

ANNOTATION

to the text of the doctoral dissertation by Nazarov Agabek Zhenisbekuly entitled “Classification of Decorative Archetypal Patterns of Medieval Settlements of the Aral Sea Region: Symbolic Meaning and Cultural Contexts of Ornaments”, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the educational program 8D02108 – Decorative Arts

Relevance of the Research Topic

In his address to the participants of the Republican Forum “Culture and Innovation” held in Astana, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, emphasized that culture is the “passport of a nation,” defining its image in the eyes of the world. By highlighting the depth and diversity of national culture rooted in traditions and customs, the importance of carefully preserving historical and cultural heritage, and the special symbolic significance of the Aral Sea region, the Head of State outlined the relevance of scientific research aimed at reinterpreting and preserving Kazakhstan’s spiritual and visual heritage. Today, it is particularly important to “comprehensively and systematically promote our historical and cultural heritage and adapt it to the realities of the 21st century.” In this context, the classification of archetypes of medieval ornaments from the Aral Sea region, the analysis of their symbolic meanings, and the examination of their cultural context correspond not only to scientific objectives but also to the strategic priorities of strengthening national identity and the spiritual code of the country.

In the context of globalization, the transformation of geocultural spaces, and the growing importance of intangible cultural heritage, research aimed at systematizing and scientifically reconstructing local artistic traditions is becoming particularly significant. The Aral Sea region, situated at the crossroads of major historical processes, provides invaluable material for studying cultural interactions and the formation of universal and local archetypes. These factors determine the relevance of the present research from both contemporary scientific and practical perspectives.

Object of the research: Ornamental systems of the medieval Aral Sea region.

Subject of the research: The archetypal structures of ornamental motifs, their symbolic meanings, and the cultural and historical mechanisms of their functioning.

Aim of the research: To develop a scientifically grounded classification of ornamental archetypes of the medieval Aral Sea region, reveal their symbolic content, and determine the cultural context of their functioning.

To achieve this aim, the following research objectives were established:

1. To examine the nature of ornament as a phenomenon of visual culture and theoretically substantiate its significance as an artistic carrier of archetypal consciousness, collective memory, and cultural codes; to identify the patterns underlying the formation of the symbolic content and cultural-historical functions of ornament.

2. To systematize methodological approaches developed in contemporary ornament studies and identify a methodological model for investigating the visual

patterns, symbolic structures, and cultural contexts of ornaments from medieval settlements in the Aral Sea region.

3. To establish a typological system and differentiate archetypal imagery models based on an analysis of the morphological structures and formal-stylistic characteristics of ornaments discovered in medieval settlements of the Aral Sea region.

4. To develop a model for the artistic-compositional and contextual classification of ornaments by examining their compositional structures and functional applications in relation to their historical and cultural contexts.

5. To analyze, from semiotic and cultural perspectives, the sacred codes and worldview models reflected in the decorative systems of the medieval Aral Sea region and reveal their archetypal foundations and symbolic structures.

6. To determine the role of regional decorative archetypes in cultural memory and propose a new interpretation of the worldview reflected in ornaments based on contemporary cultural, semiotic, and archetypal approaches.

State of Research on the Topic

The study of the ornamental heritage of the medieval Aral Sea region draws upon a wide range of archaeological, art-historical, and ethnographic sources collected by domestic and international scholars. Research into the cultural heritage of the Aral Sea region can be divided into several significant stages.

The initial stage, covering the period from the late 18th to the early 20th century, is represented by the first exploratory descriptions and records produced by Russian military researchers and Soviet scholars, including A.I. Castagné, V.V. Barthold, A.Yu. Yakubovsky, P.I. Lerch, S.P. Tolstov, and others.

The contemporary stage began in the late 20th century and continues to the present day. Kazakhstani scholars, including Zh. Kurmankulov, S. Samashev, Zh. Utebayev, A. Tazhekeyev, M.K. Kydyrniyazov, and S.T. Saipov, have made significant contributions to the investigation of archaeological monuments in the Aral Sea region, such as Zhetyasar, Zhankent, Myntobe, Zhent, Zhankala, Chirik-Rabat, and Sortobe.

However, despite individual scholarly investigations, systematic studies aimed at identifying the archetypal levels of ornament and developing a comprehensive classification model remain extremely limited. The lack of an integrated approach combining archaeological evidence, semiotic and archetypal concepts, and the potential of digital technologies determines the scientific novelty and high relevance of the present research.

Research Methods

The study of ornamental art and its theoretical interpretation is based on several principal research methods.

The comparative approach was employed to compare ornamental samples from the medieval Aral Sea region with the artistic traditions of neighboring regions of Central Asia. This approach made it possible to identify common and local characteristics of decorative systems and to understand cultural interconnections and the transmission routes of artistic motifs.

The morphological method was applied to investigate the structure and organization of individual ornamental elements.

The typological method enabled ornamental samples to be grouped according to common formal, compositional, and semantic characteristics.

The iconographic method was used to identify recurring images, symbols, and narrative elements, as well as to determine their origins and semantic content.

The semiotic method made it possible to examine ornament as a distinctive system of signs. Within this approach, the relationships between signs, images, and meanings were analyzed, along with the mechanisms through which cultural information is transmitted by decorative forms.

Contextual analysis was applied to study ornaments in relation to their specific cultural and historical environments, the functional purposes of objects, and their archaeological contexts.

The archetypal approach enabled the identification of stable universal images and symbolic structures that recur across different cultural traditions and remain preserved in artistic consciousness over extended historical periods.

Thus, the comprehensive application of these methods provided an opportunity to conduct an in-depth investigation of the ornamental systems of the medieval Aral Sea region and identify their artistic, symbolic, and cultural characteristics.

Methodological Foundations of the Research

The methodological foundations of the research are based on the fundamental works of domestic and international scholars in the fields of art history, archaeology, cultural studies, semiotics, ethnography, psychology, and ornament theory.

Particular importance is attached to Alois Riegl's concept of artistic will (*Kunstwollen*), Heinrich Wölfflin's ideas concerning the laws governing the development of artistic forms, Ernst Cassirer's theory of symbolic forms, Claude Lévi-Strauss's structural-semiotic approach, Yuri Lotman's semiotic theory, and Carl Gustav Jung's concept of archetypes and the collective unconscious.

The theoretical principles developed by Gottfried Semper, Owen Jones, Ernst Gombrich, Wilhelm Worringer, James Trilling, and other researchers were employed to analyze the artistic nature of ornament.

In Kazakhstani ornament studies, the methodological foundation established during the previous century through the works of archaeologist, orientalist, historian, and art historian Alkey Margulan; ethnographer and archaeologist Khalel Argynbayev; ethnographer Uzbekali Zhanibekov; and philosopher and art historian Bolat Baizhigitov continues to play a significant role. The contributions of contemporary researchers, including art historian Karlygash Ibrayeva, art historian Kurman Muratayev, and philosopher and researcher of Kazakh and world ornament Alibek Kazhgaliuly, together with those of other Kazakhstani scholars, provide a theoretical foundation widely applied today to the analysis of both local and global ornamental traditions.

Theoretical Significance of the Research

The theoretical significance of the research lies in expanding scientific understanding of ornament as a complex phenomenon of visual culture.

The classification proposed in this study makes it possible to examine ornament not only in terms of its external form but also as a system of archetypal images, symbols, and cultural codes.

The research findings contribute new theoretical perspectives on the decorative heritage of the medieval Aral Sea region to the fields of Kazakhstani art history, ornament studies, archaeology, and cultural studies.

The developed classification model may serve as a methodological foundation for further research into the ornamental systems of other historical and cultural regions of Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

Furthermore, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which cultural memory is preserved and transmitted by means of visual forms.

Scientific Novelty of the Research

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the comprehensive investigation of the ornamental heritage of the medieval Aral Sea region from the perspectives of archetypal structure, symbolic meaning, and cultural context.

For the first time, ornamental materials discovered in medieval settlements of the Aral Sea region are examined as an integrated visual-semiotic system reflecting the distinctive characteristics of regional worldviews and cultural memory.

The following results were achieved during the research:

- Ornamental samples discovered at archaeological monuments of the medieval Aral Sea region were systematized.
- Their principal morphological, typological, and artistic-compositional characteristics were identified.
- A classification of decorative archetypes was developed based on formal, semantic, and cultural-contextual criteria.
- The main symbolic codes reflecting the cosmological, mythological, and sacred beliefs of the region's population were identified.
- The relationships between ornamental motifs and traditional models of the world were established.
- The mechanisms of transformation and continuity of decorative archetypes within the historical and cultural space of the Aral Sea region were determined.
- A new interpretation of ornament as an element of cultural memory and a visual code was proposed.
- Opportunities for applying digital methods to the systematization, reconstruction, and visualization of ornamental heritage were identified.

Practical Significance of the Research

The practical significance of the research is determined by the potential application of its findings in scientific, educational, museum, and artistic activities.

The research materials and conclusions can be used in the development of curricula and specialized courses in art history, decorative and applied arts, archaeology, ethnodesign, and cultural studies. They can also be applied in contemporary artistic and design practices through the creative reinterpretation of traditional ornamental motifs, as well as in projects aimed at preserving and promoting the historical and cultural heritage of the Aral Sea region.

Main Propositions Submitted for Defense

1. The ornamental art of the medieval Aral Sea region constitutes an integrated visual-sign system in which artistic forms are closely connected with the mythological, sacred, social, and worldview concepts of society.
2. The ornamental motifs of the region possess stable archetypal structures and reflect universal models of world perception associated with concepts of space, time, nature, humanity, and the sacred world.
3. Morphological and typological analyses of ornaments make it possible to distinguish the main groups of decorative archetypes and identify patterns of their artistic transformation.
4. The symbolic content of ornament is revealed through its cultural and historical context, functional purpose, and relationship with the material and spiritual culture of the medieval population of the Aral Sea region.
5. Ornamental archetypes represent an important mechanism for preserving and transmitting cultural memory, ensuring the continuity of artistic traditions.
6. The developed classification model enables the systematization of the ornamental heritage of the Aral Sea region through the integrated application of morphological, compositional, semiotic, and archetypal criteria.
7. Contemporary digital technologies create new opportunities for the preservation, reconstruction, systematization, and visual interpretation of the ornamental heritage of the medieval Aral Sea region.

Dissemination and Publication of Research Results

The main provisions and results of the dissertation research were presented in five scientific publications, three of which were published in journals included in the Scopus database.

The research findings underwent academic evaluation and discussion, which made it possible to refine individual theoretical propositions, improve the classification model, and broaden the interpretation of the archetypal and symbolic characteristics of the ornamental heritage of the medieval Aral Sea region.

Structure of the Dissertation

The doctoral dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, each containing two subsections, a conclusion, a list of references, and appendices.

Chapter One examines the theoretical and methodological foundations for investigating the patterns of visual culture in ornament.

Chapter Two analyzes the morphological typology and artistic-compositional characteristics of ornaments from the Aral Sea region.

Chapter Three explores the deeper meanings of regional decorative archetypes, their sacred codes, their functions in cultural memory, and their reinterpretation.

The Conclusion presents the principal findings and conclusions obtained in accordance with the aim and objectives of the research.

The dissertation comprises 148 pages. The appendices and list of references include 179 entries.