

ANNOTATION

**To the text of the doctoral dissertation of Kelsinbek Moldir Mukhiddin
"Cultural Codes of Painting in Kazakhstan of the 21st Century as a Reflection
of the Spiritual Values of the Nation", submitted for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy (PhD) in the specialty
8D02195 – Art Studies**

Relevance of the Research Topic

In the modern era, scientific research increasingly emphasizes the significance of visual art not only from formal and stylistic perspectives but also as a means of expressing the key ideas and ideological foundations of its time, reflecting the culture of a rapidly changing society under globalization.

President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, has emphasized that building a Just Kazakhstan – aligned with the aspirations of its people – is inseparable from “the renewal of political and public life, mentality, and the cultural code of the nation”[1]. According to him, the emergence of new behavioral patterns and values indicates a profound transformation of public consciousness.

A particular aspect of this relevance lies in the study of subject codes in painting. There is still a lack of comprehensive research on the history of the still-life genre, its unique features, and symbolic programs.

The urgency of this research is also linked to the need for academic analysis of significant and often unique Kazakhstani paintings created in recent years, which simultaneously reflect national constants and contemporary global trends.

In the work of young Kazakhstani artists, issues of cultural identity and ethnic self-awareness are increasingly central. This underscores the necessity of examining how cultural codes are represented in Kazakhstani art.

Object of the Research

Paintings by contemporary artists from public and private collections of Kazakhstan.

Subject of the Research

Cultural codes of the natural and material world in modern Kazakhstani painting.

Purpose of the Research

To identify the features and development dynamics of contemporary Kazakhstani painting within intercultural communication processes and evolving artistic methods, through the exploration of national and universal cultural codes and their interaction.

Research Objectives

- To analyze scientific approaches to the study of cultural codes in the humanities and social sciences and to identify key concepts for building a theoretical model of cultural code interpretation in painting.

- To examine the theoretical potential of cultural coding within art history and visual studies; to define core categories in iconology, social art history, and national art studies associated with the concept of the cultural code.

- To analyze the material world as represented in still life and landscape painting from the perspective of sacred symbolism and self-knowledge as the foundation of identity.

- To identify and interpret contemporary artworks that reframe the concepts of family and home, and to determine how these dominant codes contribute to the transmission of Kazakh cultural values and meaning.

- To examine depictions of animals in Kazakhstani painting in the context of human-animal relations and posthumanism, and to systematize the use of zoomorphic imagery.

Additional Research Objective

To analyze the cultural code as a tool for organizing natural space, to examine the figurative representations of the Kazakh universe, and to reveal how nature is perceived in contemporary Kazakh painting through collective archetypal imagery and the national worldview.

Degree of Development of the Research Problem

In our study of the cultural code, we rely on the fundamental developments of the cultural code in structuralism and semiotics of the Soviet scientific school, where the code is considered as a secondary semiotic system through which information is transmitted. Yakobson R.G. [2], Lotman Yu. M. [3], Toporov V.P. [4], [5], Vyacheslav Ivanov [6], A. Zholkovsky [7] to understand the essence of the cultural code in our research, we use the methodological tools of linguoculturology, in which this concept acquires a fixed meaning.

In Western structuralism and post-structuralist philosophy, codes occupy one of the important places in culture, as they build the relationship of words with the world of things, namely with cultural products, which include the ideas and generally valid attitudes of thinking and worldview of M. Foucault [11], W. Eco [12]. R. Barth [13] was the first to advance semiotics into other fields, applying it to the analysis of a visual image (cinema, photography, fashion, advertising) in the 1960s, based on the analogy with language, thus applying the methods of linguistics to non-linguistic objects.

The study of the culture of life support of Kazakhs is also considered by N. Alimbai, M. Mukanov and H. Argynbayev as an inseparable unity of phenomena of the material, spiritual and socionormative spheres of culture, which are aimed at directly supporting the vital activity of its bearers living in specific natural conditions N. Alimbai [28], [29], [30].

N. Alimbai's interdisciplinary research was used to uncover ethnosocial issues related to the nomadic culture of the Kazakh people. The author's work entitled "The traditional Kazakh village in the works of Russian scientists (late XIX – early XX century)" is considered [31].

An example of modern Russian humanitarian studies of the cultural code is the collection "Cultural code in the intermediate space" edited by Altybaeva S. M.

Some issues of cultural coding in folklore, mythology, and modern Kazakh literary practice are covered in the works of S.A.Kaskabasov, B. Azibayeva, Aslan Zhaksylykov, E.Tursynov, S.Kondybai, Z.Akhmetzhanova, A.Kodar, K. Matyzhanov, and others.

The problems of the cultural code in the aspect of traditional culture were touched upon by such Kazakh researchers as S.Akataev, K.Nurlanova, A.Dosymbaeva [33] and others.

The works of Russian cultural scientists analyzing the symbolic meanings of national culture have become significant. Shaigozova and A. Nauryzbayeva [34], [35].

Methodological Base of the Research

Visual Studies starts from visibility as a phenomenon, but includes a wide range of historical, philosophical, anthropological and sociological disciplines. One of the most controversial issues of modern visual studies is the question of image as a way of understanding the world. The problems of the cultural code in the framework of visual research are substantiated in the works of T. Mitchell [39], N. Mirzoev [40], J. Didi-Huberman [41], J. Elkins [42], H. Belting [43].

Research of the national code is fruitfully conducted in the art history of Kazakhstan. In the articles and works of Ergalieva R.A. [44], [45], Truspekova XX. [46], [47], [48] Baturina O.V. [49], Yusupova A.K. [50], Kobzhanova S.Zh. [51], Sharipova D.S. [52], [53], [54] devoted to the painting of Kazakhstan, this problem has been repeatedly raised. The main attention of the authors is focused on the spatial and temporal codes of the nomadic civilization. The comprehension of the national in art, comprehended in the Kazakh art school, became the basis for further development of the phenomenon of the cultural code in our dissertation work.

Research methods

The interdisciplinary nature of this research dictates a combination of methods from art history and related fields such as linguoculturology, sociology, and visual studies. The core art historical methodology – formal-stylistic analysis – is supplemented by comparative, typological, iconological analysis, and the methodology of social art history. These approaches allow the identification of key characteristics in selected works, commonalities and differences among artists, coding strategies, and interpretations of meaning, all within the broader socio-cultural context in which cultural codes are transmitted through visual art.

The structural-semiotic approach, which treats the image as a form of text, enabled the identification of individual code elements and their interconnections. This facilitated the analysis of the internal structure and deeper meanings of image systems.

The research also applies linguoculturological tools, particularly the definition of cultural code as a secondary semiotic system, along with the basic cultural codes established in this field of study.

The visual research perspective helped contextualize the use of culturally encoded imagery and reinterpret the visual language of contemporary paintings, thereby uncovering what defines the uniqueness of national culture.

Finally, the close link between national codes and cultural memory, explored in memory studies, informed this study's approach to analyzing representations of the past in modern painting. These methods help trace the continuity of traditions within the Kazakh school of painting.

Scientific Novelty of the Research

1) The scientific novelty of this work lies in the conceptualization of the cultural code across various branches of the humanities, positioning it as a theoretical model for interpreting works of visual art and integrating Kazakhstani art history into the interdisciplinary scientific discourse.

2) For the first time, this dissertation analyzes the genesis and development of theoretical ideas concerning the cultural code in both global and domestic art criticism and visual research, emphasizing their inseparable link to the worldview of a given era, the evolution of image theory, and the embodiment of national identity.

3) This work is also the first to identify and assess the features and significance of still life within the national school of painting, highlighting the dominant role of objects in the visual language of contemporary Kazakhstani artists.

4) Furthermore, the dissertation presents the first comprehensive analysis of the representation of family and home in Kazakh painting during transitional periods marked by significant societal change. It demonstrates how transformations in symbolic values and ideals are reflected in evolving perceptions of family, and how themes of kinship, marriage, and parenthood are increasingly present in the works of young Kazakh visual artists.

5) The novelty of the research is also evident in the identification and analysis of contemporary Russian artists who have reinterpreted the animalistic genre within the framework of ecological consciousness. These artists propose new applications of the zoomorphic code and explore interrelations between animal and human existence.

6) Additionally, this study examines the works of prominent Russian masters of landscape and genre painting from the perspective of the natural cultural code. It identifies mythopoeic elements of the national worldview embedded in their imagery, revealing deep symbolic meanings in modern artistic expression.

Key Provisions for the Defense

1) Contemporary humanities and social sciences underscore culture's capacity to encode a system of social, sacred, ethnic, ethical, and axiological meanings. These codes are often socially and politically charged, enabling nations to preserve cultural identity and articulate national uniqueness.

2) The concept of the cultural code expands the methodological boundaries of art criticism, opening up opportunities for visual research. It enables the reconstruction of epoch-specific features through imagery and reveals national ideas reflected in Russian painting.

3) The focused attention of contemporary artists on the material world stems from a desire to express national mentality and spiritual practices. Representations of traditional life and the sacred material code serve as conduits for otherness, mythological universals, and historical memory.

4) Cultural codes related to family and home reflect traditional values and offer spiritual grounding amidst globalization and societal upheaval. Artists use these motifs as sources of ideological and ethical support in addressing contemporary issues.

5) A key trend in contemporary Kazakh painting is the widespread use of enduring motifs drawn from the Kazakh worldview. These are linked to the

representation of the natural code, in which natural objects – transcending their materiality – symbolize core beliefs about the environment.

6) In the posthumanist era, with its pressing need to revise humanity's utilitarian relationship with nature, the dynamic development of the animalistic genre in Kazakh painting and the application of the zoomorphic code have emerged as vital tools for exploring spiritual, existential, and ecological issues.

Scientific and Practical Significance of the Research

This dissertation offers a number of valuable observations and conclusions. The theoretical significance of the research lies in its interdisciplinary approach to contemporary Kazakh painting, bridging art history with linguoculturology, sociology, and visual studies. The findings and theoretical framework of this study can inform further research in modern art history, as well as in art theory and methodology.

The practical significance is evident in the potential application of the collected and analyzed materials for the development of academic curricula and lecture courses on the history and theory of contemporary art in Kazakhstan, as well as for specialized courses in visual culture and visual studies.

Approval and Publication of the Research

The dissertation “Cultural Codes in 21st Century Kazakhstani Painting as a Reflection of National Spiritual Values” was reviewed at an expanded session of the Department of History and Theory of Fine Arts at the Temirbek Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts and was recommended for public defense.

The results of the research and the conclusions of the scientific work are reflected in 4 scientific articles. Of these, 1 article is published on the basis of international scientific journals with a non-zero impact factor, and 3 scientific articles are published in special publications established by the Committee for Quality Control in Education and Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three main chapters (each concluding with a summary), six subsections, a conclusion, a list of references, and an appendix. The first section, "Theoretical foundations and methodological aspects of cultural code research," includes the following subsections: "The study of the cultural code in the humanities", "The study of the cultural code in the history and theory of fine arts and visual studies". The second section, "The subject code in the painting of Kazakhstan of the XXI century", consists of the following subsections: "The phenomenon of the subject in Kazakh still life and landscape", "The representation of family and home as national cultural codes in modern Kazakh painting". The third section – "Actualization of natural and zoomorphic codes in Kazakh painting of modern Kazakhstan" – includes subsections: "Symbolic content of natural codes in Kazakh painting". "Zoomorphic code in Kazakh painting of modern Kazakhstan". In conclusion, the conclusion, the list of sources used and appendices are presented.