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Semantic analysis of images on banknotes of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The research article is devoted to the study of images semantic meanings placed on banknotes of the Republic of Kazakhstan of the 1993–2011 series. The main purpose of the article is to conduct a reconstructive analysis of the semantic values of Kazakhstan’s national currency as an implication of the historical path of the Kazakh people. The analysis of images content on money notes of the Republic of Kazakhstan was carried out in a combination of semantic, cultural and historical methods. The connotations between communicative and significant information of images and Kazakh culture, also systematization of historical-style groups of the national currency were marked. The research theoretical basis was the works on history, semantics, semiotics, linguacultural and cultural science. Special attention is paid to various archival documents on the history of banknotes in the Republic of Kazakhstan, reflecting the value relationship to national history and culture.

Keywords: semantics, symbolism, national history, national culture, identification, banknotes, modern Kazakh cultural tradition, the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Introduction

O. Spengler once wrote that the outside world can be thought not only legally, mathematically, technically, but also financially [1; 512]. That idea of the German researcher laid the vector of this article — to consider money in the context of symbolic constructions, formed by images on banknotes.

We say nothing unexpected, noting that money is one of the most important means of communication, a highly symbolic contour of interactions at the personal and social levels. In this sense, communication takes place at the level of symbols and images that have a shared value for each communicator [2; 28]. Thus, money ceases to be perceived as an exclusively quantitative equivalent and regulator of monetary relations but begins to act as an instrument of self-identification of the ethnic group, contribute to formation of value representations of the nation, perform the function of preserving and transferring national experience.

This reasoning leads to the question of how national archetypes and value universals are formed, based on the semantic content of banknotes, when we think of money in terms of symbolic representations. The fact that G. Simmel stated that the philosophy of money must be situated outside of the economic sciences in order to “...to demonstrate the premises laid down in the soul constitution, in social relations, in the logical structure of realities and values that indicate to money their meaning and practical position” [3; 310] when demonstrating the impact that money has on people’s lives is not coincidental. He continued, saying that “money is merely a means, material, or example of depicting those relationships that exist between the deepest currents of individual life and history, and the most external, realistic, random phenomena and ideal potencies of being” [3; 312].

Since money, as a phenomenon of culture, bears on itself the properties of a given culture, F. Braudel pointed this feature, likening money to a language, and saying that “money... form a language in which every society speaks in its own way” [4; 441], if money accumulates the spiritual experience of the nation, thus measuring its past, present and future. Moreover, “...for specific individuals in a particular culture, shape, color, pattern have a specific value and significance. Hence, there are the national differences in currency design, size, color, iconography of money” [5; 144].

Experimental

Having reviewed the previous scientific research, we have concluded that the analysis of images on money notes of the Republic of Kazakhstan and structuring information through the prism of semantic approach has not yet been the subject of scientific study either in the domestic, nor in a foreign research field. Moreover, during the writing of the article, we found various materials on semantics of dollars, euros,
stamps, francs, crowns, zlotys, rubles and other currencies, a complex analysis of the visual and semantic unity of all attributes of money banknotes (graphic, color, heraldic, functional, etc.) takes place only in disparate journalistic works, there is a lack of complex analysis of visual and semantic unity of the national currency of Kazakhstan.

The works on consideration of the object’s visual content features and its representative content [6–8], social problems of money [9, 10] and their symbolic value were used as methodological guidelines [11–13]. A few works on semiotics and semantics, revealing the specifics of iconic systems carrying various aspects of the translation of culturally significant information were used [14, 15]. It is worth mentioning several works that consider money as a visual symbol that represents moral, intellectual, legal and political relations. The selected topic’s complexity led to the appeal to domestic works of historical and cultural discourse [16, 17].

Thus, the research method used in this article is based on a combination of semantic method, providing analysis of money notes and their heraldry; cultural method, highlighting the connotation between communicative significant information of images on banknotes and modern Kazakh culture; historical method providing the retrospective and descriptive part of the analysis.

The research’s objectives are related, firstly, to the introduction of a new semantic direction in cultural science, allowing a broader look at the symbolic design of images on banknotes as a way of transmitting cultural traditions and social knowledge of the Kazakh ethnic group, ethnic and state-civil identities, the orientation of the national ideology of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and, secondly, expanding the practice of using cultural tools in the study of visual representations of modern Kazakh culture.

Results and discussion

The Kazakhstan Tenge was first introduced on November 15, 1993, after the publication of a presidential order on November 12, 1993, titled “On the introduction of the national currency of the Republic of Kazakhstan” [18].

A team of artists and designers was established in 1991 with the goal of developing the national currency. They analyzed the future national currency’s designs from an artistic, linguistic, and historical perspective. The team includes polygraphists and graphists Mendybay Alin, Dosbol Kasymov, and Agimsaly Duzelkhanov, as well as architect and artist-designer Khayrullah Gabjalilov, President of the Union of Designers of Kazakhstan Timur Suleimenov.

According to visual compatibility and dominant semantic context, all issued banknotes can be divided into four groups: “Portraits”, “al-Farabi”, “Bayterek”, “Samruk”.

The first group “Portraits” include banknotes of the 1993-year model, later withdrawn from circulation in 2006 year. The choice of the portrait concept, in our view, was based primarily on the habit of understanding the monetary banknotes of historical personalities, which was a significant factor for the psychology and education of the post-Soviet space, which included Kazakhstan of that period.

On the front side of the banknotes of this group were placed portraits of Kazakhstan’s historical personalities from various fields of culture, science and politics: al-Farabi, Suyunbay Aronuly, Kurmangazy Sagyrbayuly, Shokan Ualikhanov, Abay Kunanbayev, Abulkhair Khan, Ablyay Khan.

Without exaggerating the significance of zhuz and tribal enclaves of Kazakhs, which emerged from the institutional structure of the traditional Kazakh ethnic group, we will note several features in this issue, which we can see by putting the names of historical personalities on the map of Kazakhstan (Fig. 1).

As you can see when applying historical personalities whose images have been placed on money notes on the country’s geographical map, we arrive at several intermediate conclusions:

− All four regions included — Western Kazakhstan, Northern Kazakhstan, Eastern and Southern Kazakhstan.
− Historical personalities are representatives of the population’s all three zhuzes: Suyunbay Aronuly — the Senior zhuz, Abay Kunanbayev and Ablyay Khan — the Middle zhuz, Abulkhair Khan and Kurmangazy Sagyrbayuly — the Younger zhuz.
− Such a controversial group of Kazakhs as Chingizids — tore is taken into consideration — Shokan Ualikhanov.
− A part of non-Kazakh origin people is “not forgotten” in the person of al-Farabi.
On the back side of banknotes are portraits of architectural monuments of culture and natural landscapes of the country: the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yassavi who was the ancient Turkic poet and preacher of sufism, rock paintings of Mangystau, Borovoe Lake, the landscape of Alatau, golden eagle rider.

Next, we overlay images of monuments and natural landscapes, the images of which were placed on money notes, on a geographical map of Kazakhstan (Fig. 2).

As you can see, during this overlay, we come to the next intermediate conclusion: all four regions included — Western Kazakhstan, Northern Kazakhstan, Eastern and Southern Kazakhstan.

Next, we refer to the consideration of banknotes:

On the front side of the banknote there is a portrait of the philosopher and scientist al-Farabi (872–951). As will be seen in the future, this historical person will be repeatedly dedicated to the Kazakh currency. The encyclopedic heritage of al-Farabi stands out in modern Kazakh society as a symbol of the rich spiritual and intellectual tradition that once took place in the territory of the Kazakh Steppe, as personification in its image of Turkic and Islamic origins of Kazakh culture. On the back are printed Eastern medieval symbols of science, geometric constructions and al-Farabi formulas (Fig. 3).

On the front side there is a portrait of the Kazakh improviser, master of poetry competitions and performances of heroic epics Suyunbay Aronuly (1815–1898). Thanks to his mastery of improvisation, ornamental language and performance talent, heroic epics about the great heroes of the Kazakh people like Otegen, Suranshi, Karasy, Sauryk were widely disseminated. The name of the great improviser Suyunbay Aronuly is a spiritual reference point for the development of Kazakh cultural values, a symbol of freedom, independence, cohesion of Kazakhs as a nation. On the back side there are the views of the Zailiyskiy Alatau (Fig. 4).
Figure 3. A banknote of 1 tenge

Figure 4. A banknote of 3 tenge

On the front side there is a portrait of the Kazakh folk musician, classical Kazakh instrumental music, dombrister, composer of kuys (music for dombra) Kurmangazy Sagyrbayuly (1818–1889). The great musician, whose kuys are associated with the image of the native land, and to this day his heritage, written in the language of melodies, has a great influence on the development of Kazakh musical and performing culture, raises the freedom-loving spirit of the Kazakh people, strengthens the foundations of national historical consciousness. On the back side a complex of mausoleums on the Mangyshlak Peninsula of Western Kazakhstan is shown (Fig. 5).

On the front side there is a portrait of Shokan Ualikhanov (1835–1865) — Kazakh scholar-orientalist, historian, ethnographer, geographer, folklorist, traveler, translator, journalist and educator. Shokan Ualikhanov, openly and boldly expressing his liberal and reformist ideas about the future of Kazakhs, was in fact the first democrat in the history of the Kazakh people. That is why his name has become a national symbol for all subsequent development of democratic culture of the Kazakh people, its ethnic history, language, spirituality. On the back side there is a corner in the national park Borovoe in Northern Kazakhstan — the Ok-Zhetpes mountain (Fig. 6).

Figure 5. A banknote of 5 tenge

Figure 6. A banknote of 10 tenge

On the front side there is a portrait of the Kazakh poet, educator and philosopher, founder of the new Kazakh national written literature and Kazakh literary language Abay Kunanbayev (1845–1904). The heritage of the master of the artistic word Abay Kunanbayev is the spiritual core of the Kazakh people, a symbol of the cultural, moral image of the nation, the desire for national identity and autonomy. On the back side there is an illustration of a hunter with a hawk based on one of Abay’s poems (Fig. 7).

On the front side there is a portrait of a large and influential political figure of his time, the Khan of the Younger Zhuz Abulkhair Khan (1693–1748). The name of the skillful commander Abulkhair Khan symbolizes the national conceptions of Kazakh unity, the nation cohesion, the preservation of its ethnic and territorial integrity in the history and development of Kazakh statehood. On the back side are fragments of rock paintings of the Mangystau region in the area of Lake Balkhash, reflecting ancient Kazakh art (Fig. 8).

Figure 7. A banknote of 20 tenge

Figure 8. A banknote of 50 tenge
On the front side there is a portrait of 18th century statesman, commander and politician, the Khan of the Middle Zhuz Abay Khan (1711–1781). Life and actions of outstanding ruler and commander Abay Khan are symbol of the Kazakh land integrity, unification of people against external enemies, strengthening and further development of the Kazakh state. On the back side is the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yassavi (Fig. 9).

![Figure 9. A banknote of 100 tenge](image)

So, semantic analysis of money notes images of the group “Portraits” leads to the following conclusions:

1. The selection of historical personalities was carried out, firstly, considering the division of the country’s indigenous population into zhuz and tribal enclaves, since affiliation with zhuz remains a significant factor in the identification of some segments of the Kazakh population, also, to reduce clashes between secular and religious, ethnic and state-civic identities of society;
2. The selection of architectural monuments of culture and natural landscapes of the country was also carried out taking into account the territorial division of the country into regions;
3. The selection of historical personalities acted as a positioning of the values of the national ideology of the young, newly created state, which has declared itself in the international arena.

A certain compromise solution is presented by the next group of banknotes, conditionally called “al-Farabi” (2003-year issue). This group is named after the fact that only al-Farabi profile was placed on all banknotes of this period. As noted above in the analysis of the portrait series, the figure and spiritual heritage of al-Farabi for Kazakhs is a unique cultural symbol of the country, that is why he was dedicated to the entire issue of the banknote series (Table 1).

On the back of this group banknotes are various fragments of the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yassavi.

**Table 1**

The money notes of the group “al-Farabi” issued in 2003 year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Banknote Value</th>
<th>Main Color</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200 tenge</td>
<td>Light orange</td>
<td>A banknote of 200 tenge. The main color is light orange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 tenge</td>
<td>Light blue</td>
<td>A banknote of 500 tenge. The main color is light blue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 tenge</td>
<td>Bluish green</td>
<td>A banknote of 1000 tenge. The main color is bluish green.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000 tenge</td>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>A banknote of 5000 tenge. The main color is brown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10000 tenge</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>A banknote of 10000 tenge. The main color is blue. On the back, unlike other banknotes of this group, is a snow leopard against the background of the Alatau mountains.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So, semantic analysis of money notes images of the group “al-Farabi” leads to the following conclusions:

1. The unified choice of the image of only one historical personality was determined by the neutrality of al-Farabi for the multi-ethnic composition of the country against the background: firstly, of disparate multicultural segments population; secondly, the growing nationalist and populist forms of identity; thirdly, to neutralize the Kazakhs’ zhuz and tribal disunity; fourthly, to emphasize the roots commonality of all peoples living in the territory of modern Kazakhstan;

2. Promotion of the civil Kazakhstan identity idea as opposed to ethno-nationalistic narratives of the Kazakh identity;

3. The depiction of only one object precluded discussion of the disputed use of images of other architectural and natural monuments of culture.

The next group of Kazakh banknotes, conditionally called “Bayterek”, begins its history in 2006 year. The banknote group under consideration got its name for placing on the whole party the image of the monument “Bayterek” (“Tree of Life”, “Tree of Peace”), symbolizing cosmogonic views of ancient Kazakhs about the world-building, continuity of generations, observance of wise instructions of ancestors, entry into a new historic life. In general, the architectural-sculptural complex “Bayterek” is not only a compositional structure, but also an embodiment of the past, present and future of the country and Kazakh consciousness.

Another common leitmotif of this group is the placement on the back side of an open palm. Note that some disputes about the meaning of this image go on to this day (especially in the publicist field), and someone sees in it the impression of the hand of the first president of the country. We, sharing the opinion of another group of Kazakhstanis, believe that the image of the open palm is a symbol of friendliness, sincerity, readiness for dialogue, inherent to Tengrianism, as an ancient spiritual outlook of the Kazakh ancestors [19].

The main colors are green and orange; the size is 126×64 mm. On the back — the building of the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the building of the Ministry of Defense of Kazakhstan, as well as the image of one of the winged leopards, installed on the bridge across the Ishim River, steppe landscape (Fig. 10).

The primary hues are grey and blue, and the dimensions are 130 by 67 mm. The Finance Ministry building in Kazakhstan, the Akimat (central city government) building, and gulls above the sea are shown on the back (Fig. 11).

The primary hues are brown and yellow, and the dimensions are 134×70 mm. The Presidential Centre of Culture building and the outline of a map of Kazakhstan including mountains may be seen on the reverse (Fig. 12).

The dimension is 139×73 mm, with green as the primary color. The Abay Opera House in Almaty and the outline of a map of Kazakhstan with a picture of a lake surrounded by mountains are depicted on the back (Fig. 13).
The primary hues are red and brown, and the dimensions are 144 by 76 mm. The Monument of Independence, the hotel “Kazakhstan”, and the shape of a map of Kazakhstan including pictures of mountains are on the reverse (Fig. 14).

The primary hues are blue and purple, and the dimensions are 149×79 mm. The rear side displays the presidential mansion, “Ak Orda”, located in the capital of Kazakhstan. The geography of Kazakhstan is outlined with pictures of canyons (Fig. 15).

Figure 14. A banknote of 5000 tenge Figure 15. A banknote of 10000 tenge

So, semantic analysis of money notes images of the group “Bayterek” leads to the following conclusions:

1. The considered group of banknotes (as well as the subsequent issue) does not contain images of people, as it is likely that this practice hurt feelings of Muslims whose faith forbids the depiction of people (Muslims account for more than 60% of the population); also, in the portrait representation of the exclusively titled nation, other ethnic groups inhabiting Kazakhstan felt a certain lack of identity (the number of non-indigenous population, represented by about 130 ethnic groups, amounts 30%) [20];

2. The choice of design was justified by the need to position the new capital — Astana (transfer to the new capital was carried out in 1997) and the monument Bayterek as national symbols of the Republic of Kazakhstan;

3. Promotion of new built cultural objects of Kazakhstan as iconic architectural elements of the state.

In 2011, the issue of banknotes conditionally united into the group “Samruk” begins, with the withdrawal of the previous series of banknotes from circulation. To date, the banknote group under consideration is active.

As with the money notes of the group “al-Farabi”, where only the profile of al-Farabi or the group “Bayterek”, the common theme of which was the monument and the open palm, the architectural and historical monument “Kazakh Eli” (“Land of Kazakhs”) symbolizes the ancient history, culture and statehood of the Kazakh people, and sacred bird Samruk, sitting on top of the monument and representing the future of sovereign Kazakhstan was placed on the front side of all banknotes of the series “Samruk” (Table 2).

Another unifying symbol of all “Samruk” group money notes is the placement on the obverse of bills of flying pigeons as a symbol of peace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Banknotes issued since 2011 year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The image of banknotes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Banknote 500 tenge" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Banknote 1000 tenge" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So, semantic analysis of money notes images of the group “Samruk” leads to the following conclusions:

1. Positioning of key landmarks of the Republic of Kazakhstan development at the level of nation and society in the 21st century;

2. Promotion of the symbiosis idea of Turkic spiritual traditions and Islamic values as a counterweight to the active process of modern Kazakh society islamization;

3. Veiled state and public reaction to public unofficial challenges to the state borders of the Republic of Kazakhstan (this moment is especially reflected on all banknotes of the state map as the idea of belonging to the Kazakh people its ancestral territories).

Conclusions

Concluding the analysis of semantics of images on banknotes in the modern Kazakh cultural tradition, let’s identify the main conclusions:

1. Money is not a neutral element, on the contrary, it is one of the most important means of communication, a highly symbolic circuit of interactions at the personal and social levels;

2. The perception of money as a solely quantitative equivalent and regulator of monetary arrangements and relations changes, and instead it starts to serve as a tool for ethnic group self-identification, aid in the creation of national value representations, and preserve and transmit national experience;

3. The semantic content of the images on the money notes of the Republic of Kazakhstan is a heuristic model for understanding the modern Kazakh cultural tradition;

4. The symbolic structures on the banknotes of the Republic of Kazakhstan are the visual image of certain messages, presented in graphic format, and broadcasting the national archetypes and value universals of the Kazakh people;

5. According to visual compatibility and dominant semantic context of images on money notes of the Republic of Kazakhstan is conceptualized in relation to categories of history, spiritual requests, changing social ties and values:

   − Group of banknotes “Portraits”: a reflection of the identity of the young, newly emerged state represented by national historical personalities;

   − Group of banknotes “al-Farabi”: positioning the state’s openness to dialogue with the world in the person of al-Farabi as a scientist (not a Kazakh) with international fame;
– Group of banknotes “Bayterek”: revival of national spiritual and intellectual traditions, development of ethnic and state-civil identities in the face of mythological plots of the monument “Bayterek”;
– Group of banknotes “Samruk”: positioning the sovereignty and statehood of the country as a full participant of the global world, the state national ideology direction represented by the monument “Kazakh Eli”.

6. Part of symbolic constructions used in images of money banknotes of the Republic of Kazakhstan refers to common human meanings (sky, water, mountains, trees, animals and birds, symbols of science, state heraldry, contours of the state map). Another part of the images bears local-national subtext, understandable either to citizens of Kazakhstan or foreign specialists in the field of Kazakh history and culture (historical personalities, ancient Turkic and Kazakh mythological plots). Finally, apart from the symbolically simple visual representations intended to demonstrate the intended meaning, a small proportion of the images on banknotes do not have obvious and/or unambiguous cultural associations (pictogram, palm).

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Макала 1993–2011 жылдарында Казахстан Республикасының ақша банкноттарындағы бейнелерді семантикалық талдау

Макаланың негізгі мақсаты — казақ халқының тарихи жұлдыз импликацияларының ретінде Казахстандың ұлттық валютанының семантикалық мәндерінің толықтырылуына таңдайды. Мұндай мәдениет кәсіби және ұлттық, жетілдік толықтырылған жұлдыз. Эртүрлі негізгі семантикалық талдау жұлдыздарына қарастырылған, ұлттық валютаның тарихи-стилідік толықтырылған жұлдыз. Реттегі, теориялық негізгі тарихи, семантика, семиотика, ұлттық мәдениеттің және ұлттық валютаның семантикалық мағыналы жазылған.

Семантикалық аналиzu изображений на денежных банкнотах Республики Казахстан

Семантикалық анализ изображений на денежных банкнотах Республики Казахстан

Статья посвящена изучению смысловых значений изображений, размещенных на денежных банкнотах Республики Казахстан 1993–2011 годов выпусков. Основной целью статьи выступает проведение реконструкционного анализа семантических значений национальной валюты Казахстана как импликации исторического пути казахского народа. В сочетании семантического, культурологического и исторического методов осуществлен анализ содержательного наполнения изображений на денежных банкнотах Республики Казахстан, обозначено коннотации между коммуникативно-значимой информацией изображений и казахской культурой, выполнена систематизация историко-стилевых групп национальной валюты. Теоретической базой исследования выступили труды по истории, семантике, семиотике, лингвокультурологии и культурологии.

Ключевые слова: семантика, символизм, улттық тарихи, улттық мәдениет, идентификация, ақша банкноттары, заманауи қазақ мәдениетінің коммуникативтік маңыздылығы.

References

Semantic analysis of images on banknotes …


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