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Engraving Techniques: Evaluating and Redesigning the Teaching Practices of the Kazak Mythology

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Abstract

The study was designed to explore and develop art students' interest and engagement in Kazakh mythology and using engraving techniques. The archetypic and challenges of Kazakh mythology in art students were not previously explored. Therefore, the need for study in this domain was essential to cover the gap in the literature. The gap has been recently discovered by Kazakh scholars although it has been explored by foreign authors but the authenticity of such studies remains a question. The study was experimental and the results show a strong association between art's student's engagements with Kazakh mythology using engraving techniques. Moreover, the elective course was selected by 90% class of the art students voluntarily. The teaching method developed for the study provides strong results and the outcome of the experiment was well above 80%. The study used a systematic method along with comparative analysis based on Kazakh myths, culture, ethnology, folklore, mythology, and archeology.

Keywords: *Kazakh mythology, engraving art, culture, training, students' engagement, students' assessment*

1. Introduction

Kazakh mythology is a rich and fascinating area of study that has received increasing attention in recent years (Karim, 2023; Karim et al., 2021; Bieken, & Alashbaeva, 2023; Bekebasova, 2019). Teaching Kazakh mythology arises several challenges among these challenges are the problems associated with students' engagement (e.g. Cole, 2006; Uskembraeva et al., 2016). Engraving techniques as a means of introducing myths and legends to the students has been linked with students' engagement (Gao, 2016). Engraving is a form of printmaking that involves carving a design into a surface, typically a metal plate or a piece of wood. The design is then inked and printed onto paper, creating a unique and detailed image (Stijnman, 2012; Hind, 2011). Engraving has a long history in Kazakh culture and many of the traditional designs and motifs used in engraving have their roots in Kazakh mythology (Karim et al., 2021).

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The first stage of the art of engraving is the exploration of the space of myth with the advent of human civilization, cultural landscapes begin to form, in which myth becomes the oldest way of explaining, naming, and pragmatics of the socio-psychological development of the world. "The space of myth created the architecture of the world" (Melik-Gaykazyan, 2005:6). Furthermore, the transition from archaic myth to mythology led to the formation of many cultural spaces with their mental foundations on which various socio-cultural systems have relied and are based (Топоров, & Knight, 1978; Walker, 2014). For example, the association between Kazakh mythology and Turkic mythology (Uskambaeva et al., 2016). Methodological perspectives of Kazakh art, history, culture, and society as a whole assist in the interpretation of Kazakh myths and mythologies (Алтаев, & Иманбаева, 2021). Until the beginning of the 20th century, Kazakh Mythology was not explored separately from folkloristics and only a handful of studies exist in this domain that do not pay attention to the interpretation and analysis of mythical stories (Uskambaeva et al., 2016).

Kazakh myths have an interesting association with stars and the end of the world such as the myth of "Zheti Karakshy" (Big Bear) that consist of seven stars linked with seven thieves; "Temir Kazyk"-the Iron Stake and the two stars near Iron Stake is depicted as two horses tied to the Iron Stake. "Ak Boz At" the white horse; "Kok Boz At" the blue-gray; and "Akır Zaman" - "The End of the World". (Sagandykova, 2019). Moreover, various studies have analyzed the art history, artistic, creative, semiotic, and structuralist studies of the mythology of the XX-XXI century (e.g. Marchenko et al., 2022; Karpov, 2019). The period emphasizes the universality of the functions of myths, regardless of which "mental environment" they arise in "traditional and archaic", "Hellenistic", or "bourgeois".

Teaching Kazakh mythology through the art of engraving, educators can bring by introduce students to the basic principles of engraving. This may include a brief history of the technique, an overview of the tools and materials used in engraving, and a demonstration of the engraving process itself. Furthermore, once students have a basic understanding of engraving, they begin to explore the myths and legends of Kazakh culture through the creation of their engravings. Educators may provide students with a selection of traditional Kazakh designs and motifs to use as inspiration for their engravings. Students need to be encouraged to create their designs based on their interpretation of Kazakh mythology. The purpose of the research is to highlight the importance of studying myth and mythology for art students and professionals, as well as to emphasize the relevance of developing critical analysis skills for both traditional and neo-mythological material. The study aims to explore the role of myth and mythological systems in Kazakh history and culture and to familiarize art students with various aspects of Kazakh myth and mythology. The research also emphasizes the need to develop critical thinking skills and the ability to analyze mythological and neo-mythological material in its narrative and artistic expression, which is crucial for future art teachers, graphic artists, and other art professionals.

Mythological consciousness is a process of interpretation as an immanent component of social consciousness (Bidney, 1995). Understanding the "pulsating" nature of mythological consciousness and analyzing its existence in specific socio-historical conditions is an integral part of the professional skills of an art critic (Alexander, 2017; Slattery, 2005). Pulsation and mutual permeability of the "logical-rationalistic" and "mythological" consciousness that myths are often considered by political elites as a kind of inexhaustible resource a means of periodically renewed national identifications and legitimization of certain forms of statehood and personal manifestations of power. In these cases, mythological images, plots, and characters become the object of unlimited manipulations, fixed in the public consciousness by the available mass media. Such processes are especially characteristic of the so-called epochs

of "breaking the world" (Weltwende). The term was first introduced into scientific circulation by Arnold Toynbee, who believed, in particular, that the I century BC was a frontier, Weltwende – "breaking of the world", a time when rationalism exhausted all its resources and was replaced by mysticism, stagnation, and apathy (Toynbee, 1981: 135-137).

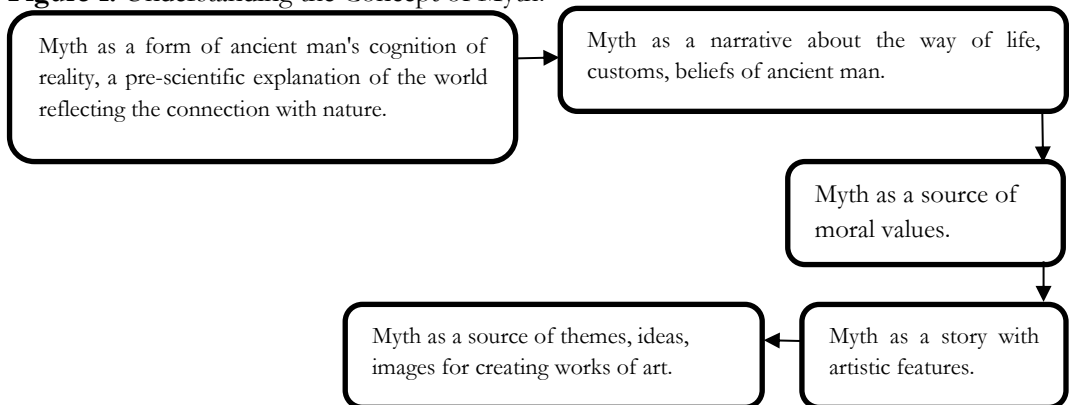
The study of the status of the "mythological" in the mentality of traditional communities can contribute to the explanation of the origins and analogy of the above phenomenon in the modern world, the distinctive feature of which is a real occult boom, the fashion for witchcraft and sorcery. In this light, the current situation is described by researchers as a "postmodern era" or even as a "new Hellenism", a professional art critic. The artist can analyze the evidence of another reanimation of the mythological way of understanding the world – reanimation, socially-historically conditioned and having obvious historical boundaries (Khazina & Stroganov, 2015: 275). The process of demythologization that has been taking place since the end of the XX century to the present, and the emergence of neo-mythology on its basis, Naidysh, presented "quasi-scientific myth-making", which can be interpreted as a synthesis of science and mythology, and ultimately tends to anti-science. Additionally, to the greatest extent, quasi-scientific theories touch upon the issues of a society full of the most acute contradictions. Therefore, vulnerable and striving for stability and balance, there is an undeniable shortage of a calm, sober understanding of neo-mythmaking, and the need to develop an adequate worldview attitude to it. The approach requiring researchers to remain in positions of rational criticism can create conditions for achieving a balance of interests of society and the individual based on civil society (Naidysh, 2010:419).

This study was designed to explore students' engagement and performance in an experiment designed to promote Kazakh mythology using engraving techniques at the Institute of Arts, Culture, and Sports, Abai University- Kazakhstan. The purpose of which was to identify the peculiarities of the perception of Kazakh myths to students and the level of knowledge of mythology to identify the main problems in mastering the topic and to outline ways to study myths in teaching Kazakh mythology through the art of engraving.

2. The Myth – Understanding the Origin of Myth

The methodological challenges linked with the teaching of Kazakh mythology and students' engagement require an understanding of students' interests and engagement. That is how students can be engaged in learning Kazakh mythology using engraving techniques. Figure 1 represents the concept of myth in terms of its foundations, historical perspective and association.

Figure 1: Understanding the Concept of Myth.



3. Methodology

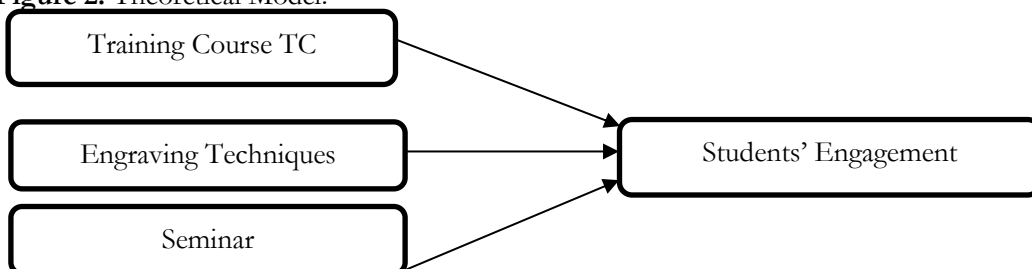
To preserve and develop Kazakh mythology and art, the Institute of Arts, Culture, and Sports, Abai University has conducted an experiment in which a course on "Kazakh mythology and Art" as a subject– as part of the elective discipline (60 Credit) was introduced to the art department students (Bachelor and Master students). Mythology is a subject previously taught in Kazakh universities to students of philological, cultural, religious studies, and philosophical, but, unfortunately, not art history or in the specialties of graphics, and painting. There was a need to introduce Kazakh mythology and art as a course that would cover a wide range of problems related not only to the study of various techniques of mythology but also analysis of the main mythologies and familiarization with the main scientific theories in the field of myth and mythology. The purpose of this subject was to access students' interests and to develop an understanding of Kazakh mythology. The study was designed through the assessment of the works of art historians and artists on the chosen problem were studied and programs and textbooks on art, mythology, graphics, and, of course, engraving were analyzed to develop course content, The effectiveness of teaching Kazakh mythology through the art of engraving was evaluated using two groups of students from the art department. Group 1 students were taught Kazakh mythology through traditional methods, whereas, group 2 students were taught using the approach we have developed that consists of lectures, seminars, and engraving techniques. The performance of both groups was then compared in terms of their level of knowledge and understanding of Kazakh mythology.

The training course "Kazakh Mythology and Art" consists of 15 lecture topics and 10 seminar topics along with practical classes on engraving techniques from the perspective of Kazakh mythology. The training course begins with "Mythology in art", which focuses on generating a painting based on myth stories. This allows students to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the history and art of Kazakh mythology along with the Ancient World, the Middle Ages, etc. The works of various artists, sculptors, and film directors were included in the study. The seminar series on engraving techniques were based on compositional works. The seminar series allows students to participate in the discussion based on each module of training courses.

In addition to studying the main issues of the topics, students were grouped into micro-groups (3 students per group). These micro-groups were assigned engravings and a practical task to prepare art on a particular ritual or various mythical sources (historical or modern) from a particular people or tribe paying specific attention to local ritual with the fusion of the art historians' work, ethnographers, religious scholars, and cultural scientists. The students' outcomes were assessed by the experts and professionals engaged in Kazakh art, history, and archeology.

4. Theoretical Model

Figure 2: Theoretical Model.

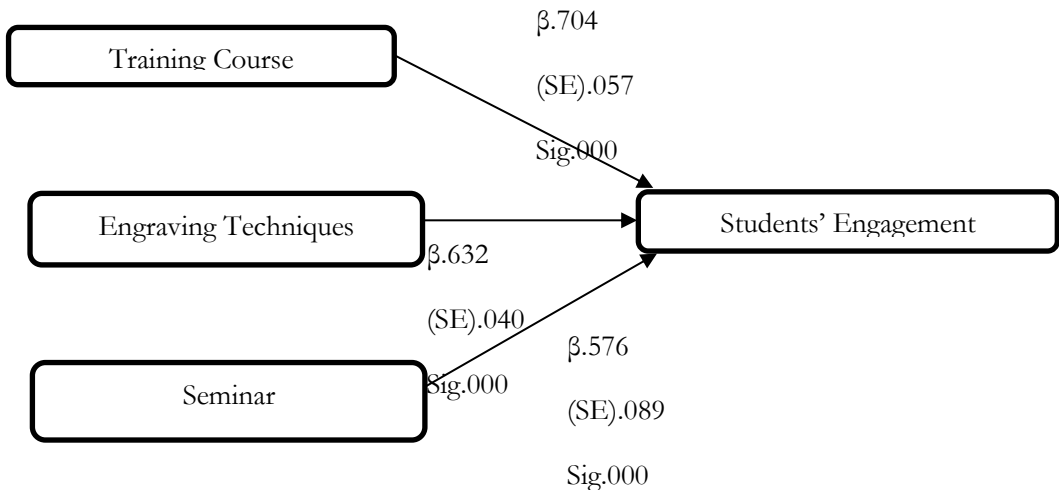


4.1 Measure

All constructs and items were measured on a Likert five-point scale anchored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

- 1- Student's engagement: Student engagement was assessed using a 20 items self-developed scale with Cronbach's alpha value (α 0.92). A sample item example: "The engraving techniques help me in building my interest in Kazakh mythology."
- 2- Training course assessment scale: The training course assessment scale was measured using a 19 items self-developed scale with Cronbach's alpha value (α 0.89). A sample item example: "The students were able to apply engraving techniques effectively in Kazakh Mythology."
- 3- Seminar assessment scale: Seminar course assessment was measured using a 22 items self-developed scale with Cronbach's alpha value (α 0.88). A sample item example: "The seminar series helps students develop a more advanced understanding and knowledge of Kazakh mythology."
- 4- Engraving technique assessment scale: The engraving technique assessment scale was measured using a 20 items self-developed scale with Cronbach's alpha value (α 0.90). A sample item example: "Engraving techniques help students in innovatively expressing Kazakh Mythology."

5. Data Analysis and Results



5.1. Regression Analysis

Table 1: Regression Model.

Paths	Estimate	Standard Error	f-value	Mean Square	p-value	R Square
TC □ SE	.704***	.057	117.644	14.055	0.000	.939 93.9%
ET □ SE	.632***	.040				
SM □ SE	.576***	.089				

Significance levels: *** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$; SMST = TC=Training Course; ET=Engraving Techniques; SM=Seminar; Students' Engagement SE.

Table 1, provide regression results along with model strength. The model R^2 or the coefficient of determination shows 93.9% the variance in the dependent variable (Students' engagement)

that explains by the independent variables (training course, engraving techniques, and seminar). The association between TC and SE was statistically significant ($\beta = .704$; $p=0.000$) with students' engagement; moreover, the association between engraving techniques and students' engagement was also statistically significant ($\beta = .632$; $p=0.000$) and the association between seminar series and students' engagement was also statistically significant ($\beta = .576$; $p=0.000$).

The regression results show the effectiveness of the experiment, the positive association between variables shows that students felt motivated and positively get engaged with Kazakh mythology through the course and seminar that we introduced. This shows the effectiveness of course contents and seminar series. Moreover, the engraving technique's positive association shows that it can deliver effective results in developing and preserving Kazakh mythology. Kazakh mythology which was previously ignored in arts discipline needs to be taught in the arts department across the country to promote and preserve cultural and historical values.

5.2 Pearson Correlation

Table 2: Correlation Analysis.

		Correlations			
		TC	ET	SM	SE
TC	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	46			
ET	Pearson Correlation	.546**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	46	46		
SM	Pearson Correlation	.567**	.667**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	46	46	46	
SE	Pearson Correlation	.471**	.595**	.665	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	46	46	46	46

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2, shows the correlations analysis, ET has a moderate positive and statistically significant ($p .000$) association with TC ($r = .546^{**}$). SM has a moderate positive association with TC ($r = .567^{**}$) and with ET ($r = .667^{**}$). Furthermore, SE has a moderate positive association with TC ($.471^{**}$), ET ($.595^{**}$), and SM ($.665^{**}$). Therefore, from the correlation analysis, we explore that all variables are positively associated.

5.3 Comparison

Group 1 students were taught Kazakh mythology through traditional methods (Lectures and assignments), whereas, group 2 students were taught using the approach we have developed that consists of lecturers (using visual aids), seminars (students and experts), and engraving techniques.

Table 3 Kazak Mythology.

Items	Traditional	Integration	Mean Difference MD=T-I	Significant
Students' engagement	2.1342	6.4323	-4.2981	<0.01
Knowledge acquisition	3.8734	5.3532	-1.4798	<0.01
Kazak Mythology Understanding	1.9173	5.2487	-3.3314	<0.01
Course attendance	3.6131	6.2419	-2.6288	<0.01
Students performance	2.2421	5.7548	-3.5127	<0.01

Table 2 shows the mean score of five indicators, the negative difference between mean scores shows the effectiveness of the integration method that we have developed as compared to the traditional theory-based method that does not support practicality.

6. Findings

The results of the study showed that group 2, which was taught Kazakh mythology through the art of engraving performed significantly better in terms of knowledge acquisition and understanding of Kazakh mythology as compared to the group that was taught Kazakh mythology using traditional methods. This suggests that the use of art and visual aids in teaching mythology can be a highly effective method for improving student learning outcomes. The study also revealed that students found the use of art and engraving to be a more engaging and interesting way to learn about mythology. Students were able to better remember and retain the information that they received through visual aids and artistic depictions. The findings of the study suggested that the use of art and visual aids in teaching mythology can be a highly effective way to improve student learning outcomes and engagement. It also highlights the importance of incorporating a variety of teaching methods and approaches to help students learn and retain information. The incorporation of lectures, seminars, with engraving techniques is directly associated with the success of mastering skills and students' engagement.

7. Discussion

The mythology of the Kazakh people and practice in the art of engraving is the topic of the "Mythopoetic model of engraving" the process of studying which involves particular drawing sketch designs and the transition to engraving technology dedicated to the reflection of one of the variants of the model of graphic techniques but also the theories associated with Kazakh myth, culture and folklore as well as sculpture and traditional costume. Although the degree of independence in performing this task is usually much greater because students of Kazakh mythology at the beginning of the week find it difficult to perform and get engaged however, once students begin to develop an understanding the level of engagement increases and the difficulty level decreased significantly. The research model was driven by theory, history, art, mythology, practice, and engraving techniques.

Mythology in engraving was divided into several extensive practical classes so that students progress with the subject in stages thus reducing the level of difficulty level. The categories were divided into scientific literature that included the works of art historians, philosophers, religious scholars, linguists, folklorists, sociologists, ethnographers, and anthropologists. Furthermore, due to the limited existence of educational materials and anthologies that would

cover the whole range of necessary issues regarding Kazakh mythology was still missing from the Kazakh language, and recently work on this domain started. We recommend students use the works of Serikbol Kondybai (Kondybai, 2004) as a guide in an impressive array of scientific papers in which information about mythology and various concepts are distributed according to the thematic and chronological principles.

The topics included in the curriculum consist of, mythology and modern engraving techniques, motifs, symbols in Kazakh mythology, demonology in Kazakh mythology, and categories of mythological characters related mainly to the main mythologies and are intended to develop student's skills in comparative historical, art criticism research of national mythologies and identification of archetypal plots and images in them and application in compositional creative works. At the same time, as a theoretical basis for research, in addition to scientific and popular scientific works, students use engraving techniques, mastering linocuts, woodcuts, lithographs, etc. The connection between engraving and mythology goes through the art of history and the techniques of execution.

The development of characterization of Kazakh mythology is particularly popular among students, through which they can express their creative abilities. When compiling the characteristics of Kazakh mythology, it is recommended to rely on the framework proposed by Lyudmila Nikolaevna Vinogradova (Vinogradova, 2000:60-67). The purposed framework in our opinion, contains the optimal set of positions for a comprehensive description of mythological characters. Furthermore, students that want to improve their academic performance are instructed to compile thematic glossaries on individual sections of the discipline, annotated reviews of internet resources on mythology and essays on a predetermined topic, and analytical reviews of popular science and feature films that address the corresponding theme and the final result of the picture made by the technique of engraving.

8. Future Recommendation and Conclusion

The association between mythology and the art of the ancient world would be a valuable addition to the literature. It is also advisable to develop teaching techniques using technology and practical classes using the various technique of art. The design of course content linking history, the art of primitive society, and the proto-Kazakh mythology of the ancient people of the Saks can result in better student engagement. The expression of ideas through the use of themes and symbolism present in Kazakh mythology will help in the development of the field. Through the art of engraving as a means of teaching Kazakh mythology, educators can engage students in a creative and interactive learning experience that connects them to the rich cultural heritage of Kazakhstan. This approach not only helps students to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of Kazakh mythology but also fosters important skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. Furthermore, engraving not only allows students to learn about Kazakh mythology through a hands-on and visually engaging medium, but it also provides a bridge between the past and the present. By studying traditional Kazakh engraving techniques and motifs, students can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural heritage of Kazakhstan, while also exploring how this heritage can be reinterpreted and applied in new and creative ways.

In addition to traditional engraving techniques, modern technology can also be used to enhance the teaching of Kazakh mythology. For example, digital engraving software can be used to create and manipulate designs, while laser engraving machines can be used to produce high-

quality engravings quickly and efficiently. By incorporating modern technology into the teaching of Kazakh mythology, educators can help students to develop important technical skills that are relevant to the modern world, such as digital design, computer-aided manufacturing, and graphic design. Students can continue to explore and appreciate the rich cultural heritage of Kazakhstan through the creation of engravings that reflect their unique interpretations and perspectives. Overall, the methodology and technology of teaching Kazakh mythology through the art of engraving provides a powerful and engaging way to connect students with the cultural heritage of Kazakhstan, while also fostering important skills and abilities that are relevant to the modern world. Whether teaching in a formal classroom setting or as a community-based project, this approach to teaching Kazakh mythology has the potential to inspire creativity, cultural awareness, and a deeper understanding of the world. Knowledge of the specific features of the myth, the main mythological plots, and characters become a support for the study of folklore and some of the creative works of famous artists. Among the reasons for turning to mythology in the analysis of works of art, along with deepening penetration into the text, and in working with paintings, students need to master the individual creative approach of the artist, art historian to mythological material as one of the features of his work. However, the problem of involving mythology as a factor in deepening the analysis of artistic creativity is currently insufficiently developed. Thus, as a result of studying the discipline "Kazakh mythology and Art", students of art historians, graphic artists, and pedagogical specialties manage to form a fairly holistic view of myth and mythology as one of the oldest cultural and historical phenomena and the sphere of activity of creative consciousness and develop skills of critical comprehension of mythological material in all its manifestations.

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