



# Magazine Araku

Thesis Proposal  
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**“Kazakh nomads were a great and smart nation.** Our ancestors were very hardy, tough and strong as they had to travel around our deserts and withstand all kinds of weather and other unpredictable circumstances” – Kazakhs would say, these are the kind of **stories I grew up on.** Every teacher in Kazakhstan is teaching that in school and every parent tells these stories to their kids. **I was always very proud of my heritage** and of what Kazakhs used to represent. Traveling around the world, moving from one country to another and exploring different cultures: I would say that it is **in my nature,** due to my nomadic background. I do not need to move but I love it - exploring new traditions and learning about other people’s origins. For me, it is a form of **self-education and entertainment.** Of course, it was not the case for Kazakh nomads, as they were traveling out of necessity. For them, it was a way of surviving. They had to be **creative and innovative to adapt** to the harsh environment around them. “Negizine Oralu” means **back to origins** in the Kazakh language, as the collection **brings the user back to the artistic background of my ancestors,** while also **embracing the needs of modern society.**

Living in a fast pace environment, people often forget about their origins. They look for simpler and more convenient solutions, choosing comfort over beauty and elegance. The “Negizine Oralu” collection **combines elegance and comfort.** It is going into the **deep exploration journey of Kazakh nomadic culture** bringing it to a very modern world. Being nomads, Kazakh people were traveling around the country, with their cattle, as the main source of food and clothes. Being close to nature also influenced their beliefs, as **they were deifying nature,** which affected their **craftsmanship and visual art.** They were finding the divine and the sacred in the nature around them, constantly following the **traditions and superstitions,** which were carried to the modern world. Beautiful Kazakh culture and history are one of our **main sources of pride,** and I want my project to convey the **love and respect** that I have for my



culture while embracing the needs of modern society towards **comfort and convenience**.

I always add a personal touch to my designs, and this collection will not be an exception. In this project, I want to **go deeper and add my cultural background** to the collection. I want to introduce the Kazakh inheritance to the world, as Kazakh culture is very vibrant and not a lot of people know about it. I especially want to **concentrate on ornaments** as they were an essential part of Kazakh nomads' beliefs. Going deeper into history, I want to **bring back those traditions**, as lots of people, including my family, still follow some of them. My primary research revolves around the meaning of ornaments and their use in the daily lives of Kazakh nomads. Inspired by nature and their surroundings Kazakh nomads were **finding blessing and curses in the world around them**. In order to protect themselves, they were using symbolized ornaments (4). Apart from being aesthetically pleasing this was also a major part of their faith. Kazakh ornaments can be distinguished into four different categories: **animal inspired, plants inspired, space inspired and geometrical** (6). Not all of them were specific to only Kazakh culture, as a lot of the motives are common for different nations around the world, but there is something specific to Kazakh ornaments – it is the flowing shapes, and the contrasting relationship between the ornament itself and the background (4). These details are leading “Negizine Oralu” project, as the main aspect of it is returning to our origins, and for that it needs to **consider and appreciate the practices my ancestors followed**.

However, returning to the origins will not be too subtle. These **motives will definitely lead the aesthetic choices** for the collection, but the project itself **steps away from the traditional** understanding of the Kazakh ornament. I added a modern twist to the project through shapes



and colors. Using **looser more organic shapes, while experimenting with color** opened up new horizons of Kazakh ornament. Putting it into painting, I discovered that the paint is more forgiving and gives more room for experimentation. Painted ornaments are put into patterns creating great motives when printed on fabric. "Negizine Oralu" is **bringing the idea of paint into felting**. It includes the printed ornaments into the wet felting while **organizing the felted materials in more organic ways**.

Kazakhs' mode of life was very well structured – **everything they needed was always with them**. Food and material for their craftsmanship was sourced from their **flocks of sheep, herds of horses, cows and camels**. The resources for their housing and apparel was also procured from the livestock. "Nomads were breeding a special kind of sheep, which had merino wool. That wool was of a very good quality and was used for elegant knitted and felted pieces. Whereas, other sheep and camel wool was used for felted blankets, carpets, footwear, and yurt outer shells as they were more durable and thick." This tradition remains unchanged even till these days, as walking around a shopping mall in Almaty, I encountered a small stand of the Almaty Craftsman Association, and they were mostly using merino wool in their products. **The craftsmen of ethnic goods** in Kazakhstan are uniting into associations to support each other and to **preserve their cultural inheritance**. Each of their pieces was handmade and unique and everyone used very different techniques like felting on silk, needle felting applied on wet felted materials, and wet felting into preset shapes. Some techniques require specific traditional tools. All of the above inspired me to think of how I can personalize felting and make it more modern and different. I **combined my passion for painting with wet felting**. I decided to use my paintings inspired by



Kazakh ornaments and made a pattern out of them. Printing them on silk organza, I wet felted into the wool. Then I created a new technique using **colored Urethane on wet felted material** which had a rubbery feeling. The flexibility of the material made the pieces very **playful and artsy**, while adding pops of colors to the pieces and making them more textured.

The aesthetic aspect is very important to this project, but nomadic life was not only about aesthetic beauty. **Being a nomad was also about survival**, and in order to survive Kazakhs had to be always ready for any attack, which could have come from anywhere either nature and animals or other tribes. That is why they always **had to keep their hands free for unexpected fights and moves**. The images, illustrations, and clothing in the museums of Kazakh nomads all show that they had either crossbody bags or were loading most of their belongings on their horses or camels. Keeping their hands free was one of the ways to protect themselves from enemies be they human, animals or natural hazards. That is why I am so obsessed with the idea of hand free bags, which **will not restrict my user's movement**. Nowadays, it is unnecessary for people to have their hands free – a lot of people still enjoy carrying their bags around, but hand free bags can offer more movement flexibility and freedom of movement. **Making people's life more comfortable and joyful** - that is my main goal. For the past year, I have been focusing on bags that people can wear without the use of hands - hand-free bags. Living in a fast paced environment of a city, where everyone has to do a million things at the same time, is very hard on its own. My products will make the lives of urban habitants easier through **relieving them of need to carry stuff around** in their hands. The products are combining the aesthetic inheritance of Kazakh nomads with the new technologies that make them hands - free. They can be attached to the clothes or to body accessories.



Body accessories will accompany the bags in this collection. As I said, the main idea of the project is functionality and hand-free bags, and the main way to achieve that is through **attaching my products to garments**. An example of that is the **pocket bag that attaches to pockets** and you don't need any straps or hands to hold it. People react very well to that invention. The flap at the back of the bag is very versatile and can **attach to any garment pocket**. However, if there is no possibility to attach them to garments, the bags will be connected differently. This can be achieved by attaching to another accessory. The example of such are belt bags, and those are the bags that gave me an idea to create the body accessories, **the accessories that will hold the bags, but at the same time can be used on their own just for styling purposes**.

Being far away from home for the most part of my life brought me a huge **appreciation towards my culture**. When people leave their comfort zones and explore new horizons they often forget about where they came from. "Negizine oralu" is a collection that represents my origins and **encourages people to look back and reevaluate their past experiences**. It also shows that no matter where we are, we can always come back home for the extra source of power and inspiration. I presented my cultural background in this project to show people who Kazakh Nomads were, and how were they living. However, the main idea behind this project was to inspire people of my own nation to **appreciate and be proud of craftsmanship and traditions of our ancestors**, and most importantly to bring those into the modern society.



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