleful looks and protects its owner. Turner gave a full explanation on the symbolic meaning of the white colour. His research showed that white (points on beads) can protect against wicked spirits and gods, evil eye and hexes.

The national costume cannot go without headgear which fulfills an identifying function. The hats of the Kazakh women were mostly done in the white colour. They wore white headgear all their life since this colour symbolises Allah. However, during her first year of marriage a woman wore a red “saukele”. I. Zakharova

and U. Khodzhaeva gave the following description of this headgear: “a saukele consisted of two basic parts. The first of them, a cone-shaped textile hat, had a quilted lining and reached the height of 25 centimeters (10 inches). Sometimes this hat was expanded with an eye-shield or a neck-flap. The second part, a big white cloak (“zhelek”) made of lightweight fabrics, was fastened to the top of the head and could cover the whole body”. The colour palette of this costume was formed with red (the colour of a fabric or corals), white (a fabric), the natural colour of silver (white) and gold (yellow). White stands for holy; yellow – spacious, supreme, the symbol of earth, steppe clay; red – fertility, health and wealth. Along with the white colour red makes a “life-affirming pair” which symbolizes goodness, power, honour, authority and wealth.

When a married woman got pregnant, she put the first “kimeshek” (cloak) over her head. Its details and embellishments changed in accordance with her age. Basically, a kimeshek was made in the form of the head and had a cut-out for the face. Its upper part resembled a female turban that was put over a kimeshek. Both parts were made of a white fabric.

The red colour was dominant in the clothes of young women. This tendency can be illustrated by the Kazakh proverb “girl’s eyes are always drawn to the red colour”. The prevalence of red in the costumes of fertile women is typical of many Turkic peoples.

After a woman gave birth to two or three children, the colours of her costume became more subdued. Male dressing gowns (shapan) were sewn of red woolen cloth and were covered with tambour laces. Resembling solar circles and symbolising the sun and other planets, these embellishments were embroidered with white, yellow, black, blue, green silken threads. Men wore undertrousers and put baggy leather ones over them to protect their legs from injuries and cold. They also got into black and brown high or ankle boots with small hills.

The Kazakh male headwear is also diverse, but mainly painted the white colour. The colour prevalence explains the name of a high white hat made of felt – “ak kalpak”. This headwear looked particularly festive thanks to white silken embroidery. Being an integral part of the Kazakh national costume, male and female belts could be of the green, brown and red colours, but their trimming were generally green. In this case, the prevalence of green can be explained by its symbolism as this colour is typical of Islam and Muhammad’s holy banners.

The white colour combined with sacred texts fulfilled a protective function. Before a battle warriors put on a white shirt covered with prayers and suras from the Quran which should protect men from the death.

Thus, the national costume was a multifunctional system of symbols. Fulfilling spiritual, aesthetic, practical and magical functions, it distinguished people in accordance with their sex, age, nationality, social status and religion. All in all, the

design of the national costume and its jewellery combined sacral and protective functions.

Having regard to the above, the authors can conclude that the colour palette of the Kazakh national costume, comprising red, white, black, green, yellow and blue tones, is connected with ancient archetypes and proves that the Kazakh aesthetic traditions are a solid and stable system.

DISCUSSION

The Kazakh culture of the 21st century is characterised by a growing interest in the national flavor and the revival of the sense of colour that was typical of the traditional Kazakh society. Nowadays design items convey cultural identity and combine protodesign with modern creative approaches. Since the early 2000s traditional colour palettes have been used in designing modern garments. This fact proves the idea that contemporary culture has adopted folk art. The use of colour and composition in the modern Kazakh art demonstrates the rise of national traditions which are strongly opposed to globalisation. In the sphere of spiritual life and national identity this process cannot be regarded as solely positive.

CONCLUSION

While choosing their creative concept, modern designers either stress or neglect national and constructive peculiarities of their traditional culture. When a certain item of clothes becomes widespread, people start searching for its new forms. The costume creation belongs to architectonic art. Visual thinking is an essential quality that encourages design innovations and enables modern designers to transform such natural forms as hills and sand dunes into different types of clothes. The whole entity of a costume comprises proportional parts which are connected with its constructive base. Distinctive parts are put together with the help of colourful decorative lines and are aimed to express the worldview of traditional culture. Nowadays ecological trend is gaining popularity in clothes design. For many millennia human consciousness has been acquiring colouristic, functional and ecological characteristics of skin, felt, silk and other ancient materials. A professional approach in design implies that a colour is a relatively independent means of forming the objective world. Colouristics is the science about colours which embraces traditional colour science, colour culture, colour harmony, national colour peculiarities and the language of colours. The colour culture of different peoples is highly indigenous and truly unique.

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