

The evolution of song folklore and its influence on the development of the national musical tradition

A evolução do folclore musical e a sua influência no desenvolvimento da tradição musical nacional.



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Abstract: Globalisation processes actualise the need for a systematic study of the evolution of song folklore as a key element of national identity and the basis of the musical tradition. The aim of the study is to theoretically substantiate

the patterns of evolution of song folklore and to determine the mechanisms of its influence on the formation of national musical traditions in the context of socio-cultural transformations. The study was carried out using a set of complementary methods: structural and typological, comparative, semiotic, functional, and statistical analysis. As a result, a theoretical typology of evolutionary processes in song folklore has been developed, which includes six models: linear-stage, divergent, convergent, cyclic, substrate-superstrate, and adaptive, and a correlation between geographical and socio-historical factors and the intensity of folklore transformations has been revealed. The analysis of song genres in the South-West Zhetys (Kazakhstan) has shown uneven preservation of traditional forms across regions, with the highest preservation of ritual folklore (65%) recorded in the southern regions, while in the northern and central regions this figure does not exceed 30%. A model of the influence of song folklore on the formation of national musical identity, through four levels of integration of folklore elements into professional musical culture, is developed, and five strategies for preserving traditional musical forms in the context of globalisation are systematised. The results of the study can be used in the development of state programmes for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, to improve ethnomusicology curricula and to create methods for adapting traditional forms to the modern cultural context.

Keywords: ethnomusical heritage, cultural transmission, ritual symbols, wedding ceremonies, ethnocultural integration.

Resumo: Os processos de globalização tornam urgente o estudo sistemático da evolução do folclore musical, como elemento-chave da identidade nacional e da base da tradição musical. O objetivo deste estudo é fundamentar teoricamente os padrões de evolução do folclore musical e determinar os mecanismos de sua influência na formação das tradições musicais nacionais, no contexto das transformações socioculturais. O

estudo foi realizado com recurso a um conjunto de métodos complementares: análise estrutural e tipológica, comparativa, semiótica, funcional e estatística. Como resultado, desenvolveu-se uma tipologia teórica dos processos evolutivos no folclore musical, que inclui seis modelos: linear-estágio, divergente, convergente, cíclico, substrato-superstrato e adaptativo, e revelou-se uma correlação entre fatores geográficos, socio-históricos e a intensidade das transformações folclóricas. A análise dos géneros musicais do sudoeste de Zhetys (Cazaquistão) mostrou uma preservação desigual das formas tradicionais nas diferentes regiões, onde a maior percentagem de preservação do folclore ritual (65%) se regista no sul, enquanto, nas regiões do norte e do centro, este percentual não ultrapassa 30%. É criado um modelo da influência do folclore musical na formação da identidade musical nacional, por meio de quatro níveis de integração dos elementos folclóricos à cultura musical profissional, e são sistematizadas cinco estratégias para a preservação das formas musicais tradicionais no contexto da globalização. Os resultados do estudo podem ser utilizados no desenvolvimento de programas estatais para a preservação do património cultural imaterial, para aprimorar os currículos de etnomusicologia e para criar métodos de adaptação de formas tradicionais ao contexto cultural moderno.

Palavras-chave: património etnomusical, transmissão cultural, símbolos rituais, cerimónias de casamento, integração etnocultural.

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1. Introduction

Despite the growing interest in the preservation and transformation of traditional musical culture, the mechanisms that determine the evolution of song folklore and its role in shaping national musical identity remain insufficiently systematised. In particular, there is a lack of clear theoretical models explaining how traditional song genres transform under the influence of socio-cultural changes, intercultural interaction, and modernisation processes. This creates a research problem: the need to analyse the mechanisms of song-folklore evolution and identify the factors that influence the preservation and transformation of traditional musical forms.

In the context of contemporary globalisation, the study of song folklore as an integral element in preserving national identity is particularly relevant. Song folklore reflects the cultural traditions, worldview, and values of a people, ensuring the transmission of cultural codes between generations (Nurbekova, 2022; Kelmendi, 2024). The evolution of musical folklore is linked to changes in society's aesthetic preferences, socio-political transformations, and interethnic contacts. In the culture of Kazakhstan, traditional music has historically been part of the people's spiritual life, and in modern conditions, it is undergoing changes under the influence of globalisation.

The concept of national musical identity is understood as a complex cultural construct that reflects a community's collective representations of its musical traditions, symbols, and historical continuity. At the same time, it has a socio-psychological dimension, shaping members' sense of cultural belonging and shared heritage. Contemporary identity theories emphasise that cultural identity is not static but is constructed through historical narratives, cultural practices, and symbolic representations (Anderson, 2006; Hall, 1996). In this sense,

national musical identity can be viewed as a dynamic process formed through the interaction of traditional folklore, historical memory, and modern cultural transformations.

The processes of revival and modernisation of vocal traditions are examined in detail in the work of S. Daukeyeva (2021), which analyses the phenomenon of kumei (throat singing) in contemporary Kazakh music. The research demonstrates how traditional vocal techniques are adapted to the modern musical context, becoming symbols of national identity and means of cultural self-expression. Similar issues are continued in the research of M. Mukhsynova and I. Kaysidi (2024), which analyses the types of vocal performance in traditional Kazakh music and their realisation on the contemporary stage, revealing the mechanisms of synthesis of traditional and modern elements in vocal art.

The ethno-cultural diversity of the musical life of Kazakhstan is presented in the research of G. Mussagulova and Z.M. Kasimova (2021). The authors examine the role of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan in integrating the musical cultures of the country's diverse ethnic groups. The analysis is based on materials from state archives and libraries, as well as on participation in cultural events. The research identifies key factors in preserving the traditional folkloric heritage of various ethnic groups in the context of cultural integration and provides specific examples of mutual influence between representatives of different musical traditions.

An understanding of Kazakh musical culture in a global context is presented in the research of A. Omarova et al. (2020), dedicated to the study of the legacy of Mukhtar Auezov and its influence on the development of musical art in Kazakhstan. The authors analyse M. Auezov's role in the research and popularisation of traditional Kazakh music, particularly his contribution to integrating folk melodies into professional musical art and theatrical productions. The research emphasises the importance of preserving the authenticity of folk music

when adapting it for the professional stage and reveals the significance of traditional forms in the formation of national cultural identity.

The transformations of stringed instruments in the musical culture of Central Asia are analysed in detail in the research by B. Junussova et al. (2024). The authors consider the modernisation processes of traditional stringed instruments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, studying their fundamental properties (timbre, sound production, mode, form) and the transformations they have undergone in modern conditions. The research underscores the importance of parallel development of performing mastery on authentic and reconstructed models of folk instruments, particularly for preserving unique timbral characteristics when integrating traditional music into the contemporary cultural context.

An important contribution to the understanding of the evolution of musical traditions is made in the research of A. Nikolsky et al. (2020), which reveals the phenomenon of “personal song” and its place in the evolution of musical culture. The authors substantiate the existence of an alternative system of music organisation – timbral music, which is based not on the frequency ratios characteristic of the Western tradition, but on the timbral peculiarities of sound. The researchers emphasise the individualised nature of “personal song”, which serves as a means of human identification through a unique performance style, which is of particular significance for understanding the evolution of folkloric traditions and their contemporary transformation.

The processes of preserving folk songs in a cross-cultural perspective are analysed in detail in the work of L. Guangchao et al. (2024). The researchers identify the main challenges to the preservation of folkloric song traditions, including globalisation, urbanisation, and the changing cultural priorities of younger

generations, and propose a set of strategies to address them, including state support, educational programmes, and the use of modern technologies. An important aspect of the functioning of song folklore is revealed in the research of C.R. Okpokwasili (2023), which analyses in detail the functions of folk songs, including cultural representation, communicative, ritual, social, and educational functions. This research demonstrates the multifunctionality of song folklore and its role in various aspects of social life.

A broader cross-cultural perspective on the preservation and transformation of traditional musical cultures is also presented in international research. For example, the comparative collection *The Legacy of Indigenous Music: Asian and European Perspectives* (Lu and Elschek, 2021; Korniienko et al., 2025) examines the transmission and transformation of indigenous musical traditions in different cultural contexts of Asia and Europe, highlighting the role of historical continuity and cultural adaptation in the development of folk music. Similarly, the study by Morgenstern (2015) on folk music research in Austria and Germany analyses the theoretical and methodological foundations of European ethnomusicology and emphasises the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in the study of traditional musical cultures. These studies provide a broader analytical context that allows the processes observed in Central Asian song folklore to be considered within a wider cross-cultural framework.

The analysis of current research on song folklore reveals gaps in the scholarly discourse. The mechanisms of transformation of song folklore in the context of digital culture, the influence of globalisation on authentic performance traditions, and strategies for adapting traditional forms to the contemporary cultural context remain insufficiently studied. Particular attention needs to be paid to the study of the regional peculiarities of

song folklore in Kazakhstan, particularly in the Zhetysu region, where the processes of preservation and transformation of traditional music occur in conditions of complex ethno-cultural interactions.

The aim of the research is the theoretical substantiation of the patterns of evolution of song folklore and the analysis of the mechanisms of its transformation and its influence on the formation of national musical traditions in the context of socio-cultural transformations and globalisation processes, based on materials from Central Asian musical cultures, particularly Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Karakalpak traditions, with particular attention to the regional features of song folklore in southwestern Zhetysu.

2. Materials and methods

The study of the evolution of song folklore and its influence on the formation of national musical tradition was conducted as a comprehensive historical-theoretical investigation with elements of ethnomusicological analysis during March-April 2025. The temporal framework of the material studied encompasses three periods: traditional (pre-1920s), transformational (1920s-1990s), and contemporary (from the 1990s onwards).

To investigate the evolutionary processes of song folklore and to create theoretical models, a range of scholarly sources was utilised, including the research of S. Daukeyeva (2021) on the revival and modernisation of komei in contemporary Kazakh music, the works of G. Omarova (2019) on the typology of Central Asian musical cultures, the research of A. Raimkulova (2020) on modality trends in the history of Kazakh music, and the concepts of cultural evolution of music by P.E. Savage (2019) and P.E. Savage et al. (2022). The systematisation of the obtained material was carried out according to chronological and geographical principles using historical-typological and

comparative analysis. The research focused on the evolution of song folklore among Central Asian ethnic groups, particularly Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Karakalpak, which were chosen for their shared historical-cultural development, long-standing interethnic contacts, and proximity of their musical-stylistic traditions. This allowed for the identification of six models of the evolution of song traditions (linear-stadial, divergent, convergent, cyclical, substratum-superstratum, adaptive) and the tracing of their manifestations in the specified ethnic folklore.

The investigation into the transformation of traditional song genres of the south-western Zhetysu (the territories of Almaty and Zhambyl regions, predominantly in the border area with Kyrgyzstan, washed by the Shu River and the upper reaches of the Talas River) was based on an analysis of materials presented in the work of B. Babizhan et al. (2021) on contemporary song folklore of the Kazakhs of south-western Zhetysu, as well as the research of K.S. Matyzhanov et al. (2024) on the ethnographic origins of Kazakh wedding folklore. The study of the musical-poetic structure of wedding songs was based on the methodological approaches of M. Mukhsynova and Z. Kassimova (2023), which consider the regional peculiarities and stylistic features of the performance technique of Kazakh traditional songs. Semiotic analysis was based on the concepts of A.S. Sabirova et al. (2020), who view folklore and symbolism in Kazakh music as a reflection of mythological ideas and philosophical views, forming a cohesive system of cultural codes.

The music-theoretical analysis is used to study the harmonic and metrical features of song genres. In particular, the author investigated the sound systems (Aeolian hexachord, Ionian pentachord), ambitus (quinta, sexta), dominant intonation types, reference tones and cadence. The analysis of the rhythmic organisation focused on the interaction of syllable rhythm and pitch, which made it possible to identify synchronic and recitative types as predominant in the wedding songs of the region.

A functional approach was applied to identify changes in the context of the existence of wedding songs during three historical periods: traditional (sacred-ritual context), transformational (desacralised, entertaining), and contemporary (reconstructed, staged). For the analysis of the influence of song folklore on the formation of national musical identity, cultural studies and musicological analysis were applied in accordance with the concepts of C.R. Okpokwasili (2023) on the functions of folk songs and L. Guangchao et al. (2024) on strategies for preserving folkloric song traditions. The results of the research by K. Bizhanova et al. (2024) on the formation of Kazakh youth identity through traditional folk music helped determine the influence of traditional music on the development of personal qualities and national self-awareness.

The selection of the periods under study was determined by significant stages in the development of song folklore and the socio-cultural transformations that influenced traditional musical practices. Particular attention was paid to periods characterised by active interaction between traditional folklore and changing cultural environments, including processes of modernisation, intercultural contact, and the transformation of performance contexts. This approach enabled tracing both the preservation of archaic musical elements and the emergence of new stylistic features in the evolution of song folklore.

The research included a statistical analysis of 85 recordings from respondents across different age groups, as described in the work of B. Babizhan et al. (2021), collected during expeditions in 2018-2019 in south-western Zhetysu. The sample of 85 recordings was considered sufficient for identifying the main structural and stylistic characteristics of wedding song traditions in the south-western Zhetysu region. The recordings represent respondents from different age groups and local communities, which allowed the study to capture generational and regional

variations in the preservation of traditional genres. At the same time, the results are interpreted primarily as indicative of regional tendencies rather than as a fully comprehensive representation of all Central Asian song traditions.

This analysis enabled determination of the percentage of preservation of traditional genres across different regions of Kazakhstan and the age stratification of tradition bearers. Comparative musicological analysis was also applied to study the influence of song folklore on the professional compositional work of Kazakh composers, in particular the transformation of folkloric elements in such works as “Enlik-Kebek” and “Dala Sazy”, using the concepts of A.S. Sabirova et al. (2020) on folklore and symbolism in Kazakh music. Within the framework of the functional approach, a study was made of the economic aspects of preserving traditional musical culture using the example of Kazakh regional initiatives, in particular the “Korkyt and the Great Steppe” festival in the Kyzylorda region, with the application of the methodology of C.R. Okpokwasili (2023) to determine the potential of cultural tourism as a tool for financing projects for the revival of folkloric traditions.

The research methodology also included an analysis of the educational practices of musical educational institutions in Kazakhstan, especially the “уста́з-шаки́рт” (teacher-student) system, based on the approaches of M. Mukhsynova and Z. Kassimova (2023), which allowed for an assessment of the effectiveness of modern methods of transmitting traditional performing mastery. To systematise strategies for the preservation and development of national musical traditions, a modelling method was used with an analysis of the application of digital technologies, including virtual reality and augmented reality, based on the approaches of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the theoretical concepts of L. Guangchao et al. (2024) on cross-cultural strategies for the preservation of folk songs.

The interpretation of the obtained results was based on an interdisciplinary approach, combining ethnomusicological analysis with methods of cultural anthropology and historical ethnography. This made it possible to develop a theoretical model of the evolution of song folklore and to outline the mechanisms of its influence on the formation of national musical identity, which corresponds to the stated aim of the research.

3. Results

3.1. The evolution of song folklore: Theoretical models and cultural and historical patterns

Research into the evolutionary processes in song folklore has revealed a variety of theoretical models and patterns that determine the transformational mechanisms within traditional musical culture. The systematisation of the results obtained has enabled the formation of a cohesive theoretical approach to the development of traditional musical art, taking into account diverse cultural-historical contexts.

The mechanisms behind the development of song traditions are based on a dynamic equilibrium between the preservation of established elements and their modification under the influence of historical and cultural factors (Zhang, 2023; Abdykulova et al., 2025). A comparative analysis of different musical cultures has demonstrated the greatest intensity of song-folklore transformation in zones of intercultural interaction, where interference between different musical systems is observed. P.E. Savage et al. (2022) say that “folk songs evolve according to similar patterns regardless of culture”, with “rhythmically important notes changing less often than less significant ones”, indicating universal mechanisms of musical evolution. Expedition materials recorded in 2018-2019 in the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border region confirmed the existence of “transitional musical

dialects” resulting from prolonged interethnic communication. Analogous processes are observed in the border regions of Mongolia and China, where Mongolian and Turkic musical traditions have formed syncretic forms, combining elements of different ethnic styles.

In Kazakh song folklore, structural analysis has revealed patterns in the transformation of musical-poetic organisation. Metrorhythmic models retain their basic structure despite variations in pitch parameters. A characteristic example is the wedding songs “zhar-zhar” and “syngsu”, where the stable 7-8 syllable “zhyr” metre is combined with diverse melodic variants. Syllabic rhythm demonstrates higher resilience compared to melodic constructions – a tendency also inherent in Kyrgyz and Karakalpak folklore. In examples of Kazakh ritual folklore, archaic rhythmic formulas have been preserved despite modifications to melodic-intonational characteristics, which is confirmed by a comparison of 19th and 20th-century recordings.

The application of a functional approach has established a correlation between evolutionary processes and changes in the socio-domestic contexts in which musical genres function. The transformation of the functional interrelationships between musical folklore and society’s life activity has led to a reconfiguration of the genre system across the entire Central Asian region. The weakening of the ritual-magical function has led to a reduction in ritual genres and an expansion of the sphere of secular song. This tendency is observed in 20th-century Kazakh, Uzbek, and Turkmen folklore, where the blurring of the genre specificity of ritual songs and the integration of elements from secular genres have occurred. A specific example is the transformation of the ritual wedding songs “zhar-zhar” in Kazakhstan, which have lost their sacred significance while retaining their formal structure.

Based on a semiotic approach, the mechanisms of transformation of the figurative-symbolic system of song folklore have been revealed. The semantics of key image-concepts

in poetic texts function as a system of cultural universals, preserving their semantic core while their forms of expression change. According to observations by A.S. Sabirova et al. (2020), folklore and symbolism in Kazakh music reflect mythological ideas and philosophical views, forming a cohesive system of cultural codes. In Kazakh wedding songs, the concepts of “mirror” (айна), “tree” (тал), and “threshold” (есік) retain their archetypal significance, reflecting mythological ideas about the boundary between worlds, the feminine principle, and the life cycle. A comparative analysis of the imagery system of wedding songs from different regions of Central Asia has demonstrated the stability of these images despite local variations in artistic embodiment, which reflects the interaction between preserved archaic musical structures and later cultural influences. A commonality of symbolism is observed in Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Turkmen wedding songs, confirming convergent processes in the evolution of the region’s folkloric traditions, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Theoretical models of the evolution of song folklore in Central Asia

The evolution model	Process characterisation	Examples of transformations	Regional distribution
Linear-stage	Successive change of development stages from simple to complex forms	Complication of the melody of the Kazakh song “Myn Zhyldyk” from recitation to a developed melody	Kazakhstan (Sary-Arka), Mongolia (Bayan Ulgi)
Divergent	Branching of the primary form into local variants	Formation of the western, central and southern styles of “terme” in the Kazakh tradition	Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan (northern regions)
Convergent	Convergence of different traditions with the formation of synthetic forms	Kazakh-Kyrgyz transitional forms of “besik zhyry” in Zhetysu	Borderlands of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Xinjiang
Cyclic	Periodic return to archaic forms on a new level	Revival of archaic forms of zhoktau in the modern funeral rite	Kazakhstan (southern regions), Turkmenistan

Substratum-superstratum	Superimposition of new elements on the archaic basis	Preservation of “zhar-zhar” rhythmic formulas while updating the melody	Zhetysu, Altai, western Mongolia
Adaptive	Adaptation of traditional forms to new socio-cultural conditions	Transformation of the functions of wedding songs, their inclusion in stage forms	Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan

Source: developed by the authors based on B. Babizhan et al. (2021), P. E. Savage (2019).

The identification of six models of song-folklore evolution is based on the analysis of recurring transformation patterns across different ethnomusical traditions. Each model reflects a specific mechanism of change in traditional musical culture. The linear-stage model describes the gradual complication of musical structures over time; the divergent model explains the emergence of regional stylistic variants from a common source; the convergent model reflects the interaction and synthesis of different musical traditions; the cyclic model represents the periodic return to archaic forms; the substratum–superstratum model explains the superimposition of new stylistic layers on an older cultural foundation; and the adaptive model characterises the adjustment of traditional musical forms to new socio-cultural conditions.

In this context, it is important to distinguish between several related concepts. Transformation refers to broad structural changes in musical forms and functions over historical time. Adaptation describes the process by which traditional genres adjust to new social or cultural environments while preserving their core elements of structure. Modernisation, in contrast, refers to deliberate reinterpretation of traditional material through contemporary artistic practices or institutional frameworks.

The processes of digitalisation have also significantly influenced the preservation and transmission of folklore traditions. Digital archives, online platforms, and multimedia technologies create new opportunities for documenting and

disseminating traditional music (Satmaz, 2026; Doszhan, 2023). However, these processes may also entail risks, including the folklorisation and stylisation of traditional material, the simplification of complex performance contexts, and the potential loss of ritual and social meanings when folklore is transferred to digital or stage formats.

Among the theoretical models presented in Table 1, the substratum–superstratum model plays a particularly important analytical role in explaining the transformation of song folklore in the Central Asian region. This model describes the interaction between archaic musical layers (substratum) that preserve ancient melodic, rhythmic, and symbolic structures, and later cultural influences (superstratum) that emerged through historical processes such as migration, intercultural contact, and socio-political change. In many Central Asian musical traditions, new stylistic elements were gradually superimposed on older ritual and poetic forms rather than completely replacing them.

In the case of Kazakh song folklore, this process can be observed in the preservation of stable rhythmic formulas and symbolic imagery in ritual genres such as “zhar-zhar” and “synsu”, while melodic structures, performance styles, and functional contexts have undergone significant transformation. The substratum–superstratum relationship therefore provides a conceptual framework for understanding how traditional musical forms maintain continuity while simultaneously adapting to new cultural and historical conditions.

G. Omarova (2019) identifies two primary super-ethnic groups in the Central Asian space: the Turkic-Mongolian (Tengrian) and the Turkic-Iranian (Muslim), whose cultural particularities shape the specific characteristics of the region’s musical traditions. The Central Asian cultural space, with Kazakhstan at its core, exhibits specific features in the evolution of musical traditions, shaped by historical processes of ethnogenesis and intercultural contact. A characteristic feature of the region’s musical folklore is the substratum-superstratum

relationship between archaic elements of indigenous cultures and later cultural layers that emerged through historical processes of migration, intercultural interaction, and socio-political change. In the musical folklore of Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Karakalpak, ancient melodic-intonational structures have been preserved despite modifications to the genre system and the poetic component. A telling example is the pentatonic scale in the melodies of Kazakh songs from the western regions, which attests to ancient Turkic-Mongolian cultural links.

A. Raimkulova (2020) proposes viewing the history of Kazakh music through three cultural paradigms: monomodality (pre-1920s), bimodality (1920s-1970s), and polymodality (from the 1980s onwards). The chronological periodisation of the evolution of song forms in Central Asia has allowed for the identification of three historical stages: archaic (up to the 14th century), traditional (15th-19th centuries), and transformational (20th-21st centuries). Each of these periods is characterised by specific cultural-historical conditions and dominant developmental trends. The archaic stage was marked by the dominance of ritual genres with a ritual-magical function, syncretism of musical forms, and a prevalence of recitative-declamatory intonation. The traditional period saw the formation of developed lyric-epic genres such as “жыр” (zhyr – small epic) and “дастан” (dastan – great epic), the professionalisation of the musical tradition, and the emergence of regional styles. The transformational stage saw the intensification of intercultural interactions, the formation of hybrid musical forms, and the gradual displacement of ritual genres by secular ones.

The regional differentiation of evolutionary processes in song folklore reflects the influence of socio-historical and geographical factors. In the northern regions of Kazakhstan, where modernisation and urbanisation occurred more intensively, a faster displacement of ritual folklore by secular genres was recorded compared to the southern regions. The geographical factor further determined the specificity of

transformational processes: in border territories, transitional musical dialects emerged, combining elements of neighbouring ethnic traditions, while in isolated mountainous regions, archaic forms of musical folklore were preserved. M. Mukhsynova and Z. Kassimova (2023) note that the regional peculiarities of traditional song require a systematic analysis of artistic, linguistic, and performance techniques in each district of the Kazakh Steppe. Statistical analysis of field materials from 2018-2019 reveals uneven preservation of traditional genres across different regions of Kazakhstan. The highest percentage of preserved ritual folklore was recorded in the southern regions of Kazakhstan (65% of respondents performed examples of traditional wedding folklore), while in the northern and central regions, this figure did not exceed 30%. The age stratification of tradition bearers reflects a progressive tendency towards the disruption of transmission mechanisms: among performers of ritual songs, 78% are individuals over 60 years old.

A comprehensive analysis of the musical and stylistic parameters of Central Asian song folklore has revealed a multi-level system of evolutionary transformations. The modal organisation of song forms evolved from narrow-range scales (third-fourth) to expanded modal structures (sixth-octave), and from diatonicism to the enrichment of chromaticism. An illustration of this process is a comparative study of the “сыңсу” (syngsu) genre, in which early 19th-century examples are limited to a fourth ambitus, while modern recordings span an octave. The metrorhythmic organisation underwent transformation through the complication of rhythmic formulas, the development of polyrhythms, and the enrichment of agogic nuances. Simultaneously, compositional structures evolved from simple single-part forms to developed multi-part compositions, demonstrating a general tendency towards the complication of musical form.

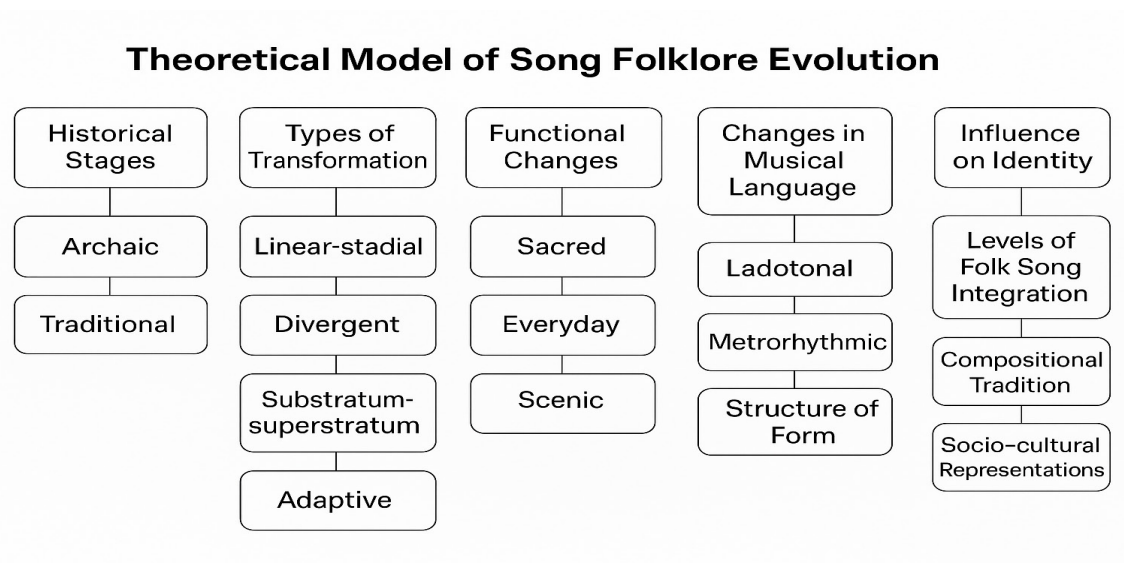
K.S. Matyzhanov et al. (2024) note that during the Soviet era, many traditions were altered or concealed; however, the post-Soviet period is characterised by their revival. The Soviet period (1920-1991) became a catalyst for the accelerated transformation of traditional folklore through the disruption of the traditional way of life of rural communities – the primary bearers of musical folklore – and the ideologisation of art. In the post-Soviet era, globalisation processes and digital technologies have led to new directions in the transformation of folklore: the formation of virtual communities of tradition bearers, the reconstruction of archaic genres, and the emergence of neo-folklore artistic movements (Kengesbayeva et al., 2025; Yilmaz and Delen, 2025).

The current state of song folklore in the Central Asian region is characterised by the parallel existence of three forms: authentic, transformed, and reconstructed. Authentic forms are preserved mainly in rural areas and function within the traditional domestic context. Transformed forms are adaptations of traditional genres to modern socio-cultural conditions, found in both rural and urban environments. Reconstructed forms have emerged from the purposeful revival of traditions by professional folklore ensembles and individual performers, based on archival recordings and ethnomusicological research.

Summarising the research results, it can be asserted that the evolution of song folklore in Central Asia occurred under the influence of a complex system of internal and external factors that determined the specificity of transformational processes across various cultural-historical contexts. The developed theoretical model of the evolution of song folklore constitutes a methodological basis for analysing transformational processes in different ethnic traditions and predicting the dynamics of their further development in the face of contemporary globalisation challenges.

To systematise the research results, a structural model of the evolution of song folklore was created, reflecting the sequence of transformational processes from historical preconditions to changes in musical language and their impact on national identity (Figure 1). The model includes five interconnected levels: historical stages, types of transformations, functional changes, the evolution of musical language, and the final level – impact on identity. This approach allows tracing the internal logic of folkloric changes and establishing a conceptual foundation for predicting future development trends in traditional musical culture in the context of globalisation.

Figure 1 – Structural model of the evolution of song folklore in the context of transformation processes



Source: developed by the authors.

The proposed model helps to integrate the empirical data of the study into a single analytical framework and explain the mechanisms of preservation and modification of folklore traditions in a historical and cultural perspective. In this way, song folklore appears not only as an object of recording, but as a living dynamic system that responds to the socio-cultural

challenges of the time. It is this structural integrity that provides a deeper understanding of the relationships between historical changes, musical parameters, and identification strategies within the national cultural space.

3.2. Transformation of traditional song genres: the case of the folklore of South-West Zhetysu

Expedition materials from 2018-2019 in south-western Zhetysu revealed specific patterns in the transformation of traditional song genres. B. Babizhan et al. (2021) note that a complex of geographical, economic, socio-clan, and historical-cultural preconditions shaped the transitional nature of the musical dialect of folk genres in this region. The concept of “south-western Zhetysu” encompasses the districts of Almaty and Zhambyl regions, mostly located on the border with Kyrgyzstan. Although the musical notation of Zhetysu songs has a century-long history, ethnomusicologists have predominantly studied the eastern regions, which necessitates an analysis of the western part of the region.

The region’s location between Lake Balkhash to the north, Sasykkol and Alakol to the south-east, and the ridges of the Northern Tian Shan to the south influenced the formation of the cultural space. The name “Zhetysu” originates from the seven main rivers of this area: Ile, Karatal, Bien, Aksu, Lepsy, Baskan, Sarkan. Favourable geographical conditions transformed Zhetysu into one of the oldest cultural centres in Central Asia. South-western Zhetysu is represented by the territories washed by the Shu River and the upper reaches of the Talas River.

Through an interdisciplinary approach to the research, it was established that ritual folklore currently constitutes a smaller part of the region’s oral musical-poetic heritage. The majority is represented by everyday songs. Among the wedding ritual genres, samples of the bride’s farewell ritual – “kyz uzatu” – have been predominantly preserved in respondents’ memories.

During the analysis of 85 recordings from respondents across different age groups, it was found that 73% of older respondents (60+) retain knowledge of traditional wedding songs, while among younger respondents (under 30), this figure is only 12%. K.S. Matyzhanov et al. (2024) note that during the Soviet period, many traditions were changed or hidden, however, in the post-Soviet period, their revival is observed.

Semantic analysis of poetic texts allowed for the identification of key symbols-concepts in wedding songs. A.S. Sabirova et al. (2020) emphasise that folklore and symbolism in Kazakh music reflect mythological ideas and philosophical views, forming a holistic system of cultural codes. Functional semantics is always associated with symbolism, symbolic meanings, metaphorical meanings, allegory, and hidden meaning. In the texts of “synsu” and “zhar-zhar” of south-western Zhetysu, the frequent use of images of a mirror, a threshold, and a tree (willow) was found. The image of a mirror is found in the lines “Қарағанда қолыма айнам болсын, жар-жар-оу” (“May there be a mirror in my hand to look into, zhar-zhar-ou”) and “Есіктің алды шоң айна” (“A large mirror in front of the door”). In the Kazakh traditional worldview, the mirror was considered a boundary between life and death. It is no coincidence that it was attached to the resonator of the bakhsy’s (shaman’s) instrument, whose main function was healing with the help of spirits of the Upper and Lower Worlds. Such an understanding of the sacredness of this image also exists in other national cultures.

A comparative analysis of the musical-poetic structure of wedding songs from south-western Zhetysu revealed systematic differences in the organisation of various types of “synsu” and “zhar-zhar”. P.E. Savage et al. (2022) found that folk songs evolve according to similar patterns across cultures, with rhythmically important notes changing less frequently than less significant ones. The systematisation of parameters of musical form, poetic structure, scales, and other characteristics allows for a clear presentation of the features of each sample (Table 2).

Table 2 – Musical and poetic structure of wedding genres of South-West Zhetysu

Analysis parameters	“Synsu” (1 type)	“Synsu” (2nd type)	“zhar-zhar” (female, 1 type)	“zhar-zhar” (female, 2 types)
Musical form	ABAC	AA ₁ AA ₁	AA ₁ AA ₁	ABAB
Poetic form	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD
Soundscape	Aeolian pentachord: I-II-III-IV-V-VI	Ionian pentachord: I-II-III-IV-V	Aeolian pentachord with the introduction of the VII degree: VII-I-II-IV-V	Aeolian pentachord with the introduction of the VII degree: VII-I-II-IV-V
Size of the poem	7-8 components (zhyr)	7-8 components (zhyr)	11-part with 3-part refrain	11-part with 3-part refrain
Structure of syllable groups	4+3, 5+3	4+3, 5+3	4+3+4+(3)	4+3+4+(3)
Type of rhythmic interaction	Recitative	Synchronous	Synchronous	Recitative
Key semantic images	Mirror, threshold	Tree (willow), threshold	Mirror, comparison of parents and in-laws	Earring, comparison of parents and in-laws

Note: the following abbreviations are used in the table: A, B, C, D – musical and poetic stanzas; A₁ – variant of stanza A; I-VII – degrees of the mode.

Source: developed by the authors based on B. Babizhan et al. (2021), M. Mukhsynova and Z. Kassimova (2023).

In the poetic texts of wedding songs, the threshold serves as a semantic object, according to Kazakhs, the place of residence of the spirits patronising the yurt and the boundary of the inhabited space. In the lines “Есіктің алды тал ма екен, Талдан да биік бар ма екен” (“Is not there a willow tree in front of the door? Is there something higher than it?”), the image of a tree is combined with the concept of a threshold. Comparative analysis has shown that the image of a tree in the form of a birch (ақ қайың) is used in poetic stanzas of a similar genre in Central Kazakhstan, and in the form of a spruce (қарағай) – in Western Kazakhstan. The image of the tree in the above example can be interpreted in two ways: as an archetype-symbol of life, the centre of the universe, or as a metaphor for the bride’s state of grief (drooping willow branches).

The variation of musical parameters presented in Tables 2 and 3 is largely determined by historical, sociocultural, and geographical factors. In Central Asia, long-standing interethnic contacts, migration, and the mobility of nomadic communities have contributed to the formation of transitional musical dialects that combine elements of diverse traditions. At the same time, geographical conditions, such as mountain isolation or borderland interaction, influenced the preservation of archaic musical structures and the emergence of regional stylistic features.

Socio-cultural transformations also played an important role in shaping these differences. Changes in ritual practices, the weakening of traditional social institutions, and the processes of urbanisation and modernisation led to the gradual transformation of musical structures and performance contexts (Gospodinova and Torlakov, 2023; Costantino et al., 2021). As a result, some musical parameters remained relatively stable, particularly rhythmic and poetic structures, while melodic organisation and performance style underwent more significant variation across regions.

The structural and typological analysis of wedding songs revealed that, as in most genres of the bride's sending-off ritual of Central Asian Turks, the 7-8-syllable size ("zhyr") is of great importance in the West Zhetysu samples. In the "Synsu", the internal structure is represented by bunaks (syllable groups): 4+3 and 5+3, and in "zhar-zhar" two 7-syllables are included in an 11-syllable line with a 3-syllable refrain (zhar-zhar-ou): 4+3+4+(3). A comparison of the correspondence between the poetic stanza and the musical structure demonstrates different types of organisation. In the first type of "Synsu", the musical form is represented by the structure ABAC with the poetic form ABCD. The second type of "Synsu" is characterised by the musical form AA₁AA₁ with the same poetic form ABCD. The first type of "zhar-zhar" demonstrates the musical form AA₁AA₁ with the poetic form ABCD, and the second type of "zhar-zhar" has the musical form ABAB with the poetic form ABCD.

The above diagrams show that “Synsu” (type 2) and “zhar-zhar” (type 1) are created in the structure of a musical one-element semi-strophe. The same melodic beginning and different endings of the lines show that the musical form of these examples embodies the principle of “difference from identity” (AA₁). In the second example, “zhar-zhar”, the musical organisation becomes more complex, demonstrating a two-element structure (AB). The more intensive development of the melodic line leads to the formation of a three-element musical stanza (ABAS) in “Synsu” (type 1).

The study of the transformation of wedding song genres in the time perspective reflects changes in their functional context, forms of existence and performance specificity. Three historical periods are distinguished, each of which is characterised by its own trends in the development of wedding songs (Table 3).

Table 3 – Historical transformation of wedding song genres in South-West Zhetysu

Characteristics	Traditional period (before the 1920s)	Transformation period (1920-1990)	Modern period (since the 1990s)
Functional context	Sacred and ritual, magical	Desacralised, entertaining	Reconstructed, stage/ festival
Carriers of tradition	All participants of the rite	Older generation, ethnophores	Professional musicians, folklore ensembles
Form of existence	Authentic, oral transmission	Modified under the influence of ideology	Partially reconstructed on the basis of archival recordings
“Synsu”	An obligatory element of the ritual with a lamentation intonation	Preserved in rural areas with loss of ritual function	Reconstruction based on recordings, stage performance
“zhar-zhar”	Dialogical performance in the ritual	Transformation into a monologue form	Revival of a dialogue form in a stage setting
Musical features	Recitative-declamatory style, narrow range	Expansion of the range, melodisation	Stylisation of archaic elements
Preservation of local traditions	Full	Partial (45-60%)	Fragmentary (20-30%)

Source: developed by the authors based on A. Raimkulova (2020), K.S. Matyghanov et al (2024).

The fingering and intonation analysis showed that both versions of the piece “zhar-zhar” are based on the pentachordal structure of the Aeolian type with the occasional inclusion of the septet sound: VII-I-II-IV-V. In the first version of the song “Synsu”, the melody is realised within the Aeolian hexachord (I-II-III-IV-V-VI), whereas in the second version it is based on the Ionic pentachord (I-II-III-IV-V). Similar harmonic structures were found in “Synsu” samples from Western Kazakhstan. As for the hexachordal system, the sextet interval was initially considered an extension of the quintal support and later acquired equal status with other degrees. The initial melodic turn d-e-fis-a-h in the first version of the “Synsu” has common features with the melody of the “Synsu” recorded in Eastern Zhetisu and became the basis for the formation of a number of household lyrical songs.

A theoretical examination of the rhythmic organisation of traditional songs involves studying the relationship between the rhythm of syllables and the pitch of sounds, i.e. the rhythmic structure is analysed in the vertical dimension. In the songs of Western Zhetys, a combination of a formulaic rhythmic component and melodic rhythmic variability can be traced. Of the three known types of rhythmic interaction (synchronicity, chant, recitation), the first and third prevail in this region, indicating the stability and firm consolidation of poetic rhythmic structures in the collective memory of the tradition’s bearers. A detailed musical and theoretical analysis of the studied samples helps to explore the transformation of genres at the level of the deep musical structure. P.E. Savage (2019) notes that cultural evolution has played a key role in shaping musicology, and research shows that songs, like genes and languages, change and are transmitted through cultural evolutionary processes. Parameters such as ambience, intonation types, reference tones, cadence, rhythmic patterns, and other elements reveal the specifics of the evolution of the musical language of wedding songs (Table 4).

Table 4 – Details of musical and theoretical characteristics of wedding songs of South-West Zhetysu

Parameter of analysis	“Synsu” (1 type)	“Synsu” (2nd type)	“zhar-zhar” (female, 1 type)	“zhar-zhar” (female, 2 types)
Ambition	Sexta (d ¹ -h ¹)	Quinta (d ¹ -a ¹)	Quinta (c ¹ -g ¹)	Sexta (c ¹ -a ¹)
Dominant intonation type	d ¹ -e ¹ -fis ¹ -a ¹ -h ¹	d ¹ -e ¹ -fis ¹ -g ¹ -a ¹	c ¹ -d ¹ -f ¹ -g ¹ with occasional h	c ¹ -d ¹ -f ¹ -g ¹ -a ¹ with occasional h
Reference tones	d ¹ , fis ¹ , a ¹	d ¹ , a ¹	c ¹ , g ¹	c ¹ , f ¹ , a ¹
Cadence phrases	fis ¹ -e ¹ -d ¹	g ¹ -fis ¹ -e ¹ -d ¹	d ¹ -c ¹	f ¹ -d ¹ -c ¹
Rhythmic models of syllables	Formula 4+3	Formula 4+3	Formula 4+3+4	Formula 4+3+4
Meter	Variable	Variable	Regular 4/4	Variable
Tempo	Moderate (72-80)	Moderately slow (60-68)	Moderate (76-84)	Moderately fast (84-92)
Melismatics	Rising nozzles, glisando	Insignificant	Without melismatics	Downward nozzles
Structural features of cadences	Open (at stage I)	Open (at stage I)	Closed (at the I stage)	Closed (on the I stage)
Performance specifics	Solo performance with elements of lamentation	Solo performance	Choral performance by women	Choral performance by women

Note: the upper indices next to the notes indicate the octave; the tempo numbers indicate the number of beats per minute.

Source: developed by the authors based on the methodology of M. Mukhsynova and Z. Kassimova (2023) and analysis of expedition records by B. Babizhan et al. (2021).

The chronological periodisation of the transformation of wedding songs in the region identifies three main stages. In the traditional period (until the 1920s), wedding ritual songs functioned in an authentic context, retaining their sacred and ritual significance. The performing style of this period is characterised by a recitative-declamatory style, a lamentatory intonation and adherence to ritual functions. The transformation period (1920-1990) was marked by the gradual desacralisation of ritual songs and by changes in their use. The melody has undergone changes in the direction of expanding the range and complicating intonation structures. In the modern period (since the 1990s), ritual genres are being reconstructed on the basis of archival records and adapted to stage performance.

The identified patterns of transformation of the wedding folklore of southwestern Zhetys are consistent with the general directions of development of the song tradition of Central Asia. Common social and family structures and historical and cultural factors have led to the similarity between the intonational language of the bride's send-off genre – kiz uzatu – in the southwestern part of Zhetys and the melodic features of the corresponding genres in eastern Zhetys and eastern Kazakhstan. The convergence of the musical language of the ritual songs of western and eastern Zhetys, on the one hand, is explained by the long-standing kinship relationships within the Senior Zhuz. On the other hand, the typological similarity of certain features of the musical structure of the Zhetysu ritual genres with the corresponding genres of the Turkic ethnic groups of South Siberia and the Kyrgyz indicates the presence of a common substrate layer.

The results of the study have established that the transformation of traditional song genres in southwestern Zhetysu preservation of ancient stylistic layers of ritual folklore.

A.Zh. Kaztuganova et al. (2023) note that folklore plots penetrate various genres of art, ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage. The absence of close links between the ceremonial and non-ceremonial layers of the local tradition's musical folklore also confirmed the transitional nature of the musical dialect formed under the influence of contacts with neighbouring musical cultures.

3.3. Song folklore in the formation of national musical identity: theory and practice of preserving traditions

Research into how song folklore influences the formation of national musical identity has revealed a multi-layered structure to this process. Based on an analysis of the collected materials, a theoretical model has been developed that reflects the system of interconnections between traditional song

folklore and national musical identity. The study found that national musical identity forms through a phased integration of folkloric elements into professional compositional work. A comprehensive analysis of the mechanisms of this integration has enabled structuring the process and identifying key stages.

The four identified levels of integration of folkloric elements into professional musical culture are characterised by a sequential complication of interaction. The initial level is represented by the quotation and arrangement of folk melodies, with minimal changes to their structure. The second stage was defined by the adaptation of folkloric intonational figures to academic musical language. At the third level, the creation of original works using the modal, metrorhythmic, and structural elements characteristic of national folklore was observed. The final stage involved the formation of a cohesive national compositional school with its own system of expressive means, based on a reinterpretation of traditional folklore. In Kazakh musical culture, this process can be traced in the appeal of composers of the 1950s and 1960s to folklore quotations, and in the 1970s and 1990s – in the development of original compositional techniques based on traditional *kyuis* rhythm and the metrorhythmic formulas of song genres.

The historical perspective of the interaction between traditional folklore and professional compositional work reveals several models of this mutual influence. According to the analysis conducted, the direct quotation of folkloric sources dominated the initial stage of the formation of 19th-century national compositional schools. The subsequent evolution of national compositional schools was characterised by a gradual transition from direct quotation to the reinterpretation of folkloric elements. Modernism at the beginning of the 20th century initiated a new wave of interest in folklore, but already from the perspective of reconstruction through new

compositional techniques. The chronological dynamics of these processes are reflected in the diversity of creative approaches to working with folkloric material, demonstrating a gradual shift in emphasis from direct imitation to creative interpretation.

A comparative analysis of the works of composers from different national schools has allowed for the classification of three main approaches to the use of folklore: quotational (the use of authentic folk melodies), allusive (the creation of original material using intonational figures characteristic of folklore), and conceptual (the reinterpretation of the philosophical and aesthetic foundations of folk music without the direct borrowing of melodic material). From the perspective of musicological analysis, the folkloric elements most often integrated by composers have been systematised: modal features, metrorhythmic structures, textural models, timbral characteristics, performance techniques, and principles of form creation. A.S. Sabirova et al. (2020) argue that folklore and symbolism in Kazakh music reflect mythological ideas and philosophical views, forming a cohesive system of cultural codes, which confirms the deep connection between the conceptual use of folklore and national identity. In the works of Kazakh composers G. Zhubanova and E. Rakhmadiyev, an evolution from the quotation of folk melodies to their thorough reinterpretation and the creation of original compositions based on the traditional formulas of the “терме” (terme) and “кюй” (kuy) genres can be traced. Particularly illustrative are G. Zhubanova’s “Enlik-Kebek” and E. Rakhmadiyev’s “Dala Sazy”, where the transformation of folkloric elements occurs at the level of musical dramaturgy, forming an innovative system of musical language (Kaztuganova et al., 2023).

The study of the economic aspects of preserving traditional musical culture has revealed the potential of cultural tourism to finance projects aimed at reviving folkloric traditions. An analysis of international practices has demonstrated that successful ethno-cultural tourism projects not only contribute

to the economic development of regions but also increase the motivation of local communities to preserve authentic forms of musical folklore. In this context, Kazakh regional initiatives, in particular the “Korkyt and the Great Steppe” festival in the Kyzylorda region, the analysis of which is conducted in the context of the general functions of folk songs identified by C.R. Okpokwasili (2023), illustrate how traditional music festivals become catalysts for the development of local cultural industries, attracting over 5,000 visitors annually and creating additional jobs for local performers and artisans. A comprehensive analysis of global practices in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and the application of modern digital technologies, including virtual reality and augmented reality, carried out using the methodology for preserving folkloric traditions by L. Guangchao et al. (2024), has allowed for the systematisation of the main strategies for preserving and developing national musical traditions in the context of globalisation (Table 5).

Table 5 – Strategies for preserving and developing national musical traditions in the context of globalisation

Strategy	Implementation mechanisms	Forms of functioning of traditional material	Technological tools
Documentation and archive	Field research, digital archiving, music transcription	Fixed authentic samples in archives, collections, databases	Specialised digital archives, multimedia documentation systems, sound recording analysis algorithms
Educational and transmission	Specialised professional education, informal practices of tradition transmission, master classes	Performance practices in authentic and educational contexts	Interactive educational platforms, distance learning, virtual workshops, ethnomusic laboratories
Cultural and representative	Festival activities, museum exhibitions, media presentations	Stage forms, exhibition projects, media adaptations	Cultural centres, museums of intangible heritage, virtual expositions, interactive installations

Innovative and transformational	Synthesis of traditional elements with contemporary artistic practices, transcultural experiments	Neo-folklore, ethno-futurism, transcultural projects, musical hybrid forms	Sound design technologies, digital sound processing, virtual reality/augmented reality environments, collaboration platforms
Socially integrative	Inclusion of traditional practices in the modern socio-cultural context, adaptation to new social functions	Revitalised rites, modernised rituals, adapted communication practices	Social networks, media platforms, digital communication channels, community-oriented applications

Source: developed by the authors based on L. Guangchao et al. (2024), C.R. Okpokwasili (2023).

A comprehensive study of the problem of preserving and developing authentic song traditions in the context of globalisation has enabled the formulation of conceptual approaches to resolving this issue. The analysis of contemporary practices demonstrates that the most effective approach is a comprehensive one, combining the documentation of authentic examples, educational programmes for studying traditional performance, and projects for the revitalisation of folklore in the modern cultural context. This integrative methodology creates a foundation for the systematic preservation of traditional musical culture. A successful example of the application of digital technologies to document and preserve traditional musical folklore is the digital archive project on Kazakh musical folklore, described by B. Babizhan et al. (2021). The authors note that the digital recording of folk songs from the south-western Zhetysu region has not only preserved sound examples but also contextual information about the functioning of song genres, their regional specificity, and performance traditions. Similar projects create a basis for the scholarly study and practical revival of traditional musical forms.

The specifics of educational methods for studying traditional performance have been traced using the example of Kazakh musical educational institutions, where the “устаз-шакирт” (teacher-student) system has been implemented, adapting traditional forms of transmitting performing mastery

to the conditions of formal education. At the Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory, the educational process includes not only the technical mastery of instruments but also the study of the cultural context of musical genres, ensuring a comprehensive approach to the preservation of tradition. According to M. Mukhsynova and Z. Kassimova (2023), fostering a singer with the necessary foundations of artistic skill and methods for further improvement of musical knowledge, who combines the ability to develop independent thought with a creative vision, is a relevant task in modern conditions. The authors emphasise that traditional teaching methods ensure the preservation of authentic performance techniques and regional stylistic peculiarities. This educational experience demonstrates the effectiveness of synthesising traditional and modern pedagogical methods in preparing a new generation of bearers of folkloric tradition.

The reverse influence of globalisation processes on the transformation of folklore itself is manifested in the formation of new hybrid genres and performance practices. Research has established that the interaction of traditional musical forms with elements of mass culture leads to the emergence of transcultural phenomena which, while maintaining a connection with authentic tradition, acquire new functions and meanings. The analysis of a Kazakh traditional song illustrates how the archaic genres “synsu” and “zhar-zhar” are transformed by modern media and digital technologies, while retaining their cultural significance. Research by K. Bizhanova et al. (2024) on the formation of Kazakh youth identity based on traditional folk music revealed that 89% of respondents who prefer traditional music belong to a sensitive personality type, characterised by vulnerability, openness, and empathy, which confirms the profound influence of traditional music on the formation of personal qualities and national self-awareness. The implementation of the “Мың жылдық әуен” (“Millennial Melody”) project has ensured the digital recording of over 2000

authentic examples, using spatial sound recording and video recording technologies to capture contextual information about the functioning of song genres, thereby creating a digital archive of the national musical heritage.

The coordinating role of state institutions and international organisations in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage has proven decisive for the systematic documentation and popularisation of traditional folklore. An analysis of state programmes in the Central Asian region has shown a tendency towards integrating traditional musical practices into the formal education system and developing legislative mechanisms to protect intangible cultural heritage. The Kazakh state programme “Мәдени мұра” (“Cultural Heritage”) has ensured planned work on documenting and popularising traditional music, resulting in the inclusion of the Kazakh kui on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Thanks to international projects under the auspices of UNESCO, a broad network of specialists and institutions working in the field of traditional music preservation has been formed, enabling the exchange of experience and methodologies at the international level.

The final stage of the research established that song folklore remains a defining factor in the formation of national musical identity, even in the context of globalisation and technological transformations. An important basis for understanding the processes of musical identity formation in the Central Asian region is the concept of G. Omarova (2019), which identifies two main super-ethnic groups: the Turkic-Mongolian (Tengrian) and the Turkic-Iranian (Muslim), whose cultural particularities shape the specific characteristics of the region’s musical traditions. This allows consideration of the processes of song-folklore transformation within a broader historical and cultural context.

The proposed theoretical model of the influence of song folklore on the formation of national musical identity, the systematisation of models of interaction between traditional

folklore and professional compositional work, and the formulated strategies for adapting traditional forms to the modern cultural context create a methodological basis for further research in this field and the development of practical measures for the preservation and development of national musical traditions.

4. Discussion

The research findings regarding the evolution of song folklore and its influence on the formation of national musical tradition have revealed the multi-layered nature of transformational processes in traditional musical culture. The identified mechanisms of song-folklore evolution in the Central Asian region demonstrate patterns shaped by historical-cultural, socio-economic, and geographical factors. The proposed classification of theoretical models of song-folklore evolution reflects the diversity of transformational processes across historical development. It is argued that the transformation of traditional genres in south-western Zhetysu occurred through the preservation of substratum elements in ritual folklore alongside significant changes in the secular song repertoire.

The obtained results correlate with the conclusions of D.T. Nosirov (2021), who asserted that the formation of youth spirituality is based on the transmission of knowledge about local musical traditions. The researcher emphasised the role of music as an educational tool throughout life. This aligns with the identified influence of song folklore on the formation of national musical identity, where it was established that traditional song genres performed aesthetic and pedagogical functions. However, unlike D.T. Nosirov, who focused on the educational aspect, the conducted research has broadened the understanding of transformational processes in song folklore, considering them in a historical-cultural context taking into account interethnic contacts.

M. Brocken (2022) conducted a study of the impact of media on the development of independent music-making skills on folk instruments in the context of the British folk revival. This research noted the role of tradition reconstruction as a means of seeking national identity, a concept that resonates with the processes of reviving ritual genres in contemporary Kazakhstan. Unlike the British model, initiatives in Central Asia were based on state programmes for the protection of cultural heritage, rather than on the initiative of urban enthusiasts.

B. Nettle (2024) analysed the universal features of lullabies across world cultures based on a comparison of 186 ethnocultures. Homogeneous genre characteristics were established despite local variations. This approach enabled identification of similarities with the results of the regional analysis of the preservation of traditional genres in Kazakhstan, although the latter study concerned a broader range of vocal forms in a specific historical-cultural environment. The creation of hybrid musical structures combining traditional and Western music was analysed by M. Reimer (2024) in the context of transformations in South Korean musical culture. Analogous processes have also been recorded in the Central Asian context; however, the determining factor in these transformations was Soviet cultural policy, rather than the influence of American military orchestras in Korea.

The evolution of educational models in music pedagogy in Great Britain was traced in the work of S. Pitts (2019), which highlighted the transformation of approaches from academic listening to creative improvisations. The identified tendency resonates with changes in the functional context of folklore, which, in the research, were analysed as not only ritual but also educational influences. At the same time, the main attention was paid to traditional mechanisms of transmitting performing practices in new socio-cultural conditions. The formation of national identity through the preservation of traditional music was studied by H. Spiller and E.A. Clendinning (2022) using

the example of Indonesian gamelan. Despite contemporary transformations, the cultural significance of musical practices was noted to be preserved. This conclusion is consistent with the results of the analysis of song folklore in Kazakhstan, although the research by H. Spiller and E.A. Clendinning covered mainly instrumental forms and the contemporary stage of development.

The dependence of the development of professional vocal art on folkloric origins was analysed by N. Madaminov and K. Fozilov (2021) using the example of the Uzbek tradition. It was determined that folk music laid the foundation for the formation of a national compositional school, in line with research on the transformation of folkloric genres in Central Asia. Methodological approaches to the study of world musical cultures, proposed by T.E. Miller and A. Shahriari (2020), were based on comparative historical analysis and cultural consideration of traditions. The attention to intercultural influences in a globalised environment allows for comparing these approaches with the study of the mechanisms of song-folklore evolution in the specific cultural-historical context of Central Asia.

The research by X. Zhang (2024) revealed the impact of globalisation and digital technologies on the process of preserving folkloric traditions in Muzaffarabad. It was noted that traditional forms are gradually declining, which correlates with the results of the conducted research on the impact of modernisation on the state of song folklore in Kazakhstan. At the same time, the work of Afridi and co-authors mainly focuses on general folkloric content, while the study of song folklore was accompanied by historical analysis.

The socio-historical reflection in folklore was highlighted by J. Newman (2020) and B. Lewandowska (2019). The former analysed African American folklore as a source of cultural identity, and the latter – the reflection of historical events in

urban songs of Poland. Both studies, like the conducted one, revealed the ability of folklore to record and transform socio-historical experience, although the conducted research focused on rural traditions and authentic forms of song folklore.

The research on the evolution of song folklore and its influence on the formation of national musical tradition has expanded scholarly understanding of transformational processes in traditional music, taking into account the diversity of factors that shape them. The identified patterns of song folklore evolution in the Central Asian region, the analysis of the transformation of traditional genres in south-western Zhetysu, and the developed theoretical model of the influence of song folklore on the formation of national musical identity complement the scholarly knowledge about the development of traditional musical cultures. The research has demonstrated that, despite globalisation processes and socio-cultural transformations, song folklore retains its cultural significance, adapting to new conditions of functioning, which confirms its important role in the formation and preservation of national identity.

5. Conclusions

The study of the evolution of song folklore and its influence on the formation of the national musical tradition has revealed complex mechanisms for transforming traditional musical forms in the context of socio-cultural changes. The developed theoretical typology of evolutionary processes, which includes six models (linear-stage, divergent, convergent, cyclic, substrate-superstrate and adaptive), forms the methodological basis for a systematic analysis of the transformation of song traditions of different ethnic groups. The identification of a correlation between geographical, socio-historical factors and the intensity of evolutionary processes is fundamentally new, in particular, the maximum dynamics of song folklore transformation in areas of intercultural interaction is established. The key factors

in evolutionary processes are identified, including changes in the social and everyday contexts of musical genre functioning, modernisation of traditional ways of life, and digital technologies, which play a dual role in both preserving and transforming traditional forms.

The proposed theoretical model of the influence of song folklore on the formation of national musical identity, the systematisation of models of interaction between traditional folklore and professional compositional work, and the outlined strategies for adapting traditional forms to the modern cultural context contribute to a broader understanding of the preservation and development of national musical traditions and may serve as a conceptual framework for further research and cultural initiatives.

The analysis of the transformation of song genres of South-West Zhetysu has revealed the specifics of the evolution of wedding song folklore at the level of its musical and poetic structure, figurative system and functional context. It has been established that the preservation of substrate elements in the ceremonial folklore, alongside significant changes in the everyday song repertoire, confirms the transitional nature of the musical dialect of this region. Statistical analysis has shown the uneven preservation of traditional genres in different regions of Kazakhstan, where the highest percentage of preservation of ceremonial folklore (65%) is recorded in the southern regions, while in the northern and central regions this figure does not exceed 30%. The semiotic analysis of wedding songs has revealed a system of key images-concepts ('mirror', 'threshold', 'tree') that retain their archetypal meanings in the transformation of forms of expression.

The developed theoretical model of the influence of song folklore on the formation of national musical identity reveals the multilevel structure of this process through the gradual integration of folklore elements into professional compositional creativity. Four levels of such integration are identified: from

quoting folk melodies to the formation of an integral national school of composition with its own system of expressive means. Five strategies for the preservation and development of national musical traditions are systematised: documentary and archival; educational and transmission; cultural and representative; innovative and transformational; and socially integrative, reflecting different approaches to adapting traditional forms to the modern cultural context.

For the effective preservation and development of song folklore in the context of globalisation, an integrated approach is recommended that combines the documentation of authentic samples, the introduction of innovative educational methods for the transmission of traditional performance, the implementation of projects to update folklore in the modern cultural space, and the development of cultural tourism as a mechanism for financing measures to preserve intangible cultural heritage. A promising area for further research is the study of the mechanisms of transformation of song folklore in the context of digital culture and the development of methods for integrating traditional forms into modern media platforms. A limitation of the study is the insufficient study of the psychological aspects of the perception of traditional musical folklore by representatives of different generations, which affects the mechanisms of transmission of intangible cultural heritage.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory Review Board, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation throughout the research process.

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