

TATAR VISUAL CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

The Tatar visual culture of the Tatar people includes both traditional visual arts, such as fine art, decorative art, associated with the textile, subject, interior decoration, architecture of rural and urban buildings, and new digital forms of visual culture, such as digital photography, video-art and cinema .

The article is devoted to the review of existing, at the present stage of development of the Tatar culture, forms of visual representation of spiritual and cultural activities of the subjects of Tatar culture.

Keywords: *visual culture, visual art, Tatar culture, visual sociology, image.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The visual culture of any nation is universal for the perception of the representatives of any linguistic community, as it does not need a literal translation and explanation. Interpretation of visual is based on universal for any human system of visual images, which are archetypal for the representatives of different cultures. The system of visual perception is not tied to a language system, that allows the speakers of different languages to participate themselves in the direct perception of the objects. In this case, the interpretation of visual is still needed for understanding the meanings, which are presented in any culture. The culture of any nation is a complex construction, in the formation of which generations of subjects of this culture are involved. Through the study of visual culture of any nation, it can be learnt a lot about its history, touching its content and for a short time to understand its essence. Tatar culture historically was forced to form in the neighborhood of other cultures, which often restricted its identity, this was particularly evident in the areas of culture, having logocentric basis (language, literature, history). The visual part of culture has largely retained its identity and foundation. The aim of this work is to systematize the visual field of the Tatar culture, to make a brief review of the objects of the Tatar visual culture, existing at the present time.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Along with the system approach, the authors used visual methods of research to explore different areas of the Tatar culture (household items, clothing and architecture), the methods of visual sociology were used in the study of photographic and cinematic sources. To achieve this task, semiotic, anthropological-cultural and structural-functional approaches were used in the study.

As the basis, the works on the theory of visual culture by V. Mitchell, E. R. Yarskaya-Smirnova and others were used [1-3].

3. RESULTS

The modern condition of culture cannot be studied today without reference to the visual codes and visual studies. Visual turn that occurred in the Humanities, led to the formation of new interdisciplinary relations, at the junction of psychoanalysis, semiotics, and cultural studies. Globalization, the acceleration of social processes, the growing use in the media of visual images instead of verbal methods of information transfer has led to the fact, that the visualization is becoming an important parameter in the description of culture. Visuality becomes a cultural construct, which allows us, as well as linguistic texts, to read and to give the meanings of cultural phenomena.

The culture of each ethnic group is based on visual constructs, which, along with other system components, form the body of culture. Historically, these constructs have always been graphics, architecture, fashion, style. Modern culture has brought to them photo, cinema, television, Internet, video games, advertising, comics and other forms of visual communications. A modern person of the information society turns from a getting to know subject, to the subject, who is observing changes, which he cannot understand, due to the high pace of life and large volume of information, passing in front of him. Observation, as a process of giving signs of the objective existence to visual images, comes to the fore and becomes the main way of learning a single subject. Analysis, as method of knowledge, becomes impossible because of constant changes in the objective situation.

Visual studies are a new direction in the Humanities, which are actualizing in the last two decades, in connection with the "visual turn," proclaimed by V. Mitchell. As the main tenet, the thesis about the primacy of the visual in the modern world is put forward. The main characteristics of visual culture, as a form of new experiences of the world, the immensity and inexhaustibility are declared. "The essence of visual culture is in pluralism, – writes V. J. T. Mitchell – it denies the possibility of any generalization, reduction to central concepts, so there are only "visual cultures", but not "a visual culture" [1, p. 543]. The vision is affirmed to be the only unifying principle for visual culture, as is no less fundamental phenomenon, than language. It is not confined to the language and cannot be explained through its models.

In visual studies, visual practices are usually analyzed, which are not the subject of the study of traditional art – home photography, children's drawings etc., Any attempts of naming the purpose and methods of visual studies, have to elucidate the meaning of the terms "visual" and "culture". As a working definition, it is proposed to use the interpretation of the concept "visual" as "mixed", namely a synthetic, discursive and pragmatic, and "culture" is understood as a moving differentiated substance, residing between the "cultural areas" and expressed in social practices.

Social theory of visibility becomes the main vector of orientation in analysis of the visual culture and focuses on the problem of vision. It denotes the act of vision as a result of the tension between external images or objects, on the one hand, and the internal thought process, on the other.

In the focus of attention of the visual research are the visible effects of social life, visible forms of social relations. The visual component of the social can be studied, using different approaches and directions - iconography, phenomenological, semiotic and hermeneutic. Visual phenomena can be studied in the framework of cultural studies, sociology, philosophy and philology, but a unifying principle, common to all these research practices of understanding and interpretation of social processes, will be use of social images and visual signs of mass media.

The visual component of Tatar culture has long been influenced by Islam, which forbade the depiction of humans and animals, as the artist in this case had violated a basic commandment of Islam: "there is No God but Allah". The artist could not act as the Creator of a living being, as the monopoly of creation belongs to Allah alone. The artist in Islam symbolically conveys in the image the hidden meaning of God's creation through symbols. For the depicting of this or that religious story, the artist had to use

neutral themes, mosaic and ornament. Visuals used to convey meaning, was just a tool, an addition to transfer the internal content. The artist had to use hints, metaphors for expression, which formed a whole system of signs.

The ornament was widespread through the Muslim countries, it made it possible to overcome the bans for painting of living beings. In the basis of ornament, lies a symbolic sign language, which has many meanings and deep in nature. Tatar culture for many centuries, since the official adoption of Islam by the Volga Bulgars in 922, was formed within the framework of Islamic culture. Due to this, there is the emphasis in the Tatar visual culture on ornament, which presents in clothing, decor, dishes and books. The ornament is represented in three types: geometric, calligraphic and floral. Geometric pattern dates back to the Arab geometry with ancient Greek roots. Such shapes as round, square, polygons, was the decoration of the ornament and carried meaning. Sublimity of geometric ornament, which decorated the exterior of facades of religious buildings, was used side by side with floral ornament, which symbolized the material world and was most prevalent in the decoration of interior, clothing and household items. Calligraphy as art was also widespread in Tatar culture, most clearly manifested in the Tatar shamails.

In shamails all the types of ornament, typical of the Islamic East are merged together. Shamail is translated from the Arabic as "the quality, dignity". In the Tatar culture shamail is used as a religious sign, existing at the crossroads of calligraphy, ornament and easel painting. There are two types of shamails – printed and manual, usually made on glass or canvas. The shamails contain both texts from the Koran, and graphics of floral ornaments, geometric shapes.

Shamail, which arrived to the Tatar culture from Turkey, in the mid 19th century took as a basis the works of Turkish calligraphers, working in the style of "beautiful writing" (husn-i hat). In the 60-70 years of the 18th century among urban Tatars, there was the fashion for the shamails. Kazan ethnographer Nikolai Vorob'ev writes: "Shamails, according to the Tartars, came from Turkey. In the 70-s of the XIX century there was an enormous fascination with them in cities, where from they got into the village" [4, p.247].

The essence of shumail is in the designation of Allah's presence. Hence, probably, the use of them as amulets, the name of the Almighty helps to get rid of the machinations of Iblis. Especially this feature of shamail was widespread among the ordinary people. The famous specialist in Turkey study, N. F. Katanov, writes that "in view of the fact, that the salutary of the tables in abundance are bought by Muslims (the Tatars, the Meshcheryaks, the Teptuars, the Bashkirs, the Sartas and the Kyrgyz), they are emitted in Kazan from 10,000 to 48.000 PCs every time" [5, p. 4].

If the Turkish calligraphies have a more aesthetic function, the Tatar shamail is used by people as an amulet. Still, in the Tatar families, shamail is hanged over the front door. Another reason for the use of calligraphy as a talisman is a neighborhood with Orthodox people, who also often use Christian symbols for protection from evil forces, what is an echo of paganism. Perhaps the main reason for the spread of shamail among the Tatars, is the existence of the nation in conditions, where the main religion of the state is Christianity (in tsarist Russia), and in the Soviet period — in conditions of persecution of any religion. The spread of Islam took place in the private sphere. Islamic visual symbolism had no opportunity of expression in the monumental temple painting, which led to its transformation in the domestic sphere to the Tatar shamail.

Tatar calligraphy in the late 19th century, with the development of the printing industry is experiencing a quality lift. Calligraphers-professionals unite in the shops of shamail artists. Along with professional calligraphers, shamails were created by skilled craftsmen in the countryside, so ethnic and folk flavor is typical for them.



Picture 1. Brothers Gabelwali and Muhammadali bin Mohammadsadegh Akhmet. Kaaba. 1908. Lithograph, paper



Picture 2. Unknown author. Shamail depicting panorama of Istanbul. 1907. Lithograph, paper



Picture 3. The unknown author from the village of Kishit of the Arsky district. Ayah “al-Kursi” with ornament. Early XX century. Glass, foil, oil, foil, oil

The reform of the Tatar alphabet and the transition from the Arabic script to the Latin alphabet, which happened in the late 20-ies of the 20th century, has led to the weakening of interest to the shamails. Shamails continued to be created home-made, but not in such large volumes. Among the masters, who preserved the tradition of Tatar calligraphy, the famous artist Baki Urmanche, (1897-1990 years) is known, he was Tatar calligrapher - professional, who has managed to preserve and develop the art of creating shamails in Soviet times [6, 156-159].

Only in the 90 years of the 20th century the art of creating the Tatar shamail starts reviving, an interest to the history and traditions of the Tatar people appears. Modern shamail is a product of creativity of professional artists, critics, workers of culture, who in their work address the history of Tatar culture.



Picture 4. Najip Nakkash. The Throne of Allah. 2001. Glass, ink, enamel, foil



Picture 5. Shamsutov Rustem. Surah 'Phathun'. 2000. Oil on canvas

The patterns, which present in the national Tatar ornament, are associated with the way of life of Tatars, for whom agriculture and farming are important. Therefore, flower and floral ornaments prevail in the Tatar ornament. In the Tatar language there are a lot of names, associated with flowers (Rose, Lily of the valley, Gulgena, Gulfira, Lily, etc.). The colors, used by the masters, have a bright, saturated hue, combined with each other, as colors are combined in nature. The most often depicted plants are the Tulip flowers. Tulip presents in the state symbols of Tatarstan, on its flag. It symbolizes the rebirth of the Tatar nation; another meaning of this symbol is associated with Islam: the name of Allah in Arabic consists of the same letters, as the name of a flower. In the ornament Tulip is painted as a pointed trefoil, the flower of which is slightly curved.



Picture 5. The Flag of Tatarstan

Tatar ornament also has geometric themes, which, combined with floral elements, create a unique flavor. Zoomorphic themes are not as common, this is due to religious reasons. Depending on the material of goods, one or the other ornament is used; so, on the fabric there are more geometrical shapes, on the embroidery – vegetal and floral themes, on leather goods – flowers are used. For the Tatar ornament asymmetry of herbal elements, which are not found together in nature, is characteristic.



Picture 6. The ornament on different materials

As the subject of analysis of the Tatar visual culture can act mass-media imagery, I-net visualization, info-graphics in the media, and other visual items of the Tatar mass media. Anyway, they are all united in the single concept of media-visuals. The characteristics of such social phenomenon, as media-visuals, are influenced by social and technological parameters of the field, in which it is formed and functions, the nature of the visual changes from medium to medium [7].

The interpretation of visual values has a rigid binding to a particular subject of perception, and is spatially tied to its ability to see surrounding communication space at a certain angle. A set of individual media-visual experiences forms a unique biography of participant in a social process. The content of these interpretations is actualized in a particular time and in relation to specific visual and communicative contact. Modern media projects, related to the Tatar visual culture, are characterized by the following common features: the use of the Tatar patterns, characteristic of the Tatar decorative and applied art; it is eclectic, embraces as elements of Eastern and Western visual culture.

4. CONCLUSION

Tatar visual culture has long been influenced by Islam, which is reflected in the use of religious symbols in ornamental painting and decorative art. The Tatar ornament is characterized by the use of geometric and vegetal and floral themes. As a classical object of visual culture, Tatar shamail acts, as a symbiosis of religious- symbolic and secular-decorative points in the culture. The type of modern visual culture is elective, and is in the process of searching its authenticity.

A CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author confirms that the submitted data does not contain conflict of interests.

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