

ABSTRACT

**for the Doctoral Thesis by Ayan Serikovich Naizabekov
entitled “Transformation of Cinematic Language in the Directing of Feature
Cinema of Kazakhstan through the Prism of Sociocultural Factors”
submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the field of
8D02184 - Directing film and TV**

Relevance of the Research Topic

Feature cinema of Kazakhstan in the twenty-first century is developing under conditions of intensive transformation of the sociocultural, technological, professional and institutional environment. The contemporary film process is no longer limited to traditional forms of production and distribution, since it is simultaneously influenced by digitalization, changes in audience practices, the expansion of the platform-based media environment, international festival integration, the development of the private production sector and the renewal of mechanisms of state support for cinema. As a result, not only the thematic scope of Kazakhstani films is changing, but also the very system of screen expression: narrative organization, visual-spatial composition, editing rhythm, sound dramaturgy, character type, conflict structure and ways of representing social reality.

Under these conditions, the cinematic language of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema acquires particular significance as an artistic and communicative system through which cinema reflects on historical memory, cultural continuity, social contradictions, urbanization processes, generational shifts and changes in perceptions of national identity. Cinematic language functions not only as a set of expressive directorial techniques, but also as a mechanism of meaning production, enabling a screen work to form an image of society, reveal its value orientations and offer models for interpreting the past, present and future.

The particular relevance of the study is determined by the fact that Kazakhstani cinema at the present stage has found itself in a situation of interaction between several multidirectional tendencies. On the one hand, the need to preserve national-cultural codes, to turn to historical memory, tradition, folkloric imagery and local sociocultural issues is increasing. On the other hand, domestic cinematography is becoming increasingly involved in global artistic, genre-based and production processes, orienting itself toward international festival practices, the mass market, digital audiences and transnational forms of screen narration. This forms a complex field in which national identity is represented not only through plot and theme, but also through expressive directorial decisions: frame composition, tempo-rhythm, work with space, light, color, sound, editing and the corporeality of the character.

The relevance of the topic is also determined by the insufficient study of the transformation of the cinematic language of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema specifically in its systemic connection with sociocultural, professional, technological and regulatory-legal factors. Existing studies pay considerable attention to the history of Kazakh cinematography, issues of national identity, screen imagery, visual culture and the institutional development of the film industry. At the same time, the transformation of cinematic language as an integral process

manifested in the expressive directorial strategies of contemporary feature cinema of Kazakhstan requires a special comprehensive analysis.

Object of the Study

The object of the study is the cinematic language of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema as an artistic and communicative system implemented in expressive directorial decisions.

Subject of the Study

The subject of the study is the transformation of cinematic language in the expressive directorial decisions of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema, including narrative, visual-spatial, tempo-rhythmic and editing-sound parameters that change under the influence of sociocultural, technological, professional and regulatory-legal factors.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to identify and methodologically substantiate the patterns of transformation of the cinematic language of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema in expressive directorial decisions, as well as to develop a model of prospects for its further development under the conditions of the contemporary media environment.

Research Objectives

- To systematize theoretical approaches to understanding the cinematic language of feature cinema and to specify its interpretation as a multi-level artistic and communicative system.
- To identify the specificity of cinematic language as a mechanism for representing national identity and to determine the sociocultural determinants of its screen expression.
- To conduct a semiotic-hermeneutic analysis of cinematic language transformations and, on this basis, to develop a typology of expressive directorial decisions.
- To analyze the professional and regulatory-legal factors in the transformation of the cinematic language of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema.
- To develop a model of prospects for the development of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema under the conditions of cinematic language transformation and to determine the conditions for the sustainable reproduction of new expressive directorial strategies.

Degree of Study of the Research Topic

The problematics of cinematic language have been widely developed in classical and contemporary film theory. The theoretical foundations for the study of cinematic language were laid in the works of S. Eisenstein, L. Kuleshov, V. Pudovkin, D. Vertov, B. Balázs, G. Kozintsev, A. Bazin, S. Kracauer, M. Martin, G. Sadoul, Yu. Tynyanov, V. Nielsen, K. Razlogov, S. Freilikh and other researchers, whose works analyze editing, the frame, composition, screen imagery, photogénie, the realist nature of cinema and the specificity of cinematographic thinking.

Of particular importance for the present study are the works of S. Eisenstein, in which cinematic language is understood as a form of directorial meaning production based on the interaction of editing, rhythm, plastic composition and the

image structure of the film. The concept of Yu. Lotman also serves as an important methodological foundation, making it possible to consider a film as a multi-level text organized by a system of visual, sound, narrative and cultural codes. In the semiotic and structural aspects, the study relies on the works of U. Eco, C. Metz, J. Mitry, J. Aumont, M. Marie, D. Bordwell, K. Thompson, D. Smith, J. Monaco, R. Stam and D. Andrew, in which cinema is considered as a complex system of signs, narrative models, spectator perception and artistic conventions.

For the analysis of the visual nature of cinematic language, the studies of R. Arnheim, W. Benjamin, W. J. T. Mitchell, J. Berger, R. Barthes, S. Sontag, G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen are of significant importance; in these works, the image is considered as an independent form of thinking, representation and cultural coding. In studying the sound component of cinematic language, the concept of M. Chion is important, as it allows sound to be considered not as an auxiliary element of film, but as an active participant in the formation of screen meaning. In understanding corporeality, spectator experience and the phenomenology of perception, the works of V. Sobchack, T. Elsaesser and M. Hagener are significant.

In the context of the transformation of screen culture and changes in the media environment, the works of G. Deleuze, L. Manovich, J. D. Bolter, R. Grusin, M. McLuhan and P. Virilio are of particular importance. In these studies, cinematography is considered in connection with changes in modes of visual thinking, digitalization, remediation, the media-technological environment and new forms of screen perception. This theoretical block makes it possible to analyze contemporary cinematic language not as a static system of techniques, but as a dynamic structure changing under the influence of technological, aesthetic and communicative processes.

The problem of national cinema and the representation of identity has been developed in the works of S. Hall, B. Anderson, H. Bhabha, E. Said, A. Higson, E. Shohat and R. Stam. These authors make it possible to consider feature cinematography not only as a set of films produced within the boundaries of a particular state, but also as a space for the symbolic construction of community, cultural memory, the image of the “self” and the “other”, as well as a field of interaction between local and global meanings.

The history and specificity of Kazakh cinema are reflected in the works of K. Siranov, R. Abdukhataeva, R. Ospanova, I. Smailova, B. Nogerbek, G. Abikeyeva, G. Nauryzbekova and N. Mukusheva. These works examine the stages of formation of national cinematography, the features of the Soviet and post-Soviet film process, the connection of screen imagery with the historical and cultural context, folkloric tradition, national aesthetics and artistic memory. The works of B. Nogerbek are especially important, as they reveal the significance of screen-folkloric traditions, mythopoetic structures and national imagery in Kazakh cinema, as well as the studies of G. Abikeyeva devoted to the cinema of Central Asia, the cinematography of independent Kazakhstan and the reflection of nation-building processes in screen culture.

Contemporary Kazakhstani cinema is studied in the works of G. Abikeyeva and A. Sabitova, S. Baimukhanova, A. Kostylev, I. Smailova, A. Aidar and co-

authors, B. Kylyshbayeva and O. Boretsky, A. Mashurova, N. Mukilbayev, M. Bakeyeva and Zh. Poshanov. These studies analyze the visual language of Kazakh cinema, the transformation of the image of society, sociocultural reality in the mirror of cinematography, female images, historical memory, the spatial-temporal organization of film, spectator practices and the place of national cinema in the contemporary cultural environment.

Foreign studies of Kazakh cinema are represented by the works of R. Isaacs, A. Kamza and A. Zafar, in which Kazakhstani cinematography is considered through the prism of the history of cultural heritage, national identity, institutional conditions, market factors and creative dynamics. Despite the significant volume of research, there remains a lack of works in which the transformation of the cinematic language of contemporary feature cinema of Kazakhstan is considered as an integral process simultaneously connected with expressive directorial decisions, sociocultural dynamics, the professional environment, digitalization and the regulatory-legal conditions of film industry development.

Methodological Foundations of the Study

The methodological foundation of the dissertation consists of semiotic, hermeneutic, historical-cultural, comparative and regulatory-legal approaches. Their combination makes it possible to consider cinematic language as a structural artistic and communicative system, and film as a complex cultural text in which narrative, visual, sound and rhythmic decisions function as meaning-generating structures. It is fundamental for the study to consider cinematic language in interconnection with sociocultural dynamics, the professional environment and the institutional conditions of functioning of feature cinema.

Systemic and historical-cultural analysis is applied to identify the stages of evolution of cinematic language and the sociocultural contexts of its change. This method makes it possible to consider the transformation of cinematic language not as a set of separate techniques, but as a regular process connected with changes in social demands, models of representation of national identity, forms of spectator perception and conditions of film production.

Comparative analysis is used to determine similarities, differences and stable tendencies in cinematic language decisions in world and national cinematography. It makes it possible to identify how Kazakhstani cinema correlates with global aesthetic, genre-based and technological processes, as well as which expressive strategies preserve local cultural specificity.

The semiotic-hermeneutic method of film analysis is applied to interpret meanings through visual, sound and narrative codes in their cultural-historical context. This method ensures the identification of the deep structures of cinematic language through which a screen work constructs the image of national identity, social reality, historical memory and the contemporary human being.

Qualitative structural-functional analysis of expressive directorial decisions is aimed at studying mise-en-scène, the organization of action within the frame, visual-spatial composition, tempo-rhythm, editing-sound structure and recurring models of screen expression. It makes it possible to identify stable types

of directorial decisions that form the transformation of the cinematic language of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema.

Regulatory-legal analysis is used to assess the influence of legislation, mechanisms of state support and the institutional environment on the conditions of formation and transformation of the cinematic language of feature cinema.. This method makes it possible to reveal the connection between artistic processes and the system of regulation of cinematography, including state support, the status of the national film, professional infrastructure and cultural policy.

The empirical base of the study consists of a representative sample of 16 full-length feature films of Kazakh production, reflecting various models of cinematic language strategies and institutional conditions of production in the period 2001–2024. Within this period, three stages are identified: 2001–2010 – the period of institutional stabilization and post-Soviet cultural reflection; 2011–2018 – the period of genre diversification and intensified festival integration; 2019–2024 – the period of digitalization, platform distribution and hybridization of cinematic language. Additionally, the research material includes individual serial projects of the platform distribution era of 2018–2024, considered as auxiliary analytical material.

Scientific Novelty of the Work

- The scientific novelty of the dissertation lies in the comprehensive methodological substantiation and empirical verification of the transformation of the cinematic language of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema as a systemic process determined by the interaction of sociocultural, technological and institutional-regulatory factors.

- The understanding of the cinematic language of feature cinema has been specified as a multi-level artistic and communicative system that is subject to operationalization and structural analysis, whose internal organization is determined by sociocultural and institutional factors and transforms under the conditions of globalization.

- The specificity of cinematic language as a mechanism for representing national identity has been identified, and the sociocultural determinants of its screen expression have been determined; on this basis, typological models of identity representation have been identified, reflecting stable forms of sociocultural determination of cinematic language.

- The patterns of transformation of the cinematic language of contemporary feature cinema of Kazakhstan have been identified, and its three-stage periodization has been substantiated, reflecting the systemic change in the structure of cinematic language under the influence of sociocultural, technological and institutional factors.

- On the basis of semiotic-hermeneutic analysis, a typology of expressive directorial decisions in contemporary contemporary Kazakh feature cinema has been developed, reflecting stable models of the semiotic organization of cinematic language.

- The role of professional and regulatory-legal factors in the transformation of the cinematic language of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema

has been established, in which the institutional environment acts as a mechanism of cultural selection and reproducibility of cinematic language decisions.

- A model of prospects for the development of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema has been proposed, based on the coordinated development of institutional-regulatory, professional-production, industrial-distribution and cultural-interpretative contours of sustainable transformation of cinematic language.

Main Provisions Submitted for Defense

- The cinematic language of feature cinema is a multi-level artistic and communicative system, the analysis of which requires a combination of semiotic, hermeneutic and sociocultural approaches. It includes interrelated expressive levels – visual-spatial, narrative, editing-rhythmic and sound – functioning as a unified structure of meaning production.

- The cinematic language of feature cinema acts as a mechanism for representing national identity, within which artistic form performs the function of its construction and interpretation. Its expressive decisions are determined by sociocultural determinants and are implemented in a system of directorial techniques that form stable models of screen expression.

- The transformation of the cinematic language of contemporary Kazakh feature cinema is regular in nature and represents a systemic change in the structure of screen expression. It is determined by the interaction of sociocultural, technological and institutional factors and is manifested in the restructuring of narrative organization, the spatial-temporal model, tempo-rhythm and audiovisual composition.

- Semiotic-hermeneutic analysis makes it possible to identify stable types of expressive directorial decisions that reflect different models of screen interpretation of social reality and national identity and form regularly reproducible models of organizing cinematic language depending on sociocultural, technological and institutional conditions.

- Professional and regulatory-legal factors act as an independent mechanism of cinematic language transformation, influencing the reproducibility of various expressive strategies of contemporary feature cinema of Kazakhstan. Their action is manifested in the institutional selection and consolidation of those cinematic language decisions that become stable in the practice of national film production.

- The prospects for the development of contemporary feature cinema of Kazakhstan are connected with the implementation of a model of sustainable transformation of cinematic language based on the coordinated development of support institutions, professional reproduction, industrial balance and public interpretation, in which new cinematic language decisions are consolidated and move from individual practices into stable forms of national film production.

Scientific-Theoretical and Practical Significance of the Study

The scientific-theoretical significance of the dissertation lies in clarifying the understanding of cinematic language as a dynamic system of artistic communication and in developing methodological foundations for analyzing the transformation of cinematic language in the sociocultural context of the film industry. The study

expands the theoretical field of film studies by considering cinematic language not only as a system of expressive means, but also as a mechanism for representing national identity, cultural memory, social reality and the institutional conditions of functioning of cinematography.

The practical significance of the dissertation is determined by the possibility of using its results in educational courses on directing and film studies; in the development of methodological materials for analyzing expressive directorial decisions; in expert-analytical activity in the field of national cinema; and in the practice of developing directorial concepts for audiovisual works. The obtained results may also be used in improving the professional and institutional environment of Kazakhstani cinematography, since the study shows that the sustainable development of cinematic language is connected not only with individual authorial practices, but also with the system of state support, professional reproduction, distribution, spectator communication and cultural interpretation.

The dissertation proposes an analytical model that makes it possible to consider contemporary feature cinema of Kazakhstan as a space of interaction between artistic, sociocultural, technological and regulatory-legal factors. The presented conclusions and recommendations are addressed to film researchers, teachers of directing, film scholars, directors, producers, experts in the field of cultural policy and specialists involved in the development of national cinematography.