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The Cultural Code of the Kazakh Steppe Civilization: Some Results of a Research Project Conducted in a Museum Setting

ABSTRACT. The article addresses the issue of promoting the historical and cultural heritage accumulated over many years through the creation of an exhibition within a museum space, aimed at implementing certain results of a scientific research project, the main priorities of which include the use of a modern and sought-after format. As part of the research project “Life in Motion: The Cultural Code of the Kazakh Steppe Civilization” (No. BR22082508, Project Leader: A. G. Ibrayeva), the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan organized the exhibition “Kazakhstan: Treasure of the Great Steppe” in November 2024 at the National Museum of Asian Arts — Guimet (Paris, France). The exhibition was created in an immersive format, utilizing advanced multimedia technologies. The article examines the theoretical and methodological approaches to the creation of an immersive exhibition, based on both domestic and international experience. It analyzes the objectives and outcomes of organizing the exhibition at the international level, with particular attention paid to the historical and civilizational foundations of the centuries-long development of Kazakh statehood, the continuity, and the uniqueness of the cultural code of the Kazakh people. The article also considers the stages of organizing the exhibition, its conceptual essence, underlying principles, and modern, innovative approaches to presenting the exhibited artifacts to an international audience.

KEY WORDS: museum, immersive exhibition, concept, virtual reality, modern technologies, steppe civilization, exhibit, permanent exhibition

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Культурный код казахской степной цивилизации: некоторые результаты научного проекта на музейной площадке

АННОТАЦИЯ. В статье рассматривается вопрос популяризации историко-культурного наследия, накопленного в течение многих лет, путем создания выставки в музейном пространстве в целях реализации результатов научно-исследовательского проекта, приоритетом которого является использование современного востребованного формата. Национальный музей Республики Казахстан в рамках научного проекта «Жизнь в движении: культурный код казахской степной цивилизации» (№ BR22082508, руководитель А. Г. Ибраева) в ноябре 2024 г. провел в Национальном музее азиатских искусств — Гиме (Париж, Франция) выставку «Казахстан: сокровище Великой степи». Экспозиция имела иммерсивный формат, проводилась с использованием современных мультимедийных технологий. Анализируются теоретико-методологические подходы к созданию иммерсивной выставки (с точки зрения отечественного и зарубежного опыта), ее направления и результаты на международном уровне. Особое внимание уделяется историко-цивилизационным началам многовекового развития казахской государственности, преемственности и уникальности культурного кода казахского народа. Рассматриваются этапы организации выставки, идейная сущность, концептуальные основы, современные подходы к презентации ценностей для зарубежной публики.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: музей, иммерсивная выставка, концепция, виртуальная реальность, современные технологии, степная цивилизация, экспонат, экспозиция

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INTRODUCTION

One of the key strategic directions of the activities of museums in Kazakhstan is the updating of displays and the creation of exhibitions aimed at attracting visitors. In this regard, as global experience demonstrates, “the museum remains to this day one of the most important tools for transforming the cultural experience of all humanity into the personal experience of a specific visitor” (Bublik 2015: 20). In order to achieve these objectives, museums regularly update their displays and organize permanent and traveling exhibitions by presenting objects from their collections.

The term “exhibition” originates from the Latin “exhibere” (to display) and, in a broad sense, refers to the concept of the special presentation of any collection of objects. In contemporary museology, the commonly accepted definition of an exhibition is the part of a museum collection intended for public display. Today, a museum exhibition can be understood as an integral material-spatial system, in which museum objects and other exhibition materials are conceptually unified (Ibrayeva 2013).

In academic museology, the terms “display”, “exposition” and “exhibition” are used in different analytical contexts. Webster’s Third New International Dictionary defines “display” as “a presentation by representation or narrative”, “exhibition” as “an act or instance of showing evincing, or showing off”, and “exposition” as “an act or an instance of exposing” (Webster’s third new international dictionary... 1986: 654, 796, 802).

Burcaw similarly differentiates between these notions, defining display as “the showing of objects depending on the interest of the viewer in the objects themselves”, while exhibition is “an assemblage of objects of artistic, historical, scientific, or technological nature, through which visitors move from unit to unit in a sequence designed to be meaningful instructionally and/or aesthetically” (Burcaw 1997: 5–6).

In contemporary museum practice, an exhibition is understood not only as the physical arrangement of a collection but also as a spatial-narrative construct, that incorporates scenography, visual composition, rhythm, and visitor perception. This understanding of the exhibition demonstrates that it is not merely a display of museum objects, but a deliberately created environment for interaction with the audience. Contemporary museum practice is characterized by a diversity of exhibition formats and conceptual strategies. Alongside small-scale thematic displays focused on a single artifact or a group of artifacts, large-scale projects are increasingly implemented, aimed at constructing a coherent cultural and historical context of a particular era, region, or phenomenon.

Despite the variety of formats, an exhibition today is not simply a collection of selected objects, but a specially organized communicative environment in which cultural heritage is interpreted. In this context, scenography transforms from a secondary element into an independent instrument for conceptualizing the exhibition space.

One of the most significant trends of recent years has been the development of immersive formats. Their expansion is associated with a shift in patterns of museum engagement: visitors expect not only access to information, but also emotional, bodily, and multisensory involvement. An immersive exhibition is oriented toward creating an environment in which the viewer becomes an active participant, and perception is shaped through the integration of visual, auditory, spatial, and technological elements.

A representative example of this approach is the scholarly museum project “Life in Motion: The Cultural Code of the Kazakh Steppe Civilization,” implemented at the National Museum of Asian Arts — Guimet in Paris. The project’s concept was based on the integration of scenographic, narrative, and multimedia components into a unified artistic and semantic system. The exhibits were embedded within a shared figurative context, where each object did not exist in isolation but interacted with adjacent items, light dramaturgy, sound accents, and spatial composition.

Such a model made it possible to interpret the museum object not only as a historical artifact, but also as an element within an expanded spatial dramaturgy. The exhibition functioned as a kind of stage, where light, sound, the choreography of movement through space, and visual metaphors formed a coherent composition. As a result, the visitor encountered not simply information, but an experience — one in which the interpretation of the cultural code unfolded through emotional engagement.

At the same time, traditional forms of display retain their importance, particularly in terms of scholarly attribution, documentary precision, and the presentation of authenticity. However, immersive methods broaden the scope of museum communication, making it possible to combine academic rigor with artistic expressiveness and spatial imagery.

In this sense, immersion operates as a mechanism for integrating material heritage with its artistic and spatial interpretation. The visitor's experience is shaped simultaneously at the level of factual evidence and at the level of imagery, corresponding to the task of presenting the cultural code of the Kazakh steppe as a complex system of meanings, symbols, and historical connections.

The project under consideration clearly demonstrates how contemporary scenographic solutions, digital technologies, and a carefully structured narrative framework enable museums to create a coherent, emotionally resonant, and conceptually articulated exhibition environment. This approach reflects a broader global transformation in museum practice — from descriptive display of collections toward the creation of experience grounded in engagement, interpretation, and spatial perception of cultural heritage.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a civilizational methodological approach combined with a structural-functional perspective, which frames the museum as a cultural, educational, and research institution operating within a global cultural space. Within this framework, the museum is understood not merely as a repository of objects, but as an active mediator that constructs, interprets, and communicates civilizational narratives through historical and cultural heritage preserved in its collections. This approach allows the analysis of museum exhibitions as culturally meaningful phenomena rather than solely as technical or design-driven projects.

The research methodology integrates theoretical analysis with empirical museum material. During the preparation of the article, published scholarly works in the fields of museology, cultural studies, and exhibition design were examined to identify key theoretical and methodological principles relevant to contemporary museum practice. At the same time, historical and cultural values from the collections of leading museums of the Republic of Kazakhstan were selected for analysis, including previously unpublished museum sources. This combination ensured a balanced interaction between academic discourse and primary museum material.

Particular attention is paid to design, multimedia, and sensory methods as essential components of contemporary exhibition-making. In this study, immersion is approached not as a purely technological trend but as a museum communication strategy aimed at constructing an interpretative environment for the visitor. Immersive techniques employed in temporary exhibitions function through aesthetic, communicative, modeling, object-representational, and creative-formative mechanisms that shape perception, emotional involvement, and cognitive engagement, especially when presenting complex historical material.

In the museum context, immersion is understood as the creation of a spatial and emotional displacement that enables the visitor to experience an alternative reality and establish an affective connection with it. This interpretation corresponds to definitions of immersion as a complex perception within an artificially constructed three-dimensional environment (Sklyarevskaya 2006: 36). Accordingly, immersion in this research is treated as a set of technological and dramaturgical tools structuring both emotional and cognitive dimensions of visitor experience.

The methodological framework also draws on interdisciplinary research that identifies three main types of immersive technologies used in museum exhibitions: virtual reality, augmented reality, and mixed reality (Kornilov 2019). Virtual reality creates a fully artificial environment affecting multiple sensory channels, while augmented reality introduces digital elements into the physical exhibition space. Mixed reality, in turn, enables interaction between digital components and physical exhibits, integrating

them into a unified experiential environment (Malysheva, Safronova 2020). These forms are examined not in isolation but in terms of their interpretative potential within exhibition narratives.

An important methodological dimension of immersive exhibition practice is its connection with empathy. Research indicates that empathy in museum contexts involves the ability to adopt another perspective, develop emotional affinity, experience emotional tension related to historical events, and cognitively recognize individuals from different historical periods (Bakin 2020). In this regard, empathy is understood as a conscious form of understanding and adaptation grounded in both emotional response and knowledge formation (Karyagina 2013). This concept is essential for evaluating the educational and psychological impact of immersive exhibitions.

To assess the suggestive and didactic effects of immersive environments, the study also refers to the principles of G. K. Lozanov's theory of suggestion, which has practical relevance for museum work. Museum objects inherently possess expressive and attractive qualities that engage viewers through visual form (Ibrayeva 2018). Within immersive environments, this suggestive potential is intensified through the use of sound, light, spatial organization, and exhibition dramaturgy, forming a unified semiotic field.

Architectural and artistic design is considered an integral methodological component of exhibition creation. Exhibition layouts are analyzed as holistic artistic systems in which spatial and conceptual unity serve as key criteria for artistic quality. Coherence, compositional harmony, and the subordination of all elements to a single conceptual idea enhance emotional engagement and facilitate meaningful interaction with artifacts (Ibrayeva, Sydykov 2024: 125). In this context, scenography functions as a form of visual dramaturgy that organizes emotional and semantic perception, aligning spatial solutions with interpretative objectives.

Within the empirical framework of the study, immersive gigapixel technology is examined as one of the tools supporting such unity. This technology enables the creation of ultra-high-resolution images that allow viewers to explore objects and scenes in detail, reinforcing the cognitive dimension of immersion. While the process includes stages such as object preparation, high-precision photography, image processing, interface development, and integration into exhibition space, these stages are considered here primarily as methodological indicators of how digital tools support interpretative and narrative aims rather than as technical production procedures.

The methodological approach is further illustrated through the analysis of the exhibition "Kazakhstan: Treasures of the Great Steppe", where multimedia and digital technologies were used not simply to accompany artifacts but to reveal and enhance the thematic structure of the exhibition. Expert perspectives, including the assertion by French scenographer and designer Sylvain Roca that "to create something is to give it life" (Sylvain 2024: 10), underscore the alignment of scenography and digital technologies with the task of intensifying visitor engagement.

Overall, the methodological principle of the study is defined as the understanding of Kazakhstan's museums as custodians and active promoters of national historical and cultural heritage within the context of global cultural integration. This integrated methodological framework allows for a comprehensive analysis of immersive exhibitions as complex cultural practices that unite theory, material heritage, and contemporary museum technologies.

IMMERSIVE EXHIBITION "KAZAKHSTAN: TREASURES OF THE GREAT STEPPE" IN THE MUSEUM SPACE (ISSUE ANALYSIS)

The immersive exhibition "Kazakhstan: Treasures of the Great Steppe" at the National Museum of Asian Arts in Paris — Guimet in Paris represents the key practical outcome of the research project "Life in Motion: The Cultural Code of the Kazakh Steppe Civilization". Opened on 6 November 2024 with the support of the Presidents of Kazakhstan and France, and based on items from the collections of the National museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the "Azret Sultan" State Historical and Cultural Reserve-Museum, the exhibition was designed to present to European audiences the centuries-long his-

tory and cultural richness of Kazakhstan. Particular emphasis was placed on the continuity and uniqueness of the Kazakh cultural code, articulated through immersive technologies.

The exhibition concept defined a compact yet representative corpus of objects and a clear narrative structure. Thirty-five rare artifacts, representing key periods in the profound history of the Great Steppe were selected as emblematic markers of civilizational development. The exhibition was divided into five thematic sections: The Tobol Thinker, The Botai Culture and the Domestication of the Horse; The Golden Man and the Emergence of the Early Saka (Scythian) States; Stone Statues (Balbals) and Medieval Kazakhstan in the Era of Turkic Hegemony; Torch Holders of the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi — The Rise of Islam. The Cape of Kazybek Biy Keldibekuly and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate.

A key feature of the project was its immersive multimedia content, which enabled visitors to experience the profound history and cultural wealth of Kazakhstan through five masterpieces. As noted by Yannick Lintz, Director of the Guimet Museum, “the exhibition presents five ‘Mona Lisas’ of Kazakhstan... It is an immersive journey through Kazakhstan’s landscapes, sounds, and five masterpieces representing five eras of this civilization”. The scenographic conception aimed not only to display objects, but to convey the temporal and spatial dimensions of the Steppe civilization through light, sound, and large — scale projections synchronized with the artifacts.

During his work on the exhibition scenographer Sylvain Roca emphasized that his goal was to demonstrate how digital and immersive technologies can provide a qualitatively new experience for visitors. In the resulting spatial design, each visitor enters a “threshold” zone where sound, image, and the real object interact, producing a sense of presence in the historical environment from which the artifact originates. Thus, immersive solutions become an instrument for deepening both aesthetic perception and historical empathy.

Stage One: Development of the Scientific Concept.

The exhibition design began with the development of a scholarly curatorial concept and a thematic-expositional plan. In accordance with established practice in Kazakhstani museums, the concept was prepared by an interdisciplinary team of historians, archaeologists, art historians, and museum specialists. The concept formulated the main narrative lines of the exhibition, defined the principles of object selection, and established the methodological emphasis on immersion as a form of interpretive communication. The final version of the concept, which served as the basis for the architectural and artistic design, was approved by the Museum’s Curatorial Council.

In developing the exhibition concept, some of the key objects had already been designated by partner institutions; the remaining artifacts were confirmed during subsequent negotiations. Given that many historical items — personal belongings, manuscripts, and objects associated with prominent figures — are housed in different museums, the project relied on Kazakhstan’s well-established system of inter-museum cooperation in organizing joint exhibitions (Rozenblium 1997: 177–195). The resulting selection made it possible to present the history of the Great Steppe through a limited number of highly expressive artifacts that function as visual “codes” of entire eras.

Stage Two: Preparation of the List of Exhibits and Descriptive Documentation.

At the next stage, a list of exhibits and accompanying documentation was prepared. The artifacts were selected from the collections of the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the “Aziret Sultan” State Historical and Cultural Reserve-Museum; a total of 35 artifacts (44 catalogue units) were identified. Curators and collection keepers jointly assessed the condition of the objects, their suitability for transportation and display, as well as their interpretive potential within the exhibition narrative.

In parallel with conservation procedures (cleaning, minor restoration, and stabilization), detailed descriptive and visual documentation was prepared, including data on provenance, dating, contextual information, and interpretive commentary. This ensured that each object could function simultaneously as an authentic museum artifact and as a key element of the immersive scenographic narrative.

Five historical periods were presented as follows.

Historical Period 1: The Tobol Thinker, the Botai Culture, and the Domestication of the Horse.

The Botai culture, which played a key role in the domestication of the horse, emerged in northern Kazakhstan at the end of the Neolithic period, around the 4th millennium BCE. It was precisely this stage that largely determined the subsequent trajectory of the Steppe civilization, setting the direction of its development for millennia to come. The shift away from an exclusively hunter-gatherer way of life toward an economy based on horse breeding and livestock herding was not merely an economic transformation, but also a reflection of a nuanced understanding of natural rhythms and the patterns of the steppe landscape. This worldview is embodied in the sculpture known as the “Man Looking at the Sky”, or the “Tobol Thinker”, discovered in the Kostanay region — a small anthropomorphic figure representing the spiritual culture and philosophical thought of the early nomads (Fig. 1, see the insert).

Historical Period 2: The Golden Man and the Emergence of Early Saka (Scythian) States.

In the 1st millennium BCE, large tribal confederations and proto-states began to form across the Eurasian Steppe, united by shared cultural foundations. These groups — known to Greek and Persian authors as Scythians, Saka, or Sarmatians — created a distinctive artistic and ideological world. The most significant Saka states emerged in the southeast of Kazakhstan (Zhetysu), in the northern steppe and lake regions (Saryarka), in the Aral Sea area, and in the Altai region (Fig. 2, see the insert).

The discovery of the “Golden Man” in 1969 in the Issyk burial mound in Almaty Region became a key event in the study of this culture. The refined craftsmanship of the golden ornaments and costume details, as well as the silver bowl bearing one of the oldest inscriptions in Central Asia, testify to the high level of artisan skill and the complex mythological system that forms an integral part of the cultural code of the steppe civilizations.

Historical Period 3: Stone Statues (Balbals) and Medieval Kazakhstan in the Era of Turkic Hegemony.

Beginning in the mid-1st millennium CE, the Altai played a key role in the consolidation of early Turkic political formations and in the emergence of a distinct Turkic cultural identity. The rise of the Turkic khaganates was not merely the appearance of a new state entity, but the establishment of a coherent model of steppe governance in which military organization, clan hierarchy, and a form of authority standing above individual tribes were organically combined.

In the lands of medieval Kazakhstan, Turkic societies developed a distinctive socio-economic system in which nomadic pastoralism coexisted harmoniously with developed urban life. Cities such as Otrar (Farab) functioned not only as major trade crossroads along transcontinental routes, but also as centers of intellectual and artistic activity, where steppe culture encountered sedentary civilizations and engaged in mutual exchange. A special place in Turkic commemorative tradition belongs to monumental stone sculptures — balbals — which became one of the most expressive elements of this people’s memorial culture. These anthropomorphic stelae, frequently distinguished by attributes indicating gender or social status, were erected in association with funerary complexes and memorial rituals. Rather than serving solely decorative purposes, they articulated concepts of lineage, martial valor, and ancestral continuity. Today, balbals constitute a material record of Turkic ritual culture and continue to structure the symbolic landscape of the Great Steppe (Fig. 3, see the insert).

Historical Period 4: Torch Holders of the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi — The Rise of Islam.

The shyraghdan (candlestick) from the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi reflects a pivotal stage in the spread of Islam throughout Turkic-speaking Central Asia. The 12th-century Sufi sheikh Ahmed Yasawi, who lived and taught in Yasi (modern Turkistan), played a formative role in the religious and spiritual life of the region. His mausoleum, built between 1389 and 1405 by order of Amir Timur, is one of the most significant architectural monuments of the Timurid era.

The monumental metal torch holders, richly adorned with gilding and silver inlay and bearing inscriptions with the names of patrons and craftsmen, demonstrate the synthesis of religious symbolism, artistic refinement, and political representation characteristic of late medieval Central Asia.

Historical Period 5: The Cape of Kazybek Biy Keldibekuly and the Formation of the Kazakh Khanate.

In the 15th–16th centuries, a significant part of the territory of modern Kazakhstan became part of the Kazakh Khanate (1465–1718), which emerged as a successor to the Golden Horde. Founded by Kerei and Zhanibek, the khanate united various steppe communities into a political and cultural whole. Its legal system relied on the authority of biys — judges elected by the people — a tradition that lasted until the early 19th century.

Kazybek Biy Keldibekuly (1667–1764) is one of the most prominent representatives of this tradition. His ceremonial chapan, with a stitched framework and gold embroidery featuring vegetal motifs symbolizing prosperity and abundance, reflects the aesthetic ideals and social markers of status within the Kazakh elite.

Stage Three: Spatial Organization and Immersive Scenographic Design.

The spatial and immersive concept of the exhibition was developed by an international curatorial team. The scholarly curators were Yannick Lintz, President of the Guimet Museum, and Valérie Zaleski, Curator of the Chinese and Central Asian Buddhist Art Collection. Archaeologist Rocco Rante (Louvre Museum) and scenographer Sylvain Rocca were responsible for the historical and immersive components on the French side, while from the Kazakh side the work was coordinated by Aibek Sydykov, Acting Director of the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In the exhibition space, each of the five key artifacts was placed at the center of a dedicated zone, surrounded by visual and sound projections created using high-precision imagery and contextual landscapes. This approach produced a multilayered environment in which the real object, digital imagery, and sound design were integrated into a single spatial narrative. Gigapixel images, generated through specialized high-resolution photography and subsequent digital processing, enabled the use of large-scale projections that allowed visitors to “approach” the object, examining its details while still remaining within a contemplative museum atmosphere.

The immersive sequences, each lasting approximately two and a half minutes, were synchronized with the visitor’s movement through the exhibition. At specific moments, lighting and projections shifted to reveal new visual perspectives and semantic accents. An interactive interface controlled the playback of these sequences, coordinating them with visitors’ physical movement and the overall dramaturgy of the space.

Thus, the combination of carefully selected artifacts, a scientifically grounded concept, and scenographic and digital solutions made it possible to present the cultural code of the civilization of the Kazakh Steppe in a format that simultaneously draws on historical knowledge and fosters emotional engagement. The exhibition space became not only a place for contemplating unique objects but also a medium for experiencing the deep-time historical continuity of the Great Steppe through a contemporary immersive museum language.

Selection of Objects and Conceptual Integration of Immersive Gigapixel Content.

The selection of artifacts for the exhibition was carried out on the basis of the scholarly concept, within which 35 key objects (44 catalogue units) from the collections of the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the “Aziret Sultan” State Historical and Cultural Reserve-Museum were identified. These artifacts were incorporated into the exhibition not merely as illustrations of individual historical stages, but as objects capable of structuring the broader narrative of the Great Steppe’s development. They functioned as semantic nodes within the immersive environment, around which the spatial composition of the gallery was organized. The selection of exhibits was carried out by research staff and collection management specialists, taking into account the scholarly representativeness of the objects and their exhibition potential, namely the condition of the items. Particular attention was given to ensuring that each artifact could integrate organically into the scenographic environment.

Inspection and Preparation of Objects.

Prior to the development of multimedia content, each artifact underwent a comprehensive assessment covering its state of preservation, external characteristics, physical properties, and acceptable lighting parameters during display. It was of great importance to preserve the original appearance of such objects as the candlesticks from the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi and the chapman of Kazybek Biy. The museum's conservation specialists carried out cleaning and minor restoration work to ensure the objects were suitable for digitization and exhibition.

Visualization Strategy.

Gigapixel photography was conceived not as a display of technological capability, but as a method for in-depth formal analysis. The high resolution made it possible to reveal minute details — carving, engraving, fiber structure, and traces of craftsmanship — that would otherwise remain imperceptible. These details became an interpretive resource in their own right and reinforced the historical argument embedded within the exhibition.

The photography was conducted at the Guimet Museum using specialized camera systems under strictly controlled lighting conditions. Series of images taken from multiple angles were subsequently assembled into unified ultra-high-resolution compositions. The application of panoramic stitching and stabilized mounting systems minimized distortion and preserved the plastic and material structure of the objects.

From Image to Immersive Environment.

The resulting visual material formed the basis for constructing the exhibition's digital scenes. For each historical section, a visual composition was developed that combined scalable imagery, spatial transitions, and an accompanying soundscape. In this way, the object ceased to function as a static item of observation and became a compositional focal point around which the conceptual dynamics of the gallery unfolded.

Interactive Integration.

The digital sequences were synchronized with the visitor's movement through the exhibition space. Projection scenarios allowed for variation in viewing distance — from close examination of micro-details to immersion in a broader historical context. The physical artifact, its enlarged digital representation, and the acoustic environment interacted as components of a unified spatial configuration, generating a multilayered experience and deepening the understanding of each object's cultural significance.

CONCLUSION

The exhibition “Kazakhstan: Treasures of the Great Steppe”, presented at the Guimet Museum, demonstrated the capacity of Kazakhstani museums to convey to an international audience a coherent image and academically grounded narrative about the Great Steppe and the processes that unfolded there over the course of millennia. The combination of iconic artifacts representing distinct historical epochs with multimedia solutions made it possible to illustrate the continuity of Kazakhstani civilization from the earliest times through the medieval period, allowing visitors to experience the historical depth and diversity of the region's heritage.

A significant outcome of the exhibition project was the level of audience engagement achieved through its immersive components. According to surveys conducted by the Guimet Museum, as well as comments on social media and published reviews, the majority of visitors noted that the pairing of authentic artifacts with video content contributed to a deeper understanding of the exhibition's themes. Many identified the Golden Man, the Tobol Thinker, and the torch holders of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi as the most impressive objects precisely because the immersive visual scenes situated them within their historical landscape contexts. The increase in visitor dwell time, along with the even distribution of audience flow throughout the exhibition period, indicated a high level of engagement. Observations of

visitor behavior showed that the digital scenes encouraged longer interaction with the historical material compared to traditional display formats.

The project's resonance extended beyond the museum setting. French and other European media highlighted Kazakhstan's historical and cultural contribution to the development of nomadic and urban civilizations across Eurasia. Professional and cultural reviews emphasized not so much "innovation" in itself as the combination of scholarly rigor and technological means. The exhibition attracted specialists in the fields of history, art, and museum studies, contributing to the expansion of professional connections and contacts. For the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, studying the experience of one of France's leading museums in the course of preparing for the exhibition was of considerable importance in terms of adopting European museum preparation technologies and practices.

Organizing exhibitions in partnership with institutions such as the Louvre or the Guimet Museum carries significant institutional weight. Holding the exhibition at the Guimet Museum made it possible to place Kazakhstan's national cultural heritage within a broader cultural context, opening the way to considering steppe civilization as part of the wider Eurasian processes of cultural exchange.

The experience gained through the implementation of this exhibition project made clear that a sustainable model for presenting historical material can be built by integrating scholarly interpretation, scenography, and digital solutions. This applies both to visual impact and to the methodological enrichment of museum practice. The results and experience achieved open up opportunities for future collaborative projects and initiatives with leading museums around the world, as well as for the development of museum diplomacy as a tool of cultural interaction.

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Fig. 1. The Tobol Thinker. 3rd–2nd millennium BCE. Sandstone. National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Inventory No.: ҚРҰМ уқ ТК-2-1408

Рис. 1. Тобольский мыслитель. III–II тысячелетия до н. э. Песчаник. Национальный музей Республики Казахстан. Инвентарный номер: ҚРҰМ уқ ТК-2-1408



Fig. 2. Items from the Headdress of the “Golden Man.” 4th–3rd centuries BCE. Issyk burial mound, Zhetisu. National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Inventory No.: ҚРҰМнқ 45360/2

Рис. 2. Элементы головного убора «Золотого человека». IV–III вв. до н. э. Исыкский курган, Жетису. Национальный музей Республики Казахстан. Инвентарный номер: ҚРҰМнқ 45360/2



Fig. 3. Figures of a Man and a Woman. 9th–11th centuries. Balbal stone, Turkistan Region. National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Inventory No.: ҚРҰМ нқ 28140

Рис. 3. Изображения мужчины и женщины. IX–XI вв. Балбал, Туркестанская обл. Национальный музей Республики Казахстан. Инвентарный номер: ҚРҰМ нқ 28140