

## MODERN MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE: A BALANCE BETWEEN GLOBALIZATION AND A SENSE OF REGIONAL IDENTITY

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**Abstract.** *Modern trends of the time require significant changes in the spatial planning, functional and artistic-image design of architectural objects, including religious buildings as mosques. With the changing pace of life characteristic of the era of globalization and the growing level of religious involvement in society, there is a need for new architectural trends. These changes concern both the functional and technological aspects as well as the visual characteristics of buildings, including mosques, which must meet the requirements of modernity. This fact implies the creation of architecture that can meet the needs of the religious community, ensure inclusiveness, sustainability and conformity with modern technological and cultural expectations of society. In modern conditions, mosques, as places of worship designed for religious practices, must now become architectural objects that reflect the dynamics of social, cultural and technological transformations. Our research focuses on the study of examples of architectural solutions of modern mosques in the world and Kazakhstan, which successfully combine innovation and tradition. We analyze architectural and artistic techniques, stylistic trends and ways of adapting the form of Islamic architecture buildings and their canonical components in accordance with the needs of modern society. This study will identify key trends in the integration of traditional architectural elements characteristic of different regions with innovative solutions. This will help to substantiate the challenges of achieving a balance between traditional architectural forms and modern technologies in the context of global changes in architecture and technological progress.*

**Keywords:** *mosque architecture, regional architecture, religious architecture, regional identity*

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## МЕШІТТЕРДІҢ ЗАМАНАУИ СӘУЛЕТІ: ЖАҒАНДАНУ МЕН АЙМАҚТЫҚ СӘЙКЕСТІКТІ ІЗДЕУ АРАСЫНДАҒЫ ТЕПЕ-ТЕҢДІК

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**Аңдатпа.** Қазіргі заманның үрдістері сәулет нысандарының, соның ішінде мешіттер сияқты культтік архитектураны да қоса алғанда, кеңістіктік-жоспарлау, функционалдық және көркем-образдық шешімдеріне елеулі өзгерістер енгізуді талап етеді. Ғаламдану дәуіріне тән өмір ырғағының өзгеруі және қоғамда діни қатысудың артуы жаңа сәулеттік үрдістерге деген қажеттілікті тудырып отыр. Бұл өзгерістер функционалдық және технологиялық аспектілермен қатар, мешіттерді қоса алғанда, ғимараттардың визуалды сипаттамаларын да қамтиды, олар қазіргі заман талаптарына сай болуы тиіс. Бұл жағдай діни қауымдастықтың қажеттіліктерін қанағаттандыра алатын, инклюзивтілікті, орнықтылықты қамтамасыз ететін және қоғамның қазіргі технологиялық әрі мәдени үміттеріне сай келетін сәулет үлгісін қалыптастыруды көздейді. Қазіргі жағдайда мешіттер діни рәсімдер мен ғұрыптарды орындауға арналған культтік құрылымдар ретінде енді социомәдени және технологиялық трансформациялардың серпінін бейнелейтін сәулеттік нысандарға айналуы қажет. Біздің зерттеуіміз қазіргі заманғы мешіттердің инновациялар мен дәстүрлерді сәтті ұштастырған архитектуралық шешімдерінің әлемдегі және Қазақстандағы мысалдарын зерттеуге, архитектуралық-көркемдік тәсілдерді, стильдік бағыттарды талдауға және ислам сәулетінің ғимарат пішіндерін қазіргі қоғамның қажеттіліктеріне сай бейімдеу жолдары мен оның канондық құрамдас бөліктерін қарастыруға бағытталған. Бұл зерттеу түрлі өңірлерге тән дәстүрлі сәулеттік элементтерді инновациялық шешімдермен біріктірудегі негізгі үрдістерді анықтауға мүмкіндік береді. Бұл дәстүрлі сәулет формалары мен заманауи технологиялар арасындағы тепе-теңдікті сақтауға бағытталған міндеттерді негіздеуге жол ашады, әсіресе архитектура мен технология саласындағы жаһандық өзгерістер жағдайында.

**Түйін сөздер:** мешіт сәулеті, аймақтық сәулет, культтік сәулет, аймақтық сәйкестік

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## СОВРЕМЕННАЯ АРХИТЕКТУРА МЕЧЕТЕЙ: БАЛАНС МЕЖДУ ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИЕЙ И ПОИСКОМ РЕГИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ

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**Аннотация.** *Современные веяния времени требуют значительных изменений в объёмно-планировочном, функциональном и художественно-образном решении архитектурных объектов, включая культовую архитектуру как мечети. В условиях изменения темпа жизни, характерного для эпохи глобализации, и растущего уровня религиозной вовлечённости в обществе возникает потребность в новых архитектурных тенденциях. Эти перемены касаются как функциональных и технологических аспектов, так и визуальных характеристик зданий, включая мечети, которые должны отвечать требованиям современности. Данный факт предполагает создание архитектуры, способной удовлетворить потребности религиозного сообщества, обеспечить инклюзивность, устойчивость и соответствие современным технологическим и культурным ожиданиям общества. В современных условиях мечети, как культовые сооружения, предназначенные для отправления религиозных обрядов и ритуалов, должны теперь стать архитектурными объектами, отражающими динамику социокультурных и технологических трансформаций. Наше исследование фокусируется на исследовании примеров архитектурных решений современных мечетей в мире и Казахстане, которые успешно сочетают инновации и традиции, анализе архитектурно-художественных приёмов, стилистических направлений и путей адаптации формы зданий исламской архитектуры и их канонические составляющие в соответствии с потребностями современного общества. Данное исследование позволит выявить ключевые тенденции в интеграции традиционных архитектурных элементов, характерных для различных регионов, с инновационными решениями. Это позволит обосновать задачи достижения баланса между традиционными архитектурными формами и современными технологиями в условиях глобальных изменений в архитектуре и технологического прогресса.*

**Ключевые слова:** *архитектура мечети, региональная архитектура, культовая архитектура, региональная идентичность*

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The authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

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## **КОНФЛИКТ ИНТЕРЕСОВ**

Авторы заявляют, что конфликта интересов нет.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

One of the most significant and relevant studies in modern architecture is the exploration and preservation of regional identity. This study is influenced by the globalization process and its challenges. The evolution of design strategies for modern mosques is taking place with these challenges in mind. These challenges include: the need to unify architectural styles while preserving local traditions, the impact of urbanization on space in the built environment, the importance of environmental sustainability, and the need for technological innovation and inclusivity in design.

The incorporation of new approaches and innovative technologies contributes to a comfortable, ecologically orientated architectural environment, while the strengthening of the regional component in modern mosque architecture contributes to the preservation of cultural content and the designation of local belonging.

It is worth noting that regional identity in architecture is not affixed style or image, but a dynamic system based on an informed understanding of local traditions and the essential nature of architecture within a specific location, as expressed through the unique vision of a local architect (**Abdrassilova & Murzagaliyeva, 2020, Danibekova, 2023**).

A mosque is a stable type of religious building characterised by the presence of a number of canonical architectural forms, a characteristic functional zoning and a set of rooms. As it happened, these canons have always been preserved as unchanged as possible in Islamic cult architecture in different regional conditions. Islamic architecture is based on three key elements of the spatial planning of mosques. These are the minaret, mihrab and minbar, which are integral components of the religious space, ensuring its functionality and image recognizability.

The architectural typology of public buildings and structures, adapted to modern trends, develops basic principles of object formation based on their characteristic features, visual signs, and functional content that correspond to the needs of modern society. This approach is emphasized in the textbook "Architectural Typology of Buildings and Structures," which systematizes and elaborates on principles for the development of building types that take into account their desired features and characteristics (**Zmeul & Makhanko, 2005**).

In the context of global architectural trends and with the increasing interest in the dynamics of mosque architecture, modern architects are now in search of new approaches to the aesthetics of shaping religious buildings. Atypical architectural methods are required, which, within the framework of religious canons and traditional principles of Islamic architecture, will allow adapting mosques to the changing demands of society.

Modern architects are demonstrating radically new approaches to mosque design that differ significantly from traditional solutions. This has led to a transformation of the traditional aesthetic image of these sacred buildings. The changes are not only seen in the planning structure but also in the functional range of mosques, which has expanded to meet the needs of today's Muslim society. Architects are also proposing unconventional silhouettes and shapes for mosques that go beyond the typical visual characteristics associated with these religious structures.

According to modern scholars, the architectural designs of mosques are subject to change, transformation and adaptation to modern circumstances. Even elements that seem to be inviolate, such as the mihrab and minaret, are being reconsidered: some contemporary architects from Muslim-majority countries suggest that it is feasible to do away with these traditional features (**Muksinov & Babajanova, 2005, Shukurov, 2014, Syahid, 2018**). In the search for a solution to the challenge of achieving the uniqueness of mosque architecture, a balanced approach appears to be the most promising. This approach is based on a harmonious combination of progressive architectural innovation, local natural and climatic factors, cultural traditions, and Islamic

architectural principles. This method has the potential to create a new paradigm in mosque architecture that balances global trends with a recognition of regional identity, while maintaining their functional and spiritual importance.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The scientific literature devoted to the study of mosque architecture has a wide range. The canonical requirements for buildings and forms of mosques, their functional zoning, as well as the evolution of architectural elements are considered in the studies of Frishman M., Khan H., Grabar O., Necipoglu G. (Frishman & Khan, 1994, Grabar, 1978, Necipoglu, 1998).

The evolution of mosque architecture in the territory of Kazakhstan is studied: from simple rectangular forms of the 9th-10th centuries, oriented on functionality, to more complex constructions of the 11th-16th centuries with domes and minarets. The increase in the number of mosques, their forms and elements were due to the growing influence of Islam and partial integration of local architectural traditions. This issue was studied by prominent Kazakh scientist B. Glaudinov (Glaudinov, 1999, Glaudinov, 2019, Kasymbekova & Glaudinov, 2012). The research noted that during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10th centuries, mosques in Kazakhstan were simple structures with rectangular rooms. However, from the 11th to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, more complex shapes such as domes and minarets began to be used as important elements in mosque architecture.

The scientists have revealed the connection of local traditional features of Islamic religious buildings with Persian and Ottoman architectural styles, characterized by the use of domed structures, arched vaults, calligraphic and ornamental decorations. The problem of loss of unique regional features of cult architecture in the conditions of globalization is considered in detail (Galimzhanova & Glaudinova, 2011, Sadykova Sh., 2018, Beisenova & Samoilov, 2022, Slieptsov et al., 2024). The focus of our research is on works containing studies of contemporary trends in the development of mosque architecture in the 21st century with examples of reinterpretation of their canonical forms and elements (Kisamedin, 2013, Shukurov, 2014, Shanbayeva, Kantarbayeva & Mahoney, 2024, Putra et al., 2025, Mertyurek & Demirbas, 2023, Tamimi & Pankina, 2024).

## **3 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

When cultural and architectural traditions are influenced by globalization and unification is observed, it is important to find a balance between preservation of local specificity and adaptation to modern requirements. Formation of architectural and spatial design of religious buildings and their functions should be based on the context of the local environment with the integration of domestic traditional elements. This should be done by considering climatic, cultural, historical, socio-political, and economic factors in order to create a harmonious and appropriate design. This requires the exploration of alternative design approaches that ensure a harmonious combination of tradition and innovation within the modern architectural discourse.

The research is based on a comprehensive approach to understanding the balance between global trends and local identity in modern mosque architecture. This includes a review of academic literature, architectural projects, and periodicals, as well as an analysis of the architectural and artistic techniques and stylistic trends used in mosque design. The goal is to identify conceptual approaches and trends in the architectural and planning solutions used in various regions around the world.

We also aim to identify patterns of regional development in mosque architecture, considering the influence of climatic, socio-cultural, and economic factors. This is done by examining spatial regional archetypes and their evolution through the principle of continuity, while also taking into account modern interpretations.

In the works of contemporary architects, the concept of the exterior design, functional zoning, and interior space in modern religious buildings challenges established design stereotypes. In the



21st century has brought the realization that the invocation of the Creator (namaz) is the most important part of Islam, and that canonical elements such as the dome, minaret, mihrab, etc. are not directly related to the act of prayer itself. The fact that a Muslim needs only a small space oriented towards Mecca for worship freed architects from being rigidly bound to the canonical forms of the mosque, opening the way to a more free and flexible architectural approach.

By referring to the Quran, the sacred book of Islam, which does not provide specific instructions on mosque architecture, modern architects are able to create contemporary interpretations of religious structures (Wiebe, 2012). This led to a reconsideration of the architectural form of mosques, with the focus on creating a space that was in line with their spiritual function and open to architectural innovation, rather than simply following traditional elements.

## **4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

We have considered examples that demonstrate the possibility of creating a prayer space without traditional domes and minarets. These examples focus on the search for regional identity and take into account the local context.

**Figure 1** shows the Masjid Al Irsyad Mosque (Bandung, Indonesia, 2010, architect Ridwan Kamil), a giant parallelepiped structure with a transparent mihrab surrounded by a water tank. Here, the open mihrab with views of nature is the compositional focal point of the entire structure, which is completely atypical for the historically established image of a religious building. However, the author considered that ‘a mosque is a place where Allah is worshipped...the shape of which depends on human imagination and is not mentioned in the Qoran...and the dome does not signify Islam...’. Thus, the dome as a canonical element of Islamic architecture was excluded from the general concept of the building (Indonesia's unique mosques, 2019).

The architect explained the decision to reject the use of a dome due to the specific local conditions of the tropical climate. Dome and vaulted roof structures are traditionally used in hot and dry regions of Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Near East as a means of protecting buildings from excessive solar radiation by cooling the air inside the dome space (Murzagaliyeva & Abdrassilova, 2018). R. Kamil selected the methods of constructing the building that are appropriate for the conditions of the tropical climate, imbuing the structure with regional characteristics. Some of the concrete blocks in the walls are hollow, providing natural ventilation and daylighting for the interior of the mosque during the day.

The Assiaf Mosque (Singapore, Forum Architects) is an interesting example of a conscious deviation from established forms of Islamic architecture in favor of a modern, functional and culturally sensitive approach. The context of the city-state of Singapore is multinational and multicultural. The architects refused to use elements characteristic of Muslim architecture and formed a neutral architectural image devoid of strong ethno-confessional associations. Thus, the project is characterized by pronounced local features: inclusiveness, universality. Along with the desire for adaptability of architecture in the conditions of a global metropolis, the regional character of the building is manifested in the consideration of local specific climatic conditions - high humidity and tropical air temperature. Under these circumstances, the mosque project focuses on reducing the number of enclosed spaces. Instead of traditional walls, open-work aluminum screens with Arabic patterns are used, providing effective natural ventilation and lighting while simultaneously creating a visual effect of lightness and partial "de-materialization" of the facade, enhancing the building's connection to the environment.

In the course of studying modern trends in mosque architecture in the northern cities of the United Arab Emirates, it has been found that square or rectangular plans remain the predominant form for prayer halls (in 96% of cases). The long side of the building, as a rule, forms the qibla wall with the mihrab located in the center, while the roofs are mostly flat. The main visual element that determines the typology of these mosques is often a minaret, which is often designed in an abstract or unconventional way. An in-depth study of the internal spatial organisation, lighting quality,

acoustic characteristics, comfort microclimate and sustainability of architectural solutions, taking into account the specificity of the local context, is emphasized (Awad, 2021).

The building of the Alacaatli Uluyol Mosque (Ankara) demonstrates the rejection of the characteristic features of Ottoman cult architecture. Its architectural composition is based on a simple cube shape, but it also incorporates a traditional dome and a modern addition - a sun protection grid, due to Turkey's climate. The study conducted by the authors found significant differences of the analyzed mosques from the classical Ottoman typology, which was confirmed by a digital ranking of architectural parameters. This led to the development of a methodology for analyzing and categorizing cult architecture, which offers opportunities for further discussion (Mertyurek & Demirbas, 2023).

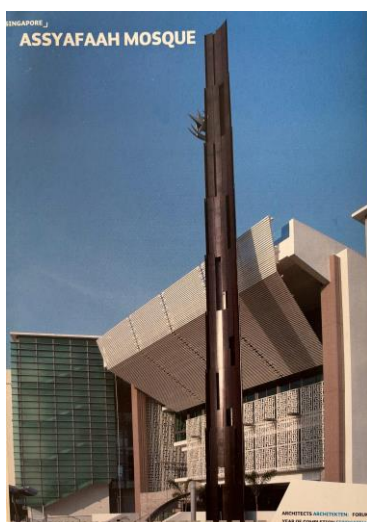
The uniqueness of a building's image, its forms, decorative elements and symbolic content is maintained by culture and tradition, and on the contrary, can be lost as a result of unification and borrowing of global architectural solutions (Abdrassilova et al., 2024, Abdrassilova & Danibekova, 2021). The studied examples of modern religious buildings demonstrate the introduction of progressive ideas of foreign architects. New approaches to design are used here, which noticeably differ from traditional architectural canons by their greater contextuality. As a result, new images of religious spaces have been formed, which often do not fit into the usual canonical framework.



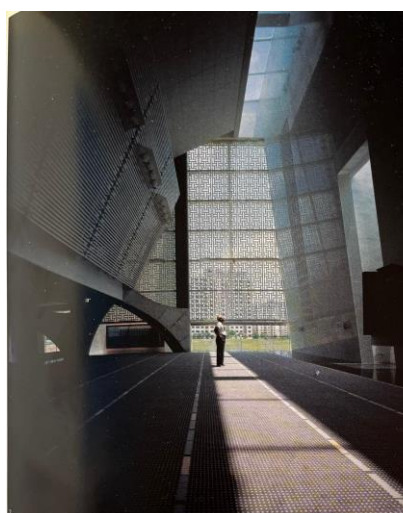
Masjid Al Irsyad Mosque. General view (Indonesia's unique mosques, 2019)



Masjid Al Irsyad Mosque. View of mihrab (Photo of the day, 2015)



Assyafaah Mosque. General view (Buck, 2006)



Assyafaah Mosque. Interior (Buck, 2006)

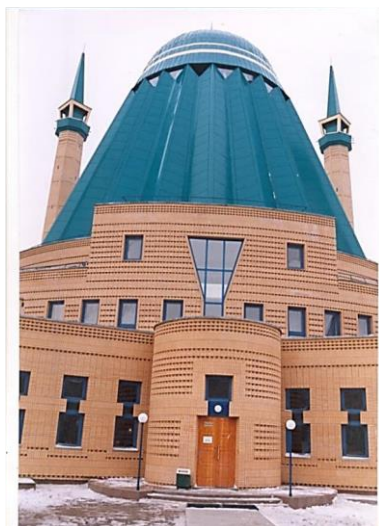
**Figure 1** – The search for regional identity in modern mosque architecture: examples from world experience.

Over the past two decades, Kazakhstan, as a young independent country, has shown an active desire for change and renewal in all areas of public life. This is especially true in the field of architecture, where Kazakh architects are increasingly turning to unconventional techniques,



methods, and forms. This trend is reflected in iconic buildings that are traditionally known for their sustainability and restraint when it comes to innovation.

Modern religious architecture, including Islamic buildings, also needs to be transformed to meet the challenges of our time. Its development should be based on a conscious departure from traditional canons, which encourages the search for new ideas rooted in a specific place's context - through its culture, natural features, and the formation of local symbols and artistic images. In **Figure 2** we present examples of mosques in Kazakhstan as experiments of progressive domestic architects. Going beyond the usual traditionalism, the authors proposed non-standard spaces of religious buildings, whose artistic and imaginative design reflect the regional identity and the spirit of the time.



Makhshur Zhusup Mosque. General view  
(Kisamedin, 2012)



Makhshur Zhusup Mosque. View of peshtak  
(Kisamedin, 2012)



Burabai Mosque. General view (There is a beautiful mosque, 2019)



Ryskeldi Kazhy Mosque. Interior (Inside, 2018)

**Figure 2** - Modern architecture of mosques in Kazakhstan.

One of the examples of non-traditional architecture in Kazakhstan is the Mashkhur Zhusup Mosque in Pavlodar, designed by architects T. Abilda, N. Kabudaliev, S. Yusupov and S. Dautov in 2001. Despite the use of traditional elements such as domes, minarets and peshtaks, its design is not a direct copy of a classical pattern. Instead, it represents a modern interpretation of traditional architecture through the use of local symbols and unconventional spatial planning solutions. "... the mosque does not seem to be a repeat of the old pattern, ... its image is new, ... it easily corresponds with traditions, ... but it is modern and expressive ..." (Kisamedin, 2012).

The tent-shaped silhouette of the building, based on an eight-pointed star, as well as dynamic domed shapes and the monumental peshtak with a corrugated surface, refer to the architectural heritage of Central Asia. In particular, these techniques are reminiscent of the mausoleums of the

Karakhanids, which combine the symbols of the Kazakh steppe - the Khan's tent and the warrior batyr - with sacred images that are important for local culture and help to create a unique architectural identity.

If we set aside the external similarities of the mosque to the usual traditional image and focus on enhancing the believer's sense of belonging to the sacred act of conversion to Almighty, and create conditions for a profound spiritual connection, it can lead to a shift in the three-dimensional and artistic design of mosques, focusing on the inner experience of the person. At the same time, regional identity plays an important role, allowing mosque architecture to not only preserve its spiritual significance, but also reflect the unique cultural, semantic, historical, and climatic characteristics of a particular area, forming a truly authentic and harmonious sacred space.

The architecture of Burabai Mosque (BI Group, 2019) in the Shchuchinsko-Borovsky resort zone, designed by the company, is expressed in a cubic form (There is a beautiful mosque, 2019). The choice of this form is due to the roots of the reference to the cube/platform, its symbolic meaning going back centuries.

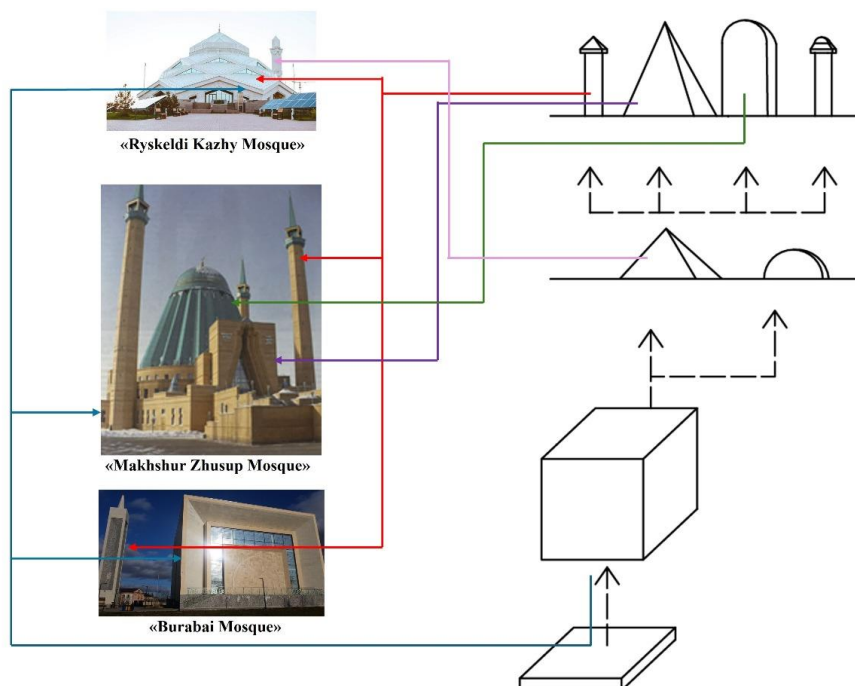
In traditional Kazakh architecture, cubic forms often formed the basis of religious buildings. One example is the mausoleum of Aisha-bibi a cubic shaped building with a cone-shaped dome with richly decorated walls (**Glaudinov, 2019**). According to the Kazakh scholar E. Baitenov, the cubic form is a kind of spatial archetype 'platform'. A compact centric volume (of a square, rectangle, circle, polygon) has traditionally been the basis of the volumetric and spatial structure of buildings, including religious buildings such as mausoleums, mosques, sacral complexes (**Baitenov, et al., 2019, Baitenov, 2024**). Thus, the shape of a cube/platform symbolized stability, balance and solidity, a symbol of the earth. As a culturally fixed archetype, the cube reflects the spiritual, ethnic and historical basis of Kazakh architecture, reflecting the mentality and connection with the traditional image of dwelling - the yurt. Using the example of the Burabai Mosque, reference to this archetype contributes to the integration of the building into the cultural landscape and the actualization of the modern appearance of religious buildings in new interpretations in order to strengthen regional identity.

Let's consider the trend of rethinking traditional forms in the work of modern architects in Kazakhstan, taking into account cultural archetypes and the use of modern technologies. The Yrskeldi Kazhi Mosque's building in Astana (arch. S. Dzhambulatov, 2018) uses non-standard shapes, such as triangular walls and a dome, which image is an inverted lotus flower. This postmodern style meets the current demand for zero consumption of non-renewable energy (**Inside, 2018**). The use of solar panels helps solve the environmental problem by reducing energy costs and provides a modern approach to integrating traditional symbols into modern architecture, shifting the focus from traditional Islamic architecture towards innovation.

The last two examples considered are examples of a minimalist approach, which seem to reflect current trends in architecture. However, simplicity of form, restraint, and modesty in the design of sacred spaces have always been inherent in the local population due to the influence of Sufism. Sufism originated in the 7th-9<sup>th</sup> centuries as a mystical and ascetic branch of Islam and had a significant impact on the spiritual culture and architecture of Kazakhstan.

In cult architecture, this was reflected in the desire to create private, meditative spaces that encourage inner concentration and spiritual purity. Sufi ideas were widely spread in the region due to the efforts of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, the founder of the Turkic Sufi tradition, who blended Islamic spirituality with traditional nomadic customs. As a result, a unique architectural style emerged, characterized by simplicity, profound symbolism, and ascetic spatial planning (**Abdrassilova, Murzagaliyeva & Kuc, 2021, Orynbekov, 2005**).

**Figure 3** shows how simple forms of cube, pyramid, as archetypes (according to the research of E. Baitenov) in Kazakhstani architecture serve as a bridge between tradition and modern architectural solutions, strengthen cultural identity and reflect the aspiration to innovation.



**Figure 3** – Archetypes in modern interpretations of mosque architecture in Kazakhstan (authors' material).

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Studies have shown that in the conditions of globalization the modern mosque is now open to change, the architectural appearance of which is formed at the intersection of tradition and innovation, past and present. The essential importance of this aspect is that the architecture of religious buildings can be enriched by taking into account the local socio-cultural identity and spatial environment. A delicate correspondence to the local multinational and multicultural environment as in the case of the Assiaf Mosque in Singapore, or consideration of the philosophical underpinnings of ancient traditions and beliefs such as Sufism can be an important guideline in the search for authentic architectural expression. Contextualized architecture of mosques, in turn, contributes to the formation of a mature and conscious society, aware of its own religious and socio-cultural identity. On the example of a developing country like Kazakhstan, this direction becomes especially relevant when architecture becomes an important element reflecting the state priorities and missions aimed at strengthening the country's position in the international arena. Thus:

1. In the conditions of growing globalization processes in Kazakhstan, regional architecture based on the adaptation of artistic image and form to the local context is called to solve the problem of revival of traditions, preservation of identity with strengthening of identity;
2. Taking into account the local specifics of multinationalism and multiculturalism of the environment will ensure cultural relevance, achieving balance and inclusiveness;
3. Mandatory integration of ecologically oriented modern technologies and architectural trends into the system of designing religious buildings will support compliance with the global trend - sustainable development.
4. Dialogue with the environment, the ability to adapt to changing conditions of the time and active interaction with the local cultural context will allow to go beyond the established norms in the design of modern mosque buildings balancing between globalization and the search for regional identity.

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