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INTERPRETATION OF THE ARCHITECTURE OF MODERN KAZAKHSTAN MOSQUES THROUGH THE EXAMPLE OF T. ABILDA AND SH. YUSSUPOV PROJECTS

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Abstract

The formation of Kazakhstani architecture is marked by both gradual changes and creative breakthroughs: starting from the search for innovation in the Soviet Era to national and regional features in the post-Soviet period. Many generations of talented masters have affected the formation of unique appearances of major Kazakh cities. Traditional forms and silhouettes, combined with the creativity and innovativeness of architects of the Independence Period in a regional context make up the basis for the figurative interpretation of regional meanings in the modern architecture of Kazakhstan. The diversity of individual architects' professional approaches shapes a complex, original image of Kazakhstani objects. A study of compositional and shape-generating techniques will allow determining the role of Kazakhstani architects' creative activity in providing uniqueness in Kazakhstan's architecture. This research's issue is associated with the insufficient state of knowledge of modern Kazakhstani architects' creative and authorial strategies. Religious structures are among the most significant architectural facilities reflecting the dynamics of historical-cultural, socio-economic and technological transformations of the country's transition period. This is due to the population's return to their roots and traditional faith, which has affected the intensive construction of new mosques and religious schools. The purpose of this study is to identify the compositional principles of the modern sacred architecture in Kazakhstan, using the creative activity of architects Tolegen Abilda and Shukhrat Yussupov as an example: the way the Islamic traditions are interpreted in the post-Soviet context in terms of regional identity. The research methodology is based on an integrated approach, comprising an analysis of the spatial and compositional specific features of modern mosque buildings and the urban planning role of the facilities under consideration. The interviews held with the above-mentioned architects are aimed at identifying the specific features of their creative activity, the tools for interpreting traditions and innovative solutions.

Keywords: mosque architecture, author's interpretation, volumetric and spatial composition, regional identity, traditions, innovation

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INTRODUCTION

The professional activity of Kazakhstan's architects started in challenging environment, when architecture was formed under the impact of a series of political conflicts and economic upheavals, sometimes followed by periods of stable development. In the context of global architectural trends and attainment of Independence, the Kazakhstani architects faced the challenges of developing new design strategies in form shaping, imaginative and compositional conceptions (Abdrassilova & Danibekova, 2021). The architecture of religious buildings especially felt the impact of both global and regional challenges.

Historically it is known that hundreds of mosques were operating in the territory of modern Kazakhstan before 1917, but in the 1930s, they were closed and destroyed in large numbers. The Soviet era of Kazakhstan's development was marked by almost a full elimination of the institutional Islamic infrastructure, and only a handful of mosques remained operational by 1990. At the cusp of the 20-21 centuries the post-Soviet society of Kazakhstan had been experiencing the self-identification and return of national traditions process (Lyukhurov, 2025). The Law "On Free Exercise of Religion and Religious Organizations", adopted in 1992 and guaranteed every citizen's right to freedom of religion after the Soviet regime's restrictions activated the countrywide construction of the mosques, the imaginative solution thereof was inclined to the interrelation with a local cultural context (Kikimbayev, 2023; the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 1128-XII, 1992). The mosques of this period were the result of a common task among local architects to search for a national and regional imagery for the religious architecture of the new Kazakhstan.

The change in the government's political orientation from atheism to support for religious denominations has led to the widespread construction of mosques, churches, synagogues and other institutions in Kazakhstan. In 1991, there were 68 mosques in Kazakhstan, and by 2026, their number increased to 2,857, that is a 42-fold increase (Zhandossova et al., 2025). The architecture of Kazakhstan's mosques, including some of the largest ones (for example, the Khazret Sultan Mosque in Astana (architect Sagyndyk Zhanbolatov, 2012) and the Central Mosque of Almaty (architects Sultan Baimagambetov, Zhanabai Sharapiev, Kazbek Zharylgapov, 1999), mainly adheres to traditional visualization.

An important aspect of imparting uniqueness to a facility via its regional identity is the architect's creative vision through an individual style. The author's personal vision and authentic craftsmanship, nurtured within local specific features, shape a regionally sensitive architectural and spatial environment (Abdrassilova & Murzagaliyeva, 2020, Danibekova et al., 2025). It is often the case, that an architect's idiom evolves and transforms under the influence of

collaborative design practice, where the design process takes the form of a field for negotiations (Ferreira, 2025).

The research range of issues lies in the insufficient study of compositional and form-shaping techniques, as well as in the interpretation of traditions and innovative solutions in the creative activity of modern Kazakhstani architects. The creative activity of the most modern Kazakhstani architects represents a rich resource to determine the mechanisms for forming regional identity in the country's architecture and requires a comprehensive study. Currently, one can observe a gradual shaping of a research foundation focused on the professional activities of Kazakhstani architectural masters. For instance, domestic scholars have conducted an analysis of the works by innovators of the Kazakhstani architecture (Abdrassilova & Aukhadiyeva, 2021, Danibekova, et al., 2026).

At the background of thousands of typologically recognizable structures, one can clearly distinguish those whose morphology utilizes new symbolic attributes: these include the mosque designs done by architects Tolegen Abilda and Shukhrat Yussupov. The creative activity of these two architects is of scientific and practical interest as the examples of new approaches to form shaping that expand the boundaries of the traditional understanding of the sacral facilities. The article considers three mosques: the "Imangali" in Atyrau city, the "Mashkhur Zhusup" in Pavlodar city and the "Vainakh" in Almaty city.

The article materials are based on a scientific generalization of the outcomes of compositional-spatial, comparative and urban planning analysis. Since architects T. Abilda and Sh. Yussupov are active designers, the authors have found it important to conduct an expert interview with them, the process of which is described in the article. This research work focuses on their significant examples of shaping modern sacral architecture in Kazakhstan during the formation of the young republic. Their works are based on a synthesis of the Islamic architectural canons, Kazakh cultural images and innovative compositional techniques from regional traditions and until recently, designer approaches had not been studied in detail.

Architects Tolegen Syzdykuly Abilda and Shukhrat Zainitdinovich Yussupov are among the modern masters of Kazakhstani architecture, whose creative activity covers an important period in the history of Kazakhstan and reflects significant epochal changes in the political and socio-cultural spheres of the country at the cusp of the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as the main trends in the development of domestic architecture. Their creative activity started in the late 1970s and evolved over decades at the AlmatyGiproGor-1 Design Institute LLP (AlmatyGiproGor-1 Design Institute LLC), from project architects to heads of the architectural and construction department. This generation of domestic architects has made a multifaceted contribution to the modern architecture of

Kazakhstan. In particular, this has been manifested itself in their attention to the continuance of traditions combined with new architectural trends and advanced technologies.

The most famous works of these architects include mosque buildings with distinctive architecture, which have become notable urban planning and architectural objects, combining the traditions of Islamic architecture with modern compositional solutions. A study of T. Abilda's and Sh. Yusupov's creative activity's specific features, based on the example of mosque designs, will allow determining their contribution to the development of modern architecture in Kazakhstan, in particular mosques, and identify general trends in forming concepts of regional identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current research of religious, in particular Islamic buildings, are associated with the study of modern trends in the development of mosque architecture in the 21st century and the issues of rethinking their images (Shukurov, 2014; Shanbayeva et al., 2024; Putra et al., 2025; Mertýürek & Demırbas, 2023; Al-Tamimi & Pankina, 2024).

The publications devoted to the unique creative activity of individual architects, pay special attention to the role their approaches and principles of architectural thinking have played in the design, as well as in the form-shaping concepts of the 20th and 21st centuries. They include: a study of digital and parametric aspects in Zaha Hadid creative activity (Coskun, 2024); identification of energy efficiency, environmental friendliness and innovation as the conceptual basis of Norman Foster's projects (Abdrassilova & Onichshenko, 2024); review of the works of architect Saken Narynov, an innovator of Kazakhstani architecture (Abdrassilova & Aukhadiyeva, 2021); a study of methods for rethinking forms in the creative activity of Tolegen Abilda (Kisamedin, 2012); definition of design principles in the works of Toyo Ito (Onichshenko, 2016). Single studies address the issues of co-authorship in architecture, which role is assigned to each participant in the design process, and the relationship with innovations (Marcos et al., 2024; Combrinck & Porter, 2021).

Current studies of the mosque architecture in Kazakhstan reflect immediate issues:

- analysis of planning, volumetric-spatial solutions and decorative design, identifying factors that shape regional identity and uncovering modern trends regarding Islamic culture buildings (Galimzhanova et al., 2020; Sadykova, 2014);
- exploring conventional specific features regarding shaping regional mosque architecture of Eastern and Western Kazakhstan, the impact of ethnocultural

- foundations and motifs, discovery of historical continuity (Baitenov, 2024; Tanzharykova & Maulenova, 2024);
- an interdisciplinary approach towards the study of mosque interiors, the role of ornament in symbolization, tradition and innovation, in the concept of fractals, etc. (Shklyayeva, 2016; Morali & Topsakal, 2025; Galimzhanova, 2017).

A conducted review of the current status of mosque knowledge in Kazakhstan has shown that various researchers considered individual structures, conducted retrospective analyses of mosque buildings, identified the layout, volumetric and spatial specific features of a number of modern structures, revealed historical continuity and made attempts to define regional identity and the factors that shaped it, as well as published publications.

Meanwhile, there is insufficient revelation of the principles which are used to realize regional identity directly at the compositional level: the arrangement of spatial structure, silhouette construction, relationship between the entrance area and the main volume and interpretation of traditional architectural archetypes. It is also worth noting a trace amount of the research works focused on the author's approaches of Kazakhstani architects who affected the development of post-Soviet mosque architecture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is based on a comprehensive exploring of the creative specific features of architects T. Abilda and Sh.Yussupov, using the example of a contemporary Kazakhstani mosque: compositional-spatial analysis, comparative analysis and interviews. Identifying visual and figurative features and characteristics of forming has applied a method of scientific generalization.

Architects T. Abilda and Sh.Yussupov took part in two semi-structured face-to-face interviews as part of the qualitative portion of the research work. Each interview lasted approximately forty minutes and was conducted on March 19, 2026 at the "90th Anniversary of the Union of Architects of the Republic of Kazakhstan" "Architecture of Three Generations" Anniversary Event at the National Central Museum in Almaty. Before holding the interviews, the participants were explained the goal of the study, and they provided their consent to audio recording. The main topics of the 10 questions asked during the interviews included mosque design methods used by architects, their interpretation of conventional architectural forms and symbols, regional identity, as well as the evolution of a modern sacral architecture. The audio recordings were fully deciphered after the interviews. The architects' statements were grouped into key topics and correlated with the outcomes of the compositional-

spatial and comparative analysis of the selected mosques within a thematic analysis of the data obtained during the interview.

The mosque buildings we have reviewed are the outcomes of projects completed under the leadership of T. Abilda or Sh. Yussupov as part of a creative team, where the authorship of the projects in public space is represented by a variable recognition of the leadership. These include: The Imangali Mosque in Atyrau city (1999-2001, architects Sh. Yussupov, T. Abilda, N. Popova); the Mosque named after Mashkhur Zhusup in Pavlodar city (2000-2001, architects T. Abilda, Sh. Yussupov, S. Dautov, S. Nurbai); the Vainakh Community Mosque in Almaty city (2004, architects T. Abilda, S. Nurbai, Sh. Yussupov).

The issue of individual and collective creative activity in architecture is related to the review of authorial strategies in piece of architecture (Ferreira, 2025). The facilities we have selected for the study are the examples of preserving the integrity of the author's idea, based on the coordinated distribution of each participant's contributions.

The chief architect of the Imangali Mosque project in Atyrau city is Shukhrat Yussupov, and Tolegen Abilda is a member of the creative team. The monumental and imposing appearance of the mosque, with its twenty-three-metre blue dome and two twenty-metre minarets, is based on the classical principles of the Islamic art of building.

The designer of the Pavlodar Central Mosque with its blue tower dome is Tolegen Abilda, and Shukhrat Yussupov is a member of the design team. The large-scale composition with a domed and tented roof solution for the main volume (the dome is fifty-four metres high) is emphasized by a central staircase structured in successive tiers and a main portal-gabled niche with sixty-three-metre-high minarets. The structure is named after Mashkhur Zhusup (1858-1931), a Kazakh poet, thinker, historian and ethnographer, who researched the culture and everyday life of the clans and tribes of Northern and Central Kazakhstan, and is located in the city centre.

Tolegen Abilda served as the chief architect for the Vainakh Mosque of regional significance, but a majestic building for the Chechen and Ingush diasporas of Almaty city, and the creative team included Shukhrat Yussupov and Sakabai Nurbai.

The examples of mosques we have reviewed, where T. Abilda and Sh. Yussupov alternated as chief architects, are of particular interest in determining the role of the architects' creative strategies in shaping the author's interpretation of the image. The research methodology we have used will allow identifying the specific features of the objects, and what compositional methods and means prevail the form shaping process.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The review of these examples will enable determining the architectural specific features of the facilities, the author's strategies and their impact on the form shaping process in the architecture of a modern Kazakhstani mosque.

Town-Planning Analysis of the Facilities

The Mashkhur Zhusup Mosque is located in the central part of Pavlodar city, limited by major city motor-roads. Pavlodar is a regional centre, a city in north-eastern Kazakhstan with a population of 335,000 people. One of the city's iconic landmarks is a long riverwalk along the Irtysh River. The mosque is located within the urban planning axis, in the direction of the riverwalk and the city beach. This visual planning axis embraces important city landmarks such as the Ice Palace, the Schoolchildren's Palace, the Regional Court and the City Hall, as well as extensively landscaped area, dominated by a high dome and minarets of the mosque - a key landmark in the structure of a large city block (Figure 1).

The Imangali Mosque is located on a city main near the central square of Atyrau and, alongside with it shapes an open public and cultural space, simultaneously serving as its dominant feature. Atyrau is a city in Western Kazakhstan on the Ural River with a population of 320,000 people. The mosque building is integrated into the citywide public facilities system, but its interaction with the river is fragmented, primarily on the level of the urban landscape (Figure 2).

The Vainakh Mosque's placement in the urban planning context in Almaty differs radically from the placement of mosques in Atyrau and Pavlodar cities. Almaty, the former capital of Kazakhstan (until 1997), is a major metropolitan city of the republican significance, with a population of over 2,200,000 people. The mosque is located in the area of low-rise buildings in the Zhetysay District – one of the city's administrative-territorial units. A compact volume of the building aligns with its position nature: there is an emphasis of a local urban planning status of the facility as a district compositional focal point within a large metropolitan city (Figure 3). In the meantime, there is a reading-out of a narrow sphere of cultural and ethnic function of the sacral space, oriented primarily towards local residents of the region and representatives of specific diasporas.



Figure 1: Mashkhur Zhusup Mosque in Pavlodar city (2000–2001; architects T. Abilda, Sh. Yussupov, S. Dautov, & S. Nurbai)

- (a) Photographic documentation of the Mashkhur Zhusup Mosque.
- (b) The mosque's peshtak (main entrance portal).
- (c) Location of the Mashkhur Zhusup Mosque and other local mosques in the city.
- (d) Urban planning organization of the mosque within the urban structure.

Source: (a) Authors' photograph; (b) Kisamedin (2012); (c–d) Prepared by the authors.

The magnificent silhouettes of the Imangali Mosque in Atyrau city and the Mosque named after Mashkhur Zhusup in Pavlodar city serve as compositional accents and can be seen from various locations. Each building, located in an open city square, creates a distinct sacred space with a special atmosphere of tranquility and harmony. This is the outcome of compositional integrity and, as a consequence, the urban-planning significance of each facility.

Architect Peter Zumthor associates the method of arranging a verified architectural space with the “image of place” and building attributes such as “balance”, “integrity” and “strength” and in general, with “regional rationality” (Bystrova, 2018). One can trace the indications that architects are turning to this method to achieve the organic integration of mosques into the modern urban-

planning context. A commonality of compositional principles can be noted: the laconic yet stepped volumetric-spatial arrangement of the mosques is consistently revealed to a viewer through an interesting interplay of forms and shadows. In the meantime, there is a difference: the Imangali Mosque is simultaneously a massive and visually lightweight building, integrated into the space of the city square in Atyrau, forming a single compositional integrity with it. The solemn and representative silhouette of the Mashkhur Zhusup Mosque, in contrast, prevails and subjugates its surroundings as a major religious centre of regional significance in Pavlodar.

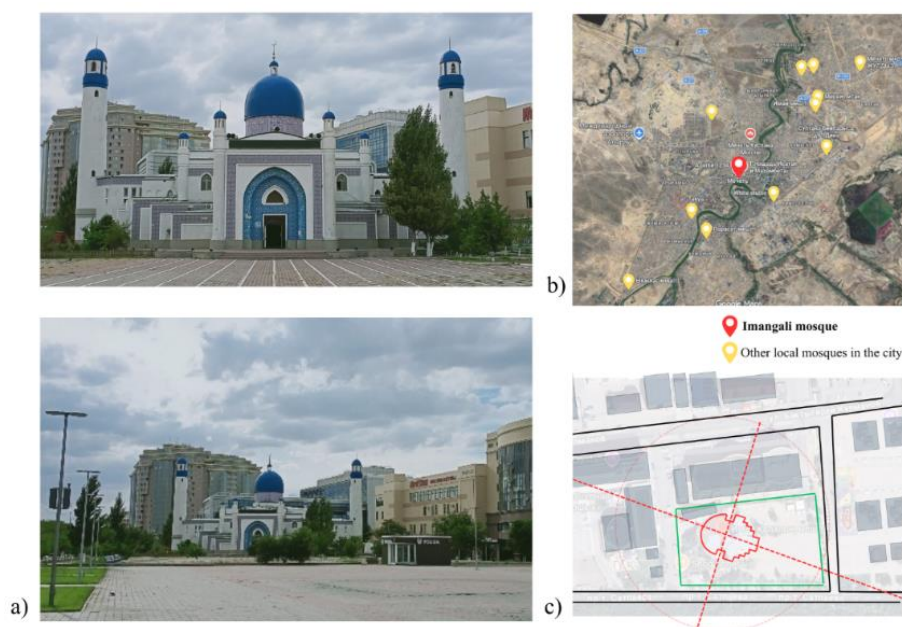


Figure 2: Imangali Mosque in Atyrau city (1999–2001; architects Sh. Yusupov, T. Abilda, and N. Popova)

- (a) Photographic documentation of the Imangali Mosque. Source: Authors' photographs.
- (b) Location of the Imangali Mosque and other local mosques in the city.
- (c) Urban planning organization of the mosque within the urban structure.

Source: (a) Authors' photograph; (b–c) Prepared by the authors.

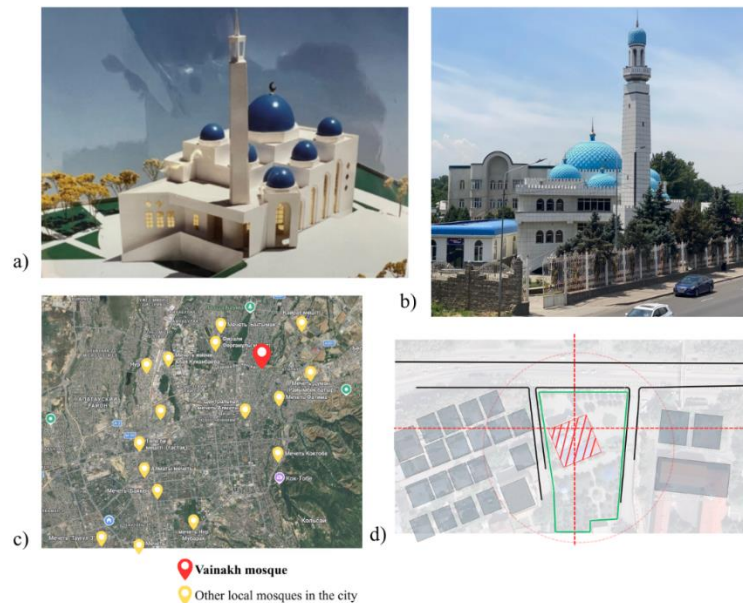


Figure 3: Vainakh Mosque in Almaty city (2004; architects T. Abilda, S. Nurbai, & Sh. Yussupov)

(a) Architectural model of the Vainakh Mosque in Almaty (created by T. Abilda and S. Nurbai).

(b) Photographic documentation of the Vainakh Mosque.

(c) Location of the Vainakh Mosque and other local mosques in the city.

(d) Urban planning organization of the mosque within the urban structure.

Source: (a) Photograph from the personal archive of T. Abilda; (b) Authors' photograph; (c–d)

Prepared by the authors.

Compositional-Spatial Analysis

The conventional architecture of sacral structures in Kazakhstan and Central Asia is marked by monumentality and symmetry (Abdrassilova, Murzagaliyeva & Kuc, 2021). All three modern facilities under consideration share the principle of strict centric hierarchy, where the dome serves as both the primary geometric centre and the spatial focal point it creates. The expressive silhouettes and plasticity of the elevations of the mosque buildings we are studying have been achieved through the contrast and rhythmicity of the rows of cascading volumes, by alternation of openings, and arranging the main entrances. Thus, one can note the commonality in the axial symmetry of the mosques in Atyrau and Pavlodar, as well as the variability of compositional methods in the distribution of masses and proportionality relations in the forms.

The compositions of buildings in Pavlodar and Atyrau are characteristic of a radial arrangement of forms, and the mosque in Almaty - of a more complex

fractal hierarchy. The metrical repetition of five smaller domes around the main large volume builds a multi-level plastic pattern.

The planning structure of the Imangali Mosque is based on the interconnection of the main compositional axes along which the rooms and architectural elements are arranged. The volumetric and spatial solution is built on a cascading system of architectural forms of the main and auxiliary rooms and is arranged in a static, symmetrical composition. Each element, varying in size, is rhythmically repeated while maintaining proportions. There is a dome on a tall twenty-three-metre-high drum above the intersection of the main axes. The main transverse axis of the building is emphasized by more than twenty metres high minarets on both sides, while the corners of the square second-story volume formed in the centre under the dome are fixed by low, slender turrets. The outline of the main volume with the entrance portal is close to a square and is also marked on both sides by graceful turrets. In general, the building is remarkable by its grace and lightness thanks to the sequential opening of the volumes to a viewer in the form of a stepped pyramid, contrasting the main, massive minarets with the slender turrets. The light colour scale of the façades with their subtle decorative mask and the blue colour of the domes enhance the lightness of perception. This is also contributed by a metro-rhythmic composition of openings and architectural elements.

The Mashkhur Zhusup Mosque building plan configuration is built on-corner of the square modules 45 degrees around the centre. The radial geometry of the layout is represented by eight-ray symmetry around a single compositional centre - a circle of the building's main volume.

The mosque's volumetric and spatial composition is based on a three-part structure of successively diminishing in plan, according to the principle of a pyramid: the lower level has an octagonal configuration; the second level, with a smaller built-up area, is circular in plan and is simultaneously visually read as a drum for the fifty-four-metre conical ribbed dome. Sixty-metre-high minarets dominate equidistantly on all four sides, and access to natural light in the lower level is provided by conical skylights. The composition is characterized by a predominant vertically developed volumetric dynamics. The verticality of the composition and monumentality of the architectural silhouette are provided by a contrasting collation of the massive tented dome and the prominent main entrance with graceful, slender minarets, the cones of the skylights and the vertical lines of window openings. The metro-rhythmic sequence of the levels and the static nature of the central dome are contrasted with the dynamic rhythm of the composition, beginning from the ceremonial staircase of the mosque and gradually flowing into the massive volume of the inclined pylons of the main entrance, as well as the sharp angles of the vertices on the façades.

The Vainakh Mosque's floor plan composition in Almaty is expressed by a modular grid of identically repeating squares – the bases of small domes and a large square of the main dome, formed by the superposition of two identical, smaller, similar shapes as per the modularity principle. Meanwhile, the composition is asymmetrical due to the corner location of the main entrance. The architecture of the building has a dynamic silhouette due to the consistent openability of the domes and their bases. The broken lines and geometric consistency of the minaret lend a lively and modern feel to the image.

We have proposed graphical-analytic models that clearly illustrate the correspondence of building layouts to stable radial, triangular and square systems.

Interpretation of Traditions and Innovative Solutions

In general, the nature of the structures reflects the cultural context in the symbolization of traditional forms, the continuity of geometric construction principles referring to religious symbolism and visual correspondence to local traditions. At the same time, the appearances of the mosques are up-to-date and reflect continuity (Kisamedin, 2012). The architects were faced with the challenge of selectively citing traditional forms and elements to create a unique contemporary facility: "... there is no need to follow stereotypes in the issues regarding the design of religious buildings and adhere to established classical images...", "... in the third millennium, the religious architecture, like faith itself, may be subject to transformation...", "... the new century requires completely new approaches in the design..." (from an interview with T. Abilda and Sh. Yussupov).

For example, the tower-like silhouette of the Mosque named after Mashkhur Zhusup recreates the images of a khan's tent, a warrior batyr, the traditional mobile dwelling of the Kazakhs – the yurt, etc. At the same time, the central volume of the dome with its vertically corrugated plasticity alludes to the architectural traditions of mausoleums of the Karakhanid era of the 11th–12th centuries. The layout of the plan forms the Rub al-Hizb symbol, sacred to Muslims, and the height of the minarets refers to the age of the Prophet Muhammad. It is known that the traditional peshtak in the architecture of Central Asia is a high arched niche, a portal-entrance to a mosque or caravan-serai (Galimzhanova & Glaudinova, 2011). In this mosque, the established niche form has been transformed into a geometrically expressive, dynamic silhouette of the entrance group, consisting of sloping lines and sharp breaks.

The up-to-date interpretation of traditional forms characteristic of Muslim architecture makes up the basis of the complex structure of sequentially unfolding volumes, broken lines and value contrasts in the Imangali and Vainakh mosques. In the architecture of the Vainakh mosque, a metro-rhythmic series of elegant window openings and an interesting pencil-shaped minaret solution have

been performed in a contemporary style. For example, a delicate combination of innovation and respect for the traditional culture of the peoples of the North Caucasus has created an authentic, prominent image.

To achieve the compositional integrity in the architectural structure in Pavlodar, the access to natural light in the mosques' interior spaces has been achieved through the use of a cone/pyramid shape made of a transparent material. T. Abilda and Sh. Yussupov often use these forms in their other creative projects as well. The modernized interpretation of simple cube and pyramid shapes reflects a dialogue between traditions and innovations based on culture, natural and climatic peculiarities, and a review of local symbols and artistic appearances.

The cone/pyramid is an archetype created on the basis of the original spatial archetype of the “platform”. A compact centric volume (square, rectangle, circle, polygon) as a culturally fixed archetype in Kazakh religious architecture reflects the spiritual, ethnic and historical basis associated with the traditional image of a dwelling – a yurt (Baitenov et al., 2019) (Figure 4).



Figure 4: The Identified Architectural Principles

Note: Developed by the authors based on the analytical and methodological approaches proposed by Ikonnikov and Stepanov (1975), Baitenov (2009), and Lynch (1960).

The colour modelling of the project plays a significant role in the perception of the entire image: the domes of mosques are designed in a sky-blue colour, and the walls are sandy ochre-coloured or white. For the steppe space regions of Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia, where the colour palette of the natural setting is limited due to local climatic conditions, and conventionally the following optimal colour combinations have been formed: white with black, with blue, with green, blue with yellow, light blue with green, etc. In traditional nomadic culture, the Space and the Universe are inseparable from the human soul. Blue is associated with open space, tranquility, peace, clarity (Askarov, 1988; Ibrayeva, 1994) and even the end of life (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 1973). Some sources associate blue with "...the endless water cycle in nature...", making its use logical in the cladding and epigraphic decoration of the khanaka of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi (Turkestan, 1385-1405), when the light blue (blue, turquoise) dome, floating in the air, symbolizes a source of life, an oasis in the hot steppe and desert (Tuyakbayeva, 1989; Abdrassilova et al., 2021). For example, the use of warm tones characteristic of the region's traditional architecture in modern religious buildings, and blue-light blue shades in the dome's erection, enhances the association with the ingrained steppe landscape. This forms the figurative content of the space for the recipient and affects their emotional state.

A study of the spatial and compositional peculiarities of modern mosques in Kazakhstan conducted, as well as an urban planning analysis, have revealed the way the creative strategies of architects Tolegen Abilda and Shukhrat Yussupov affected the development of the author's interpretation of sacred architecture projects. The analysis has revealed that Kazakhstani architects Tolegen Abilda and Shukhrat Yussupov undertook their own creative strategies for shaping a modern religious architecture in Kazakhstan. Their creativity is based on innovative ideas according to the following principles: the interpretation of traditions and innovation, contextuality, and compositional integrity.

The principle of interpreting traditions and innovation lies in a noticeable deviation from traditional architectural canons of religious architecture - the authors' interpretation of regional motifs. The acknowledging examples include a deviation from classical figurative solutions of the Islamic architecture and a reference in form to the architectural traditions of mausoleum construction during the Karakhanid era of the 11th-12th centuries; rethinking regional images, forms and archetypes, experimental design approaches, etc.

The contextuality principle is expressed in the integration of mosque buildings into the urban realm context. The mosques with indigenous silhouettes shape sacred spaces around themselves as projects of pronounced urban-planning significance.

The compositional integrity principle has been built on the use of rectangular, hemispherical, and conical modules. The logical volumetric-spatial

composition represents a clear hierarchy of both volumes and fractal elements: the prevalence of the dome and minaret as the semantic and compositional core of the sacred space; the metro-rhythmic alternation of identical modules; and the mathematical precision of proportions.

The compositional-spatial techniques, form-shaping ways and interpretations of traditions applied by the architects in the design process are supported by innovative approaches. This has stipulated the development of new images of religious spaces and may serve as a prerequisite for the practice of Islamic traditions in mosque architecture in contemporary Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet context.

CONCLUSION

Modern sacral architecture in Kazakhstan has developed in the context of post-Soviet socio-cultural transformations, a revival of religious consciousness, and a search for national identity. The construction of mosques under the conditions of a new independent state has become an important area for development in national architecture at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Mosques designed by architects Tolegen Abilda and Shukhrat Yussupov stand out among the numerous existing Islamic infrastructure facilities in the country. The analysis of their creativity conducted by the article authors enables identifying the fundamental compositional principles of modern mosque architecture in Kazakhstan. These include: preserving the canonical structure of the Islamic religious building; shaping an expressive volumetric and spatial composition based on the combination of a central dome and minarets; the use of symmetry, axial tracings and architectural dominants; the interrelationship between the building's exterior and the functional arrangement of its interior space; consideration of the urban planning and environmental context.

As can be seen from the research work, these architects' appeal to the Islamic architectural traditions goes beyond a direct reproduction of historical prototypes. Conventional forms, silhouettes, ornamental motifs and symbolic elements undergo author's interpretation and are adapted to up-to-date functional, structural and technological requirements. Through this the architecture of the mosques under consideration combines the recognizability of the Islamic religious structure with images associated with the culture and artistic traditions of modern Kazakhstan.

The creative approaches of T. Abilda and Sh. Yussupov reveal the unity of common professional principles and individual methods of form shaping. The joint design practice promoted the development of a coherent architectural language based on a synthesis of traditions and innovation. Meanwhile, the originality of each facility is conditioned by the specific features of the site, urban

planning situation, the scale of a structure, and nature of the author's interpretation of conventional architectural forms.

The mosques examined serve not only religious but social, symbolic and important urban planning functions as well. Owing to their expressive silhouette and compositional integrity, they shape visual landmarks of the urban environment, contribute to the creation of the site image and anchor regional cultural meanings in modern architecture. Herewith regional identity is manifested not through the literal citation of historical forms, but via their creative rethinking, inclusive of the local cultural context.

Thuswise, the creative activity of T. Abilda and Sh. Yussupov represents a significant contribution to the development of up-to-date sacral architecture in Kazakhstan. Their works are indicative of the possibility for harmonious combining Islamic architectural canons, Kazakh cultural images and contemporary compositional and technological solutions.

Research of the architects' author strategies expands our understanding of the mechanisms for the formation of national and regional identity and allows determining their contribution to the development of architecture in independent Kazakhstan. These scientific findings are of great importance for design practice, contributing to the enrichment of architects' activities with new creative techniques and methods.

Further research prospects are associated with expanding the range of facilities under consideration, comparing the individual methods of Kazakhstani architects, and studying the impact of regional cultural-symbolic, climatic, structural and urban planning factors on formation of modern architecture in Kazakhstan.

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