

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND ARCHITECTURE OF NUR-SULTAN

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: To discuss the architectural appearance of the new capital of Kazakhstan, Nur-Sultan, to present a close study of the architecture of Kazakhstan in the view of national identity concept, provide a deep analysis of the main tendencies in the architecture construction as well as the general mainstream in the architecture complex of Nur-Sultan city.

Methodology: The survey is based on traditional methods suitable for the research of architecture and some composite methods that are on the crossroads of architecture and other sciences, like semantics, etymology, ethnography, history, etc. Such methods have been applied as the analysis of structural and tectonic systems as the relationship of function and form, analysis of proportions, comparison method, and etymological methods.

Main Findings: The article concentrates on the various facets of national manifestations in the architecture of their-Sultan city, rose the problems of artistic interpretations of the national codes of consciousness in the architecture of individual masters. The semantic content in the form of national features of figurative expression is comprehended mainly only through additional explanations of the authors' projects.

Applications of this study: The study may be used by architects and everyone interested in the questions of national identity within the field of architecture, especially its representation in Nur-Sultan (previously called Astana) city. The urgency of the problem is connected with the entire historical context of the region's development, therefore, new aesthetics must incorporate timeless spiritual values and rely on traditional cultural codes.

Novelty/Originality of this study: Such a kind of study was firstly conducted with application to the Nur-Sultan city with the declared point of view and methods of considering the architecture of the urban environment of Nur-Sultan as a representation of the national identity concept.

Keywords: *architectural and artistic architectural unity, architectural and spatial environment, the architecture of Kazakhstan, national manifestations in the architecture, national identity, urbanization.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most problematic and disputable issues of the XX-XXI centuries are the issues of national and regional identity as well as stylistics in modern architectural practice. As a field of scientific research, the problem was fully manifested and formed in the sixties of the XX century (Puchkov, 2013; Blinova, 2014) and has a wide range of areas in various fields of humanitarian knowledge (Puchkov, 2011; Raevsky&Serebrennikova, 2017; Campbell, 2013; Lukyanov, 2008). In the development of world architecture, identity issues have become particularly relevant in the culture of modernism, in connection with the universalization of the urban environment.

Today, modern civilization has only aggravated the situation: continuing the transformation of space, it, unfortunately, even more, erases the facets of the individual in it. The uniqueness of each cultural environment is under threat of complete leveling in favor of the large-scale capitalization of the city. In the development of many countries of the modern world, there is a desire to create large logistics centers in the form of megacities. However, it is in such places that all borders are erased: "The globalization of the urban environment always runs in "parallel" with the "multinationalization" of modern cities" (Puchkov, 2013).

Approximately the same phenomenon is happening now in the architecture of Kazakhstan, with the attainment of independence experiencing rapid construction. Without exaggeration, it can be said that special attention is attracted by the transfer of the capital from Almaty to Astana (present Nur-Sultan) in 1997, to the place of the former unremarkable Soviet city of Tselinograd (Akmola in the past). As a new center of the state, it is positioned as a new reference point for general cultural development, in which, on the one hand, everything should be modern, on the other - the urban environment should have its own individual "face". That is, the general questions of identity are in this case before the designers, despite the fact that the city has existed for almost two centuries. New buildings are being built on an absolutely "clean" space on the left bank of the Esil River, while the old Soviet Tselinograd is located on the other (right) bank.

At the same time, in the formation of the next fateful phenomenon, along with the general issues of the identity of the urban environment, the issues of national identity are the most important for Kazakhstanis. The urgency of the problem is connected with the entire historical context of the region's development; therefore, new aesthetics must incorporate timeless spiritual values and rely on traditional cultural codes.

It should be noted that in the former Soviet period, for all the unification of architectural and spatial tasks, the factor of the national component in the development of cities of the republic wasn't taken into account. However, it was expressed mainly in the architecture of administrative and cultural centers, while the rest of the space was absorbed mainly by typical standard buildings. It was precisely in connection with the dictates of typical design in Soviet construction practice (as in many countries of the world) that problems not only of national but also of regional identity were acutely faced by all non-central cities and outskirts of the former USSR.

The attainment of sovereignty by Kazakhstan made it possible to get rid of the domination of the previous standards, and the process of forming a new identity of the urban environment is currently taking place. At the same time, everyone is perfectly aware of the importance of this phenomenon, since the appearance of the space organized by the architecture is one of the tools for the formation of a collective identity (Ilyin, 2015; Muravyova et al., 2015).

Taking the reference point for renewal, the country seeks to comply with modern trends in the urbanization environment. The so-called international style is currently determining relative stylistic unity in world architecture. The architecture of Kazakhstan at the beginning of the XXI century is just as "international", especially if we talk about the general vector of its development in recent decades. At the same time, the head of state N. Nazarbayev, as the main customer-builder of the new capital of Astana (present Nur-Sultan), of course, wanted to see in its appearance the features of nomadic culture. All generations of architects of the country somehow solved the issue in different ways. In the Soviet period, only the mobile form of the yurt was perceived as the Kazakh ones, and with rare exceptions, until the sixties and seventies of the XX century, in fact, they were not taking into account the religious and Central Asian model of the architectural tradition to which all peoples of the region are directly related.

It should be noted that modern world practice also relates to the theme of traditions, not so unequivocally. No one is fascinated by direct quotation, and everyone now is in search of a synthesis of historical heritage and modern trends in architecture.

In Kazakhstan, there is also a tendency not only to "inscribe" elements from the traditional heritage into the modern cultural context but also a deeper understanding of the very phenomenon of ethnic identity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The problem of architecture and identity notion interaction is quite popular among modern scientists who devote their surveys to studying of different concepts of architecture semantic models. E.g., this problem is reflected in the works of S. Daniels (1993), G. Delanty & P.R. Jones (2002), K. Dovey (2015), P. Herrle & E. Wegerhoff (2008), A.D. King (2004), Á. Moravanszky (1998), O.I. Muravyova, S.A. Litvina & S.A. Bogomaz (2015), L. Sklair (2006), C. Tilley (2006), L. Vale (2008).

Lawrence Vale focuses on the relationship between the design of national capitals across the world and the formation of national identity in modernity, he explains the role that architecture and planning play in the forceful assertion of state power. The author proposes a book that is truly international in scope as it is looking at capital cities in the United States, India, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Kuwait, Bangladesh, and Papua New Guinea (Vale, 2008).

K. Dovey presents the quest to rethink conceptions of 'place' and to move on from the views of place as essentially closed and stabilizing. Another is the focus on the nexus of place to power; the ways that the sense of place is inextricably wrapped up with questions of authority and authenticity. There is an attempt to rethink the idea of place and place identity without the suffocating ideal of place as a closed or finished one (Dovey, 2015).

A central theme of A.D. King's work is the examination of architectural and building cultures as they are affected by transnational processes. The author tries to answer a wide range of questions related to the general theme of Spaces of Global Cultures, Architecture Urbanism Identity (King, 2004).

P. Herrle & E. Wegerhoff concentrate on a common complaint about the loss of identity which, to a substantial degree, is being associated with the built environment in cities and specifically with their architecture. "Architecture and Identity" takes a global, multidisciplinary look on how identities in contemporary architecture are constructed, up to the authors' minds. The general hypothesis underlying this book is that in a globalized world identity in architecture cannot be easily derived from distinct indigenous patterns (Herrle & Wegerhoff, 2008).

G. Delanty & P.R. Jones states that architecture has become an important discourse for new expressions of post-national identity in general and in particular for the emergence of a 'spatial' European identity. The authors show using the real cases that: 1) architecture can express in a reflexive way contested and ambiguous national identities; 2) the case of architecture in post-communist European societies illustrates the dual identity of architecture as a project of building and of re-building; 3) the EU's search for a cultural form is discussed with respect to the architectural designs on the Euro banknotes; 4) the question of architecture as a relation to a lived space is considered with regard to cityscapes as yet another expression of a tendentially spatialized European identity (Delanty, G. & P.R. Jones, 2002). The special importance of this survey is in the similarity of key points in the estimation and interpretation of the problem in the light of Soviet and Post-Soviet models of architecture design.

The novelty of the present study is in the attempt of analyzing the national identity complex concentrating on the architecture of Nur-Sultan (previously – Astana) city what has never been done before in the works of Kazakh scientists or scholars worldwide as well.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study provides a close study of the architecture of Kazakhstan in the view of the national identity concept. Analysis of the main tendencies in architecture construction. Synthesis of the general mainstream in the architectural complex of Nur-Sultan city. While conducting the survey such methods of architecture scrutiny have been used:

1. Analysis of structural and tectonic systems as the relationship of function and form: speaking of designs and structural tectonics it must be always borne in mind that constructive solution (this may include the work of materials from which a building is constructed, structural units connecting different structural elements, articulations, transmitting and load balancing) can be considered as the sum of features, characteristics of the building, providing specific function, without which the object's existence is impossible;
2. Analysis of proportions (including the search for geometric patterns in the structure of objects of architecture);
3. Comparison method– while comparing the tendencies in architecture design during multiple periods of history;
4. Etymological method – studying the concept of national identity and ways of its reflection in the city architecture, the examination of the semantic content in the form of national features of figurative expression.

The hypothesis of the current study is the statement that Nur-Sultan's architecture creates its own imaginative design based on the synthesis of modern technological solutions and different facets of reading the texts of cultural heritage that allows seeing the significant features of national identity idea.

NATIONAL CULTURAL CODES OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE ARCHITECTURAL AND ARTISTIC SEARCH FOR MASTERS

One of the most unconventional phenomena in the culture of sovereign Kazakhstan is the construction of a new capital of Nur-Sultan. As known, the architectural and spatial environment is directly involved in shaping the worldview of a particular epoch society, in which it reflects its ideology. The clearly existing architectural "arsenal" of the country personified the Soviet ideology, which had exhausted itself. To "break" the ideas formed on the basis of this system, it was necessary to create an alternative to its value settings. The issue of transfer was related to the political and economic problems that had arisen by the time the country gained independence. This task is comparable to another great pass of history.

The most intensive construction of the city began in the first years of the third millennium, which is connected with the economic rise on the crest of high prices for raw materials exported by Kazakhstan. The general town-planning project was developed by KishoKurakawa with the additions of Russian and Kazakhstan architects. By the beginning of the XXI century, the city was divided into seven planning districts, two of which are part of the transportation ring of the center, three main lines, and eight directions connect it with the whole environment.

At this stage, the focus was on the artistic and imaginative issues of architecture; both the author's positions of architects and the political will of the president, who directly oversaw almost the entire construction epic, were revealed.

An example of the search for a new identity in the architecture of the city of the first years of construction were references to the image of the national flag of Kazakhstan (the building of the Ministry of Finance, architect V. Laptev, 1999). It is visually poorly compatible with the concept of "national tradition" since the image of the developing blue canvas in the appearance of the building is not clear to everyone if there are no comments from the author of the project. The object is perceived as one of the modern state-administrative types of buildings. Eastern Central Asian features peeped in a figurative expression of a number of structures between the years 1998-2001.

The main section on which most of the iconic objects of the new capital are concentrated begins to be erected from buildings, the symbolic link of which was made public only after some time. All of them are located on the line of Nurzhol Boulevard (Water-Green Boulevard is the original name). It is formed as a four-kilometer closed line between two "walls" of single building blocks: buildings of the *House of Ministries*(architect Sh. Mataybekov, R. Musabayev, J. Ainabekov) and a block of seven buildings of *Kazmunaygaz* (from 7 to 18 floors) performing the function of a kind of boundaries. Despite the presence of several administrative and cultural centers in the planning of the city for the past twenty years, Nurzhol Boulevard remained a kind of the symbolic core, the compositional axis of the capital.

In search of national regional identity, the architects involved in the design turned to a variety of sources. In addition to the traditional mobile type of architecture, folk decorative and applied art, the range of searches is expanding in the arsenal of motives and themes. The attention of the authors began to focus on the general historical-cultural context, on the heritage of medieval memorial architecture, classical examples of eastern dome types of structures, and the nature of the region.

Throughout the entire line of Nurzhol Boulevard, there is a large number of objects, several squares, recreational zones of the tape type, cascades of fountains. However, with all its workload of high-rise and significant objects, the main dominants are well manifested. Thus, the ternary system of symbolic coding of the entire space is clearly visible, with a

composite focus on the building of the *AkOrda Presidential Palace*, the *Baiterek monument* and the *Khan Shatyr* shopping and entertainment center as a universal form of mobile type of nomads' home.

The Houses of Ministries round off the square in front of the AkOrda Presidential Palace from north to south, surrounding it with a 1.5 km arc (the "arc" was proposed in the general plan of N. Tokayev), creating the feeling of a giant wall. At the same time in the center of the building passes the government axis - a kind of "gate" 140 meters wide. It is these "gates" that allow AkOrda to be clearly seen in its opening. A kind of wall from the House of Ministries (the construction of an "administrative residential complex" completely reoriented later was originally supposed) is flanked by the golden cone-shaped towers of the state holding *Samruk-Kazyna National Welfare Fund* (Figure 1), which are extremely dissonant with all other objects, primarily by their color aggression.



Figure 1: The House of Ministries and towers of the Samruk-Kazyna National Welfare Fund (SamrukKazyna)

The creator of the monolithic towers of the Samruk-Kazyna Foundation, architect Sh. Mataibekov was guided by modern trends in the development of architecture, but the geometry of the conical shape is one of the most important symbols in the minds of nomads throughout the entire period of their existence. It is known from the history of the Saka (Scythian in Western historiography) period; traced in the cultural strata of the Middle Ages (in the architecture of the steppe region, in particular), deeply rooted in the entire material and artistic culture of the Kazakhs to modern times. But the image created by the architect is perceived as somewhat aggressive, "wild" because of the continuous lining of the monolith with a glass of rich golden hue, over-focusing all attention on itself.

Nevertheless, the main semantic points in the form of the AkOrda Presidential Palace, the Baiterek monument and the Khan Shatyr shopping and entertainment center remained the compositional dominants of the space. From this triad, the image of the *Baiterek monument* (architect A.I. Rustembekov and others) is a modern interpretation of the high-tech style that is not related to the national codes of consciousness. With the height of 97 meters, which symbolizes the year of the transfer of the capital of Kazakhstan from Almaty to Astana (present Nur-Sultan), the construction of steel and solid transparent glass with a golden ball at the top, it looks more like a crystal vase.

However, the basis of this monument is the mythological plot of pagan origin from the depths of the pre-history of the nomads, well known to the Kazakhs. It says about how the legendary bird Samruk lays a golden egg (the sun) to the top of the tree of life Baiterek (translated from the Kazakh as "poplar", the world tree), whose roots go deep into the womb of the earth into the kingdom of Aydahar. The dragon Aydahar consumes the egg, and the bird returns it to the crown of the tree. As we can see, the myth symbolizes the system of the threefold structuring of the universe widespread in world culture, as well as binary oppositions (day-night, life-death, etc.).

It should be noted that the collective unconscious of the culture has retained in the genetic codes of consciousness of the Kazakhs the traces of ancient ideas about the spatial and temporal structure of the world, is directly reflected in art and artistic creativity in general. However, unlike the prevailing form of their expression in cultural traditions, the architecture of the monument is modern in all respects, so there is a lot of controversy about its figurative solution (Figure 2).

Nevertheless, the motive submitted by President Nazarbayev becomes clear when a person realizes that it is the desire to "lean" on the values of the spiritual heritage of the Great Steppe. In this case, Baiterek acts as a spatial axis for the renewal of the country, because the "nation-building" of the young state is taking place in real-time. The Tengrian origins of the architectural image are like a symbolic link of the times.

Thus, the legend, the myth, the story are the factors that guided the designers, building the city almost from the zero levels. The form of architecture is focused on modernity; it is entirely related to the present, but the semantic load opens when a person receives information about its symbolic basis. In world practice, such an approach in search of national and regional identity is known.

If in the conceptual basis of the Baiterek monument project we are confronted with the oldest layers of Turkic mythology, the architectural and artistic expression of the AkOrda Presidential Palace is the most important building of the whole Nurzhol centerline: it reflects the other positions of the authors.



Figure 2: The Baiterek monument, 2003

The European architectural classics for Kazakhstan is not an alien element, the entire population has long been in its cultural codes (Truspekova, 2016). At the end of the XVIII and the beginning of the XIX century, the active development of the Kazakh lands of the Russian Empire began, which led first to the construction of military fortifications and then the construction of cities based on them. The style principles of the Russian version of classicism and modernity were translated into the space of the steppe region. Therefore, the European traditions of classical architecture have already been associated with the identity of the urbanized territories of Kazakhstan by the beginning of the XX century.

In this regard, neoclassicism in the modern architecture of Nur-Sultan is not surprising. The synthesis of the Eurasian architectural traditions is used in the image of the main composition accent of the square – AkOrda. The classical European ensemble architecture of the XVIII century and the features of the memorial and religious buildings of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, in particular) in the shape of the dome clearly dominate the composition (Figure 3).



Figure 3: The AkOrda Presidential Palace, 2001-2003

At the same time, it is difficult not to notice the symbolic opposition of two objects of AkOrda and Khan Shatyr at the ends of the Nurzhol Boulevard line, which in turn are perceived as two cultural poles on the map of Eurasia: the neoclassical architecture of the Government House (AkOrda) at one point and the nomadic mobile form at the other Yurts Khan Shatyr.

The authors of the project, architects and brothers A. and B. Tortaev from Mabetex Group company and designers M. Gualatsi and M. Molteni (consulted by K. Montakhayev) expressed the symbolic unity of the European cultural code with the cultural codes of the nomadic world: the magnificent order architecture of the residence is crowned with a blue dome with spire.

This technique becomes one of the leading ones in search of a new “national” style in the modern architecture of Kazakhstan (Truspekova, 2017). The basis of the architectural language of the building was a variation on the theme of classicism: a strictly symmetrical layout in the composition of the facades, an order system, the renovation of the corner and wall pilasters, elongated window openings, complexly shaped horizontal traction, a characteristic parapet in the form of balustrades. The color scheme is represented by a combination of white, blue and gold.

The entrance of the palace is highlighted by a half-cylinder of a bay window with a portico of a simplified Doric order. The giant order is equal in height to four floors, the last floor is completed by a profiled cornice of large removal. The central axis of the composition is completed vertically by a large dome, topped with a high spire with a pommel on which the

national flag flutters - the symbol of the country. The blue color of the domed sphere, the national ornamentation, the overall color palette of the facades and interiors of the building appeal to the images of national architecture. All these techniques serve the idea of representativeness and monumentality, the idea of a stable, prosperous state: it was not by chance that the classical style was chosen (in the interiors the leading style is the Empire style), which embodies the listed figurative characteristics. The building immediately became a symbol of the state, which is quite explainable by its status, and the subject of discussions about the further development of the national style in modern architecture.

Synthesis of traditions of the East and the West found in the architecture of the AkOrda Presidential Palace is not accidental. This is a political gesture, and a cultural projection of the renewal of the European type, and the expression of the parity already established in the country between the present and the past in the history of the country. Thus, without compromising national ideas, the ideological basis in the figurative expression of the architecture of the presidential residence, the monument, and the Khan's tent sounds like a kind of trans-temporal imposition of the connections of the past cultural experience with the present and the future. The importance of this phenomenon in the formation of human identity is devoted to research in the field of psychology (Yanichev, 2016). Therefore, it is quite natural that in the construction of new capital it should have manifested itself.

National features in architecture are fully traced in the image of Khan Shatyr (architect N. Foster, 2006), whose sloping height is 150 meters, and the vertical axis is shifted by 15 degrees. Visually, it fits very organically into the arched opening of the block of buildings of Kazmunaygaz and is peeped all the way along Nurzhol Boulevard (Figure 4).



Figure 4: The shopping and entertainment center Khan Shatyr and the building of Kazmunaygaz

The architecture of the shopping and entertainment center Khan Shatyr really absorbed all the nomadic cultural codes of consciousness; it contains not only the Kazakh nomadic form but also a generalized image of the nomadic world. The innovative solution of technological problems and the original construction of the structure cannot be neglected by citizens of the country. The huge volume of the tent is covered with a fine mesh with fluoropolymer ETFE, a unique material that transmits daylight and protects from the weather. The climatic conditions of Nur-Sultan are very severe – from -40 to almost +40 degrees.

Not only the technical side of the issue is unique in this structure. It is clearly included in the previously mentioned symbolic triad of the main axial line of the city center of Nur-Sultan. Khan Shatyr is a part of the spatial representation of power: AkOrda is the residence of the president, Baiterek is a symbolic axis from the depths of the history of the nomads, and Khan Shatyr as a royal tent presented by the head of state to the people.

It should be noted that Kazakhstani designers seek to take into account the mistakes of the Soviet urban planning and introduce polycentricity - the direction of urbanization of all the cities of Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet era, including in Nur-Sultan. Therefore, despite its symbolic connection with the line of Nurzhol Boulevard, the shopping and entertainment center Khan Shatyr goes beyond its conventional boundaries, and together with the building of the Opera and Ballet Theater “Astana-Opera”, they form the architectural and spatial dominant of another cultural center of the city. At the same time, its figurative characteristics do not change at all; it is magnificent from all angles.

The hip form, no doubt, is associated with the nomadic past of the Kazakh people; its identity with the national heritage is unconditional. At the same time, because of the material used, architecture is like a mirage floating in the space of the surrounding landscape. However, this effect is likely to change, since the construction of adjacent territories continues.

The symbolic context, based on the traditional attitude to geometric forms in the national culture, became a guide to action and in the architectural composition of the domed structure in the building of the *Presidential Center of Culture* (architect S. Zhanbulatov, construction completed in 2004). Projected from above, the spheroconical dome on a developed stepped drum with a diameter of 19.5m and a height of 38.5m rests on the diverging rays of the wings of the cross - the base of the building. In this case, the symbolism of the geometric forms of the cross and the circle was the semantic points of the compositional solution of architecture.

It also should be noted that if the shape of the circle runs through all the material and artistic heritage in the culture of nomads with a red thread, then the cross has equally deep traces in it. It manifests itself virtually everywhere in folk art, preserved as a clan tamga (clan signs) of some Kazakh tribes, and finally, shanyrak itself is a combination of two geometric symbols: a circle and a cross inscribed in it.

At the same time, the architecture of the Presidential Center of Culture is fully modern, despite all the manifestations of past experience. Placing the main facade diagonally, underlined by the portal, allowed us to view the building from a dynamic perspective. The different scale of the development of the drum overlap and the wings of the cross is even more accented by the brutal appearance of triangular oriels made of opaque glass of deep blue color. Unfortunately, these bay windows are not very aesthetic; they are not very compatible with the concept of a harmonious interpretation of the brutal form. But the desire of the creator of the project to follow the national codes of consciousness is clearly manifested.

In accordance with modern requirements, the functional purpose of the building is quite wide: there are a theater, a concert hall, and a library. Thus, national traditions in the search for shaping and following the context of the present moment characterize this object.

The series of traditional symbols of geometric origin can be attributed to the pyramidal shape of *Norman Foster's Palace of Peace and Reconciliation* in Nur-Sultan (2006). The pyramid is naturally associated with the culture of Ancient Egypt, but the triangular shape of the facades, like the pyramid itself, takes place in the cultural strata of the ancient nomads of all Eurasia. We are talking about barrows scattered throughout the territory of modern Kazakhstan, Siberia, and southern Russia. At the same time, the triangular shape is widely interpreted in Kazakh folk culture; the most famous is the amulet (symbol of the feminine principle), which still retains its position not only in artistic culture but even in everyday life.

The President Nursultan Nazarbayev attached great importance to this iconic object since all religious denominations are united under its shadow. The question is very important now in connection with the political situation in the world, and also due to the multi-confessional composition of the population of Kazakhstan. As not belonging to any of the world religions, the pyramidal type of the palace form nevertheless has intersections with the traditional culture of all the peoples of Eurasia.

The interior of the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation (Pyramid) can be even more connected with the traditional symbolic context of organizing space in the nomad culture. It is clear vertical zoning in height, each slice of which is just as symbolically perceived. At the highest point, under the atrium – the "firmament" – the hall of confessions, the lower tier is immersed in black tones associated with the earthly womb.

Thus, despite the direct quotation from the Egyptian history, the shape of the pyramid is universal in its origin. We know it from the culture of American Indians. In the culture of Eurasia, the image of the mound also has the shape of a pyramid, and in the material and artistic culture of the Kazakhs, it is also associated with the charm of a triangular shape. Of course, it is still difficult to speak fully about national identity traits, as it is inscribed in the history of ancient Egypt, nevertheless, the pyramid becomes one of the famous religious objects of Nur-Sultan.

Due to a height of 62 meters, the building rests on a 15-meter elevation, and the facades are finished with glass and granite. In the surrounding space, the form does not look like a grandiose structure, which is largely facilitated by the gray overall tone of the lining, and, unfortunately, risks losing monumental impressiveness in the case of building high-rise objects near the territory.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE IMAGE OF THE KAZAKH YURT IN THE CAPITAL'S ARCHITECTURE

In the architecture of Nur-Sultan and Almaty in the post-Soviet period, we can observe the use of national traditions in a wide variety of variations, but the well-known motive is still most consistently exaggerated.

The image of the shanyrak (the domed frame of the yurt) was also used in the interior of the *Airport of Nur-Sultan* – the project of K. Kurakawa (2002-2005). The central lobby bears the features of a yurt with a common rounded trajectory of the dome space. It combines two tiers, penetrated by the light of the interior (the light penetrates to a greater degree from the side of the glazed facade). Kurakawa was guided by futuristic ideas based on a synthesis of Eastern and European traditions. However, in this case, we can talk about the synthesis of two cultural traditions of the people of the East. Therefore, if in the interior we accurately determine the model of the yurt in the composition, then the external parameters of the airport resemble a completely different image: here in the steppe space the "samurai helmet" stretches rather than the well-known dome of a nomadic dwelling. But the author of the project was guided by the modern context of the synthesis of Eurasian themes, and if we take into account the futuristic models, then Japanese culture fully meets all modern development trends.

As time has shown, the architect, having perfectly solved figurative and functional tasks, did not take into account the population growth factor and the work of the airport as an international harbor (there is too little space for this), and therefore the need to expand it by 2017 was very urgent.

The most complete adherence to the text of national culture using the form of a yurt is found in the project of the *Schoolchildren's Art Palace* (Figure 5) in Nur-Sultan by architect V. Yavein. This is an example when the design of a

nomadic dwelling (assembled on the shanyrak yurt) was thought out and rethought by designers in terms of image, form, and function (the project of Studio 44, St. Petersburg, under the leadership of V. Yavein).



Figure 5: The Schoolchildren's Art Palace, Nur-Sultan, 2008

In the center of the interior, there is an atrium – the circle of the shanyrak – a light well illuminating the lobby. The design of the recreational space and premises is designed in very warm, noble combinations of colors, with small decorative belts. All the rooms are distinguished by the functionalism of educational and creative facilities, that is, convenience and comfort is the main condition in creating an interior environment. Their space only remotely reflects the space of the yurt, but the facades, lined with transparent glazing with a continuous unobtrusive ornamental carpet around the perimeter of the volume, directly refer us to the deeply national traditions. A similar approach is very often found in the modern architecture of China when the unobtrusive decor of the facades is always associated with the traditions of Chinese culture.

Another object whose form is directly related to the Kazakh national architectural traditions is *the Palace of Independence* (Figure 6) opened on December 15, 2008. The monumental blue building stands out with an unusual solution to the facades, the bearing walls are treated like uyekekerege (wooden lattice wall construction) – yurts.

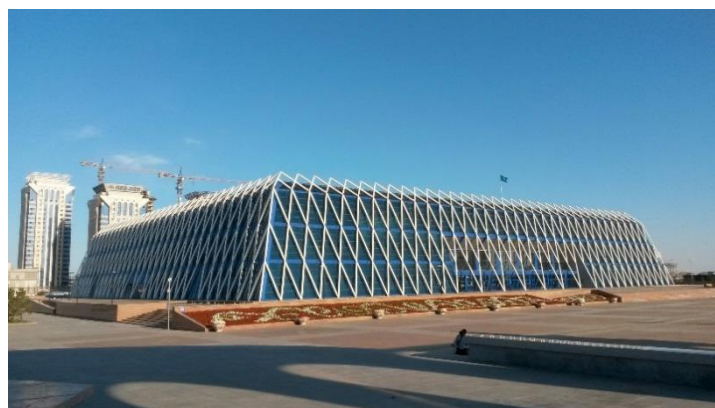


Figure 6: The Palace of Independence, Nur-Sultan, 2008

In the views of people, the word "palace" is associated with the monumental classical order types of buildings, in this case – with a trapezoidal, horizontally stretched building, covered with a metal lattice grid around the perimeter of the facades. The rhythm of light lattice intersections against the background of continuous glazing with dark blue glass surprises with its festivity and unusual expression of an object of state importance. It is intended to be in the epicenter of the political and cultural life of the country: all international events, conferences, symposia, etc. take place here. Therefore, multifunctional tasks should be solved by modern methods, and therefore the interior has transforming spaces that can be used for different purposes. However, the architect had to use national cultural codes in artistic and figurative terms. In solving this task, the author of the project, the Turkish architect Gultekin Linea (Sembolİnşaat construction company), gives us another example of how to rethink the text of the Kazakh national culture. Despite the marked inconsistency of the form with the prevailing ideas of the "palace", the motives that guided the architect are clear (kerege lattices). However, it is still difficult to "read" them without additional comments from the author even to ethnic representatives of the Kazakh nation.

The image of the yurt is central in the search for national identity in the architecture of Kazakhstan at all times. In the above example, we are faced with another interpretation of the themes of the Kazakh mobile type of dwelling – the yurt. Its constructive element named “kerege” in recent years has found a variety of interpretations, especially in interior design.

A striking example of the synthesis of European and Oriental motifs using the principles of organizing the space of a mobile type of dwelling is presented in the architectural and artistic decoration of the Opera and Ballet Theater “*Astana-Opera*” in the capital.

The project of the building is a classic European order architecture (the idea of Renato Archetti, architect BejetPakcoli, Kazakh sculptors: M. Mansurov, T. Ermekov, K. Nurbaturov), only in the interior design, in the details of architecture and in sculptural plastics national themes are used. The Italian architects, especially designers, did everything so that in the interior space we would be able to find ourselves in our element – in a cultural space of a nomadic type. Therefore, we shall see the image of the shanyrak in the main lobby of the theater, and on the second tier, in the wall paintings, there are landscapes of native spaces. An abundance of details, in which the Kazakh ornament is present, is found everywhere: from capitals of orders to the decor of chairs. Such an approach in solving questions of national identity was peculiar in the former architectural practice of the country.

In general, it is not quite in a dimensional composition of architecture, but rather in the interior design interpretations on ethnic themes occurred. The widest field of manifestations of the national, which has always been present in the projects, when the architects faced such tasks, can be found here.

The most perfect example is the interior design of the *Eternal Sky cafe* in Nur-Sultan. The authors of the project sought to rethink the existing arsenal of artistic expression of the mobile design of the nomadic dwellings but using direct quotations only in the details of the decor (INK Architects company, architect N. Kamitov). The dome part (shanyrak) – the cafe's ceiling – was created by a concentric game of rhombic and rectangular wooden types of forms (veneer), representing the firmament. The oblique round shape of the outer glass walls of the restaurant is rhythmically clearly separated from the inside by wooden frames, which is associated with the image of kerege: the walls of the yurt. As a result, the ceiling of the interior received elements resembling modern parametric architecture, but at the same time the visitor does not leave the feeling that he is in a familiar space of a nomadic dwelling. The authors of the project initially faced the task of getting as close as possible to the classical analogues of folk culture, therefore, the interior retains the structure of the decorative solution of the space, typical of the traditional dwelling. Even the ornamental series is large-scale, which is characteristic of the design of the Kazakh yurt.

As modern practice shows, the above list of examples indicates that the search for a new interpretation of the old form is endless.

INK Architects company is working generally on architectural projects and creates objects of an international and industrial style solution. However, among the company's interior design projects there is the five-star *Hilton Hotel* in Nur-Sultan, where we can trace an unusual interpretation of the historical context in the space of a modern comfortable environment once again. The nature and history of Sary-Arka (architect N. Kamitov, 2017) served as the conceptual basis for interior design, which expresses the golden ear as a symbol of the Soviet history of the region (the symbol of virgin soil when the city was called Tselinograd); the dry golden tree is an interpretation of the nature of the steppe, and the image of a soaring golden eagle as a symbol of a sovereign country with a nomadic past.

Sary-Arka is the Kazakh name for a large area of the steppe landscape of Central Kazakhstan, called “virgin land” by Nikita Khrushchev. It is glorified by the poets and music of the national composer Kurmangazy. At the same time, it is one of the breadbaskets of the Soviet empire, and the golden ear is the main symbol of the history of the entire region of the Soviet era. Thus, the authors of the project relied on the historical context of a bygone, but still close to the older generation of Kazakhstan people era.

In this case, the architects use different approaches in solving not only the architectural form itself, but the interior design first and foremost reflects the diversity of searches for a national and regional identity of the environmental space.

NEW OPTIONS FOR THE USE OF TEXTS OF KAZAKH CULTURE

Despite the direct citation or interpretation of the text of a national culture, a number of designers treat original sources from new positions. For example, a symbiosis of Eastern and European traditions in the form of architectural deconstruction, when the starting point is almost eroded or even impossible to “read” it in the figurative expression of architecture.

However, it is possible to detect the moment of the symbiosis of forms if you “arm yourself with knowledge” (explanations) from the author of the project. There are many such examples in the construction of the republic, and it should be noted that the grandiose project to build a new capital Nur-Sultan, like other cities of the country, is attended by architects from around the world. Such a situation has actually always been present in world history and is characteristic of modern times; all the more interesting is how the ethnic regional context is interpreted by representatives of a different culture.

An example of this is the architecture of the *Central Concert Hall “Kazakhstan”* in Nur-Sultan by the Italian master Manfredo Nicoletti. This is, perhaps, the first image of the architectural body radically different from all previous experiences in the urban environment in the country as a whole. Of course, there are other examples of the use of deconstruction in architecture, but the project of M. Nicoletti is still more radical. It is not by chance that from the moment of construction it became an object of study: geometry, the metaphorical transfer of meanings in three-dimensional terms, a unique, original solution of constructive problems – all this is already in the focus of scientific research. Certainly, an unusual interpretation of the form attracts attention: the petals of a blue flower – roses – unfolding in the space of a steppe landscape. According to the authors, this meant a powerful potential for flourishing, which is the best way to meet the goals and prospects of the new capital.

The architecture itself belongs to the international style, but in search of form, according to M. Nicoletti, as a starting point in the figurative decision of the composition, the author of the project relied on the heritage of Kazakh folk culture. However, how can we “read” them in an already materialized form?

Thus, the external volumes of the architecture of a “drop-down form” stretch on the flat area of the south side of AkOrda (presidential residence) and look, indeed, as an expressive, dynamic form of the “flower of the desert” (Kisamedin, 2009), striking the interior with an unusual interpretation. The stereotype of the external volume and the internal space of theaters and concert halls have already been formed in our minds, but we have a completely different image, which is difficult to compare with all past architectural heritage (Figure 7).



Figure 7: The Central Concert Hall “Kazakhstan”, 2009

The author’s statement is the following: “...I wanted to recreate a sense of the proportions of the square in front of the Romans Pantheon in the lobby of the concert hall in Nur-Sultan, where the vertical of the Egyptian obelisk in the square would resemble a spiral staircase in the lobby, and the role of the Pantheon would be performed by the wall of the concert hall, tailored as a wooden lacquered dombra surface...” (Kisamedin, 2009). However, it is very difficult to draw parallels with classical architecture; rather the author mentally represented the area, its parameters, which are unknown to Kazakhstani people.

The first thing that the person notices in the architectural composition of the Central Concert Hall “Kazakhstan” is the deconstruction of the form: there is no typical monumentality in it, and despite the saturated greenish-blue color of the facade (in the author’s project, the color was silver-white), it is not heavyweight, but the abundance of the play of lights and shadows is ensured by the curvilinear form of space itself, which is “wrapped up” in a circular motion of the building structure. Eight concave walls, four on each side of the “embrace” (Kisamedin, 2009) trapezoid hall. It has an unusual combination of materials, such as glass, metals, wood, creating a contrast of color and tonal relationships.

In general, this is an example of how the architect was striving for a symbiosis of two cultural traditions. Interestingly, the author used the image of the folk instrument and the classics of Italian architecture. We are used to seeing quotations from decorative and applied arts in Kazakhstan architecture, such as ornament. However, the form and structural details of the yurt has always been the most popular, and in this case, the Italian master took the image of the dombra as a starting point. The functional purpose of the building, of course, played, in this case, the main role in the choice of imaginative associations. It is the wooden bosom of the dombra that contrasts in the lobby of the hall, and the spiral staircase is perceived as a very light element in space, emphasizing the scale of the whole space.

It is necessary to agree with G. Kisamedin that if it were not for this huge volume, symbolizing the dombra, the interior would be just another variation of similar modern technological types of structures. The general image is the sculptural architecture, in which “...the roof, the apertures and even the main entrance” were hidden from the eyes (Kisamedin, 2009). The author of the project created a feeling of penetration into the depths of the natural form of the flower, consisting of individual petals, in the center of which its core unfolds (which is inherent in any kind of flower).

As we can see in this example, the issues of national culture were rather implied and transformed into its qualitatively new variations. The same is observed in architecture, for example, in Guangzhou, where the traditions of Chinese culture found a new expression in the architectural and spatial solution of the form of the Guangzhou Circle complex (Italian architect Joseph Di Pasquale, 2013). This is an interpretation of the shape of the jade disc, a subject in Chinese culture symbolizing material and spiritual wealth. The reflection of the building complex in the water creates the number eight, complementing the image with another ancient symbol. In the latter case, both the volume of the form and the illusion of reflection in the water are a direct reference to the age-old Chinese traditions.

If in the modern world architectural practice, the authors of the projects are masters from various regions of the world, this does not detract from the requirements for the issues of regional national identity. M. Nicoletti and his son Lukas created in the capital of Kazakhstan such an architecture, in which they synthesized European classics, Kazakh folk traditions, and modern technologies.

Nevertheless, for the inexperienced look of the average person, this architecture is an entirely modern building, which is perceived as another object of cultural leisure, where it is very pleasant to stay. The external parameters of the form attract people to a circular movement around the building in order to view it from all sides. That is, the architect created not just a very dynamic image of the form but created a kind of intrigue that prompted visitors to move around the building. With all this, the form itself violates the principles of the classical architectural scale, since such important scale units of measure as the door are hidden from view, and there are no openings: only a holistic volume of “petals” assembled into a single center.

This example is also evidence of changes in the issues of shaping the architecture of the XX-XXI centuries, when in world practice the previous stereotypes of interpretation were overcome, in particular, reliance on purely linear geometric parameters in solving architectural and spatial problems. Today there are almost no design barriers for the implementation of the most complex curved shape types. As known, besides architecture-sculpture, expressive architecture and deconstruction in the architecture of recent years, a significant place is given to the concept of “non-linear architecture” (the main EXPO object in Nur-Sultan, 2017)

The same principle of a dynamically developing form was used in the project of V. Laptev in the architecture of the *Central Museum of Kazakhstan* in Nur-Sultan. The road to the main entrance is surrounded by a “rocky-shape” wall, “rugged” with petroglyphs. As known, a large number of petroglyphs are preserved in the republic. In this regard, the author of the project interprets the image of the museum through the history of its region, in which the spiritual heritage of the Andronovo and Saka periods (II-I millennium BC) is recognized as the foundation of the culture of nomads of all time, including the Kazakh nation. Thus, the theme of the history of the place is clearly seen in the architectural composition, while the interior is subordinated to the functional requirements imposed on such objects. Most young Kazakhstanis are well acquainted with the monuments of ancient graphics in the form of petroglyphs, found on the map of Kazakhstan, from the school program. This is a direct result of the acquisition of sovereignty by the country after the collapse of the former Soviet empire. In this connection, V. Laptev’s interpretation of the architectural form of the museum through the context of the regional cultural history is understandable to the younger generation.

The given example reflects the search for regional national identity through the manifestation of the depths of the historical heritage; it was already manifested at the stage of completion of all construction works of the main objects. In the modern architectural practice of Nur-Sultan, there are other trends. Therefore, along with the national, in the arsenal of designers in recent years, there are also unusual approaches: the use of a subject image in solving architectural composition. For example, one of the objects of the work of Sh. Mataybekov: a jug-restaurant (*Astana Music Hall* restaurant, 2012). On the line of intersection of the main streets of Nur-Sultan there is a huge, well-known to all, giant hum (a jug). We are the first to see such an ironic gesture in the works of the Kazakhstani master when the form of a traditional household object is treated as an architectural form, but in the world practice such variations have been known for a long time. The culture of postmodernism has mixed all the style principles, and all the frameworks have been destroyed, and this principle is also practiced by Kazakhstani masters of the post-Soviet period. This example shows that the creative style of Russian architects has seriously changed during the period of active construction in Nur-Sultan and, of course, in other cities of the republic.

THE SEARCH FOR NATIONAL MOTIVES IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF NUR-SULTAN’S RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Along with landmark objects in the architecture of Nur-Sultan, there are many examples of the use of national themes in the construction of residential neighborhoods. Unlike the Soviet practice of the facelessness of this part of the urban environment, in modern construction, each quarter has its own distinctive features. That is, the issues of regional identity, in this case, are particularly acute in general. No one is satisfied with the complete leveling of the figurative expression and the identity, the feature of the “face” of the place is important for all designers of Kazakhstani cities. The topic of national identity, or the use of traditional cultural codes of consciousness, in this case, is overwhelmingly decided by the interpretation of folk classics in modern forms.

For example, the residential complex “Arman” (architects: V. Laptev, E. Zhuravleva, K. Lebold, 2005) in the Sary-ark area, on the Esil River embankment in Nur-Sultan, has a bizarre combination of the ideas of rationalism, functionalism and

a long-tier step design with the features of eastern religious architecture in the figurative solution. Located on the right bank of Esil River, this quarter with its entire appearance resembles a strict, almost engraved gradation of pyramidal-conical, concluding with spires, forms. A contrasting color palette of facades complements the image of the strict geometry of the entire complex. Outwardly, this architectural composition is a synthesis of Eastern traditions and traditions of constructivism, which, unfortunately, have a tendency to the excessive graphic quality of figurative expression. However, stylistically, their form fits into the principle of historicism, which is so often used in the world architecture of the XX-XXI centuries.

In general, for all the time of construction of the city, many residential neighborhoods have been erected, each of which has its own name: "Italian Quarter", "Barcelona", "Fairy Tale", "Premium Plaza", "Millennium Park", "Avicenna", "Expo Plaza", "Expo Town", etc. The names themselves already trace the stylistic features of these areas of the city, in which there are many eclecticism and modern trends in architectural practice, which sometimes represent very worthy aesthetic forms. Along with European classics, naturally, there is a synthesis with Eastern traditions.

To be fair, it should be noted that Eastern architectural traditions are less successfully interpreted in contrast to European stylistic forms, although in most cases errors and failures are associated with haste, with the tremendous pace of city construction. For example, the imaginative solution of the architecture of the residential complex "Millennium Park" refers to the Central Asian types of religious buildings, in which the prevalence of graphics in the overall composition of forms is noted.

The name of the complex itself is not accidental: 10-story buildings personify the thousand-year history of the region since they are located on one of the key places of the urban environment, on the line of the Mynzhyldyk alley – translated from Kazakh as the "Millennium Alley". In terms of the development of the metropolis, the alley continues the Nurzhol line of construction outside the main square, extending it to the right bank of the river. The name of the alley indicates the desire of the authors to "revive" the centuries-old history of the region. Therefore, it is not by chance that in their figurative solution we can observe the interpretation of Central Asian architecture: the vertical division of the facades with lancet forms imitating the traditional arcade, accentuated by angular triangular "wings" in the corners, and finally, a square openwork ornamental "crown" at the top.

DISCUSSION

Similar examples when one can observe the use of the stylistic features of the medieval architecture of the region, along with the classic mobile form of the yurt, are sufficient in the construction of Nur-Sultan. As we can see, historical heritage is an inexhaustible source.

The above list of examples is only part of a huge reservoir, affecting the construction of the city, positioned by the president of one of the logistics centers not only on the map of Kazakhstan but also at the new turn of the development of the Great Silk Road of Eurasia. National features in its appearance sought to reflect in different ways and varying degrees of reading nomadic cultural codes of consciousness.

On the basis of the above, it can be stated that in matters of national identity in the architecture of post-Soviet Kazakhstan, we are faced with the transformation of traditions in accordance with the global development trends that are characteristic of the processes of modern urbanism. In contrast to the Soviet period, there is an expansion of general ideas about the national cultural heritage, expanding the range of searches. In this regard, along with the nomadic experience, the entire historical experience of Central Asian origin is subject to rethinking. The history of the region itself and nature become active participants in thinking about creating an architectural image, architectural space, and plastics of volumes of architectural forms.

Naturally, the issues of national and regional identity are manifested not only in the architecture of public buildings. They are just as important in the architecture of residential complexes, especially for Kazakhstani designers.

CONCLUSION

National identity in the architecture of Nur-Sultan creates its own imaginative design based on the synthesis of modern technological solutions and different facets of reading the texts of cultural heritage. The research allows us to make the following conclusions: 1) in the construction of the new capital of Kazakhstan, Nur-Sultan city, the political will of the new government is manifested. In a series of "steps" to achieve the goals set, the President Nazarbayev seeks to identify and lay down a new form of state arrangement, including the issues of identity of the country's place on the map. That is, a modern type of urbanization is needed (albeit an international one most of all), which is able to distinguish the space of this "place" in the circle of neighboring cultures; 2) the pursuit of renewal and reliance on enduring cultural values from national heritage provided a guide to action in the construction of symbolic and religious objects, designed to demonstrate communication, the mantle of time: past, present, and future; 3) in search of national identity in architectural and artistic compositions, legend, myth, history, historical cultural context and nature of the region as the factors that formed the national cultural codes of consciousness of the nomads of Eurasia were the conceptual foundations of many projects of the iconic structures of Nur-Sultan; 4) both the common historical cultural layer in the form of heritage of the memorial-cult type of medieval architecture and classical samples of oriental dome types of structures, and the interpretation of the motifs

of the form of the Kazakh traditional mobile home, called the yurt, remain topical; 5) with all the marks of the Kazakh national culture's text, the architectural form is focused on the level of technological comfort of the modern world; it is entirely connected with the development of new technologies and meets the requirements of the modern construction industry; 6) the architectural innovations of Nur-Sultan are perceived by the population primarily from the point of view of their aesthetic and functional advantages. The semantic content in the form of national features of figurative expression is comprehended mainly only through additional explanations of the authors' projects.

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