

**ABSTRACT**  
**of the thesis of Shomayeva Dilara Yerzhanovna**  
**for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**  
**in 8D02107 Art History speciality**  
**Gender Discourse of the Ballet Master's Art's Development in Kazakhstan**

**The Problem Statement.** The phenomenon of gender segregation in ballet can be traced throughout the entire time of its existence.

Interest in this issue has been formed in the world community long ago and it has been sufficiently studied, which is proved by the developed works of foreign scientists. However, this area of ballet studies is characterized by insufficient research in the works of researchers in the post-Soviet countries, and in Kazakhstan in particular. It is partially and selectively covered. This work will help to gain new knowledge and reorganize the existing one about how the deep processes in the choreographic art of Kazakhstan were formed from the moment of the Kazakh dance birth to the creation of the academic ballet theater, its development throughout the history of its existence and the appearance of works by domestic choreographers.

The analysis of scientific literature on the given topic determined that the Western culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries dictated the context for discussing the dance, in which it was impossible to avoid the intersection of aesthetic and gender ideologies. Gradually, the gender discourse of dance studies has gained more and more importance, not only in the Western world, as in any community, the dance is a direct reflection of the social structure. The choreographic art of Kazakhstan has gone a special way in mastering this experience, which resulted in the phenomenon of female choreographers who declared themselves in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

But this process proceeded without an appropriate scientific justification, which results in incomplete coverage of the phenomenon. Due to the lack of developed data on the gender distribution among choreographers and a focused analysis of their work from the position of gender, it is impossible to fully voice their achievements.

**The Level of Prior Studies of the Topic.** There are no major works devoted to the proposed topic in Kazakhstan ballet studies. The most detailed studies on the work of domestic choreographers performed by L. Sarynova, A. Shankibayeva, A. Sadykova, D. Urazymbetov, and G. Zhumasseitova considered a wide range of questions about the history of the domestic theatrical art. They were devoted to the creators and reformers of Kazakhstan ballet who worked during the Soviet period: Z. Raibayev, M. Tleubayev, B. Ayukhanov, and D. Abirov. The significance of modern works performed by female choreographers was reflected in the works of A. Kussanova and A. Moldakhmetova, as well as in a number of articles written by A. Sadykova, A. Kulbekova, G. Zhumasseitova, U. Aliyeva, F. Mussina, A. Shankibayeva, D. Urazymbetova, and T. Moldalim. At the same time, the results of these works did not take into account such a factor as female subjectivity. And it allows us to assume that they can be significantly supplemented. A statistical analysis was carried out on the basis of the scientific works of N. Lvov, N. Korshunov, G. Zhumasseitova, L. Zhuikova and D. Yessentayeva. It demonstrated changes in the presence of domestic female authors in the ballet art of Kazakhstan for almost 90 years.

An example for the study of gender imbalance among choreographers was Teague J.'s dissertation, the results of which confirmed the fact of gender imbalance among choreographers in the largest academic theaters and contemporary teams in Europe and North America during the 2016-2017 theater season.

The concepts of gender, gender theory and its categorical apparatus in the world science, which underlie this work, were developed in the works of M. Foucault, S. De Beauvoir, G. Rubin, H. Cixous, L. Irigaray, J. Lorber, S. Farrell, K. West, D. Zimmerman, R. Connell, K. Gilligan. Art studies in the discourse of gender, which considered alternative methods of researching art, belonged to the Western scientists who were the founders of this trend: G. Pollock, L. Nochlin, L. Mulvey, W. Chadwick and R. Parker. The specificity of the gender approach in the analysis of the dance theory and history was described in detail in the works of K. Adair, A. Albright, E. Dempster, D. Jowitt, L. Garafola, A. Dali A., J. Hanna, S. Foster, as well as in the most recent works of A. Koritz, K. Brown, W. Midgellow and S. Guche-Miller, where they developed several areas of feminist thought, due to the subject-centric, materialistic and post-structuralist approaches used in the study of the dance history. The theoretical basis for the process of entering the modern gender theory into Kazakhstan discourse was taken from the works of Russian researchers A. Usmanova, I. Perelman, N. Kuryumova, G. Brandt, Ye. Zdravomyslova, A. Temkina, L. Bredikhina, who successfully applied the achievements of Western scientists. The work also used the materials of the developed studies of D. Abirov, O. Vsevolodskaya-Golushkevich, A. Sadykova, T. Zhumasseitova, A. Alisheva and A. Moldakhmetova devoted to the development of the national dance in the vision of domestic authors. The study was based on the concepts of the problems of the post-colonial heritage and its presence in the dance art of Kazakhstan, developed in the works of E. Said, M. Tlostanova, M. Doy, G. Zhapekova, I. Stasevich.

**The Object of the Study** was creative activity of Kazakhstan female choreographers from the moment of the professional ballet art birth to the present.

**The Subject of the Study** was processes in the history of choreography in Kazakhstan and their causes influencing the formation of trends in its development in the field of gender discourse.

**The Purpose of the Study** was to identify the features of the choreographer's art formation and development in Kazakhstan through the gender discourse analysis and to substantiate the place of a female choreographer in it.

To achieve the purpose of the study, it was necessary to perform the following **scientific tasks**:

1. To reveal the concept of gender and the gender theory in the art history.
2. To identify the main features of the feminist criticism approach to the study of art as a field of gender studies.
3. To analyze the history of the world choreography taking into consideration the presence of factors that determine the place of a female choreographer there.
4. To consider gender roles in the traditional Kazakh society and to justify their influence on the national choreography development.
5. To identify the processes that determined the new position of a woman in art of the totalitarian era (in the aspect of the work of Shara Zhiyenkulova).
6. To substantiate the mechanisms for approving a female choreographer of the independent Kazakhstan.
7. To analyze the current stage implementation of Kazakhstan dance in the work of female choreographers.
8. To consider some examples of female images' representations on the ballet stage, created by female authors.
9. To formulate possible ways to overcome the negative impact of the gender aspect on Kazakhstan ballet art.

**The Research Hypothesis.** A preliminary study of the issue allowed us to say that the analysis of the processes of emergence and development of Kazakhstan choreographer's art in the gender discourse made it possible to determine the reasons for the dominant position of a female choreographer existing at the present stage, its influence on the domestic ballet art, as well as to supplement the existing system of knowledge of the domestic ballet studies.

**Methodology and Research Methods.** This work was methodologically carried out within the framework of the gender theory and feminist criticism, based on the following approaches:

- dialectic method;
- systemic method;
- interdisciplinary method.

They were applied in accordance with the scientific principles of historicism, continuity and succession. Iconological method, semiotic method, some formal methods as well as content analysis, synthesis, description, comparison, and interview were also used

**Scientific Novelty** was generated by the following:

- the concept of revising the historical development of Kazakhstan choreographer's art in the gender discourse;
- considering the work of female choreographers in the context of the gender theory becoming a part of the humanities following the example of the international scientific practice;
- the application of the feminist criticism principles in understanding the process of a new aesthetics' formation and its establishment on Kazakhstan ballet stage;
- identification of new means of stylization and interpretation of the stage national dance proposed by female choreographers;
- determining the specifics of female images' representations and reinterpretations of the canonical cultural texts created by Kazakhstan female choreographers.

**The main provisions for the defense were as follows:**

1. The use of alternative approaches to the study of dance, based on the gender theory and feminist criticism, provided an opportunity to review the history of the development of the art of choreography in Kazakhstan from the female point of view and the place of a woman in it.

2. Conceptual methods for studying choreographic art, based on the principles of the feminist criticism, were formed by the need to study and generalize the experience of women from the position of women. The status of a woman in certain social, temporal and professional conditions was the main condition for the historical reassessment of the authors' achievements' significance.

3. Kazakhstan choreographers were influenced by the gender factor throughout the existence of the professional ballet theater, which led to imbalance, expressed in the almost complete absence of female choreographers in the Soviet era and their leadership in the conditions of the country's independence.

4. The national Kazakh dance originated under the influence of a number of factors that led to the formation of a special traditional way of people life, that was regulated by the patriarchal system of views. The character, form and content of the female dance was developed in connection with it.

5. One of the overriding tasks of choreographers was to develop the national dance along the path of professionalization and stylization. It has found its embodiment in the works of such female performers and choreographers as Shara Zhiyenkulova, Aigul Tati, Anvara Ssadykova, Mukaram Avakhri and others.

6. As soon as Kazakhstan gained its independence, a set of grounds for the formation of an original author's view that consisted of personal and general experience of domestic female choreographers, has transformed into a phenomenon called "double sensitivity" (proposed by M. Tlostanova).

7. The representation of female images in female choreographers' works was carried out in the directions of national, neoclassical and modern dances.

8. The canonical images of women were reviewed in the representations of M. Avakhri, created outside of the Western culture and the vision of a male author.

9. The gender discourse aspect, that covered this paper, affected all professional areas of the choreographic art. It seems necessary to continue the research activities in this direction to overcome the negative consequences of gender inequality. It is recommended to introduce the principles of inclusiveness into the practice of the existing educational institutions.

**Structure.** The thesis contains an introduction, three sections, nine subsections, a conclusion, a bibliographic list of references and sources, and an appendix.

**Approbation of the Study:** the main results of the thesis were presented in 8 scientific publications, including:

- one in an international scientific publication included in the Scopus database (Q3);
- three in the journals recommended by the list of the Committee for Control in the Field of Education and Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- three in the materials of international scientific conferences;
- one in the scientific publication of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

**The results of the study showed that:**

- the direction of gender theory included studies of female experience and feminist criticism. The categorical and conceptual apparatus used at the intersection of art criticism and gender studies included the main concepts on which this art history research was based: the history of women, female experience, "point of view", "vision", representation;

- attempts to discuss the works of women within the existing discourses of the high art conflicted with the recognition of the need to criticize and deconstruct the same discourses, ideologically based on the systems of domination and inequality. This was expressed in ignoring certain achievements of female choreographers in certain periods of the genre's existing;

- the gender role of a woman in the Kazakh traditional society as the guardian of the hearth and mother, as well as the influence of pagan forms of beliefs and a relatively mild form of Islam, significantly influenced the formation of a special content, coloring and manner of performing the Kazakh female dance, which can be mainly characterized as lyrical, common and "chamber" one;

- since the Soviet power was established in Kazakhstan, the formation of a national professional dance began. It was closely connected with the name of the first dancer Shara Zhiyenkulova, who laid the foundations of the dance vocabulary. However, the conditions of the Soviet state propaganda, which used Shara as an ideological image, limited her creative activity and had a direct impact on her contribution to the development of the national dance;

- historical changes in the political and social life of Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet period prepared the conditions for such female choreographers as Gulnara Adamova, Gulmira and Gulnara Gabbasovs, Natalya Novikova, Gulzhan Tutkibayeva, Mukaram Avakhri, Aigul Tati, Anvar Sadykova to take the lead positions in the national choreographic art;

- modern female choreographers promote the idea of the national dance as a living and sensitive witness of time, existing in interaction with society, history and cultural life today.

The art of ornamentation was developed in the dance of A. Tati who used stylization in her original miniatures. Another vision was offered by M. Avakhri and A. Sadykova who revived and captured the names and phenomena that embodied the national spirit of modernity in their large-scale productions;

- new aesthetic principles on the ballet stage were approved by female choreographers in the representations of female characters. Gulmira and Gulnara Gabbasovs created innovative female representations based on the possibilities of the dance theater. The example of the revision of the canonical images of Carmen and Salome in the interpretation of M. Avakhri revealed how the choreographer sought to establish new models, expanded the canonical cultural text, adequately reflecting the vision of women and non-Western authors who have been deprived of this right throughout history;

- the ballet art of Kazakhstan has the potential to overcome the hidden manifestations of gender inequality through rethinking in accordance with the feminist and egalitarian ideals. First of all, this can be done through pedagogical reform introducing the principles of inclusiveness into the educational process. In the field of theory and history of dance, researchers should be faced with the task of mastering the experience of the world science in the field of gender studies in order to expand the discourse of dance in the context of the domestic choreographic art of Kazakhstan.

The PhD thesis was discussed and recommended for defense at an expanded meeting of the Department of Art History and Art Management of the Republican State Enterprise on the Right of Economic Management "Kazakh National Academy of Choreography" of the Committee of Culture of the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated March 17, 2023 (record No. 8).