

A Study of Transmedia and Artistic Representation of the Image of Kazakhstan in Contemporary Scholarly Literature

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ABSTRACT

The proposed research problem focuses on identifying the components of the “Kazakh text” within the broader scope of contemporary world literature. The theoretical significance of this study lies in the analysis of various levels of poetics in global literary works that engage with the image of Kazakhstan, its realities, traditions, history, and culture. In today's world, the perception of a particular country is not solely shaped by its national literature; often, the aesthetic process of understanding another country can occur through foreign literature as well. Cultural values have long been regarded as the foundation of national identity. The search for and accumulation of cultural elements that form the core of Kazakh mentality, as found in native content, is an ongoing and successful process, especially in the realm of artistic literature.

At present, however, there are neither localized nor large-scale studies that reconstruct a comprehensive picture of the elements of national literature as a unique artistic phenomenon. The vacuum that has emerged can be addressed through the study of the so-called “Kazakh text” as a distinct phenomenon of Kazakh artistic culture. The examination of transmedia and artistic representation of the image of Kazakhstan in contemporary scholarly literature involves exploring how Kazakhstan's image is portrayed and interpreted across various media and artistic forms. This includes analyzing cinema, literature, visual arts, theater, music, and other cultural products, as well as how these representations interact with political, social, and cultural contexts.

The article aims to establish a theoretical framework for the representation of the unique “Kazakh text” within the global literary context. To achieve this goal, the following methods will be employed: sociological analysis, intercultural hermeneutics, historical-functional analysis, intermedial analysis, and others.

1. Introduction

The image of any country in culture and literature reflects its history, traditions, national mentality, and social changes. Kazakhstan, located at the crossroads of East and West, serves as a unique example of cultural diversity and historical transformation. This essay will explore how Kazakhstan is represented in literature and other forms of art, including traditional and contemporary works. The image of Kazakhstan in culture and literature is multifaceted and complex. It reflects not only the country's rich history and traditions but also the current challenges it faces. Kazakhstan continues to be a source of inspiration for artists, writers, and filmmakers, making its cultural heritage unique and significant for global culture. In the messages of Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President of Kazakhstan, to the nation, the critical importance of “the effective utilization of the country’s historical heritage and cultural potential” is emphasized [1]. The President also highlights that “Kazakhstan’s education and science face a large-scale and urgent challenge—not only to keep up with new trends, but to be one step ahead, generating those trends” [1].

This emphasizes the necessity of advancing scientific ideas aimed at identifying national cultural markers that form the intellectual and value-based foundation of Kazakh society.

The study of transcultural processes enables a deeper understanding of the self through the other. For instance, the image of Russia is reflected in various aspects across German, American, Japanese, and many other literatures [2]. For Kazakhstan, a young and independent nation, it is essential to see itself through foreign perspectives, to assess its global recognition, and to understand its position in

the world. This project seeks to gather all artistic texts in foreign literature that are either explicitly or implicitly dedicated to Kazakhstan or contain traces of a “Kazakh presence”.

The examination of Kazakhstan's representation in world literature will address key issues in poetics, including literary movements and trends, style and genre systems, plot and compositional structures, character development, chronotopes, narrative strategies, and more.

The conceptual foundation of this research is built on two pivotal aspects: the focus on the phenomenon of the Kazakh text, and the unique features of the literary process in global literature, shaped by globalization and migration dynamics.

One of the pressing areas in contemporary literary studies is the exploration of the so-called “urban text” [3]. From the perspective of literary scholars, the city is viewed as a dynamically evolving text, or more broadly, a sum or system of texts. This direction is interpreted as a manifestation of literary urbanism (N.L. Potanina, M.A. Gololobov [4]).

Contemporary scholarly literature devoted to transmedia and the artistic representation of Kazakhstan presents a multilayered field of study where interdisciplinary approaches and cultural reflections converge. Analyzing various aspects of this topic reveals that Kazakhstan, as a geographical, historical, and cultural phenomenon, occupies a unique position in the global discourse on transmedia.

Modern culture is characterized by the rapid development of transmediation, which enables the creation of complex and multifaceted artistic projects that engage audiences through diverse media formats. Transmediation not only expands the boundaries of art but also shapes new ways of perceiving and interacting with creative works. Artistic representation, in turn, offers opportunities to visualize, conceptualize, and reflect on key issues of contemporary society. The interaction between these two phenomena demands thorough analysis and systematization.

Transmedia representation is understood as a way of expressing a narrative or concept through multiple media formats. The key distinction of transmedia projects lies in the fact that each medium does not duplicate content but rather complements it, creating a cohesive and multilayered structure. Henry Jenkins, one of the leading scholars of transmedia, defines it as a process where parts of a narrative are distributed across different media platforms, with each making a unique contribution to the audience's perception of the overarching story. Examples of transmedia projects can be found in both popular culture and high art. For instance, the Star Wars franchise includes films, books, comics, video games, and TV series, each expanding the core storyline. In the context of artistic representation, transmedia is used to create projects that integrate literature, visual arts, performance, and digital technologies.

2. Literature Review and Methods

The focus on the representation of cities in literature has given rise to a significant scholarly field, within which various types of “urban texts” have been examined. These include studies of the “Petersburg” text (V.N. Toporov [3]), the “Moscow” text (M.V. Selemenova, O.S. Shurupova [5-6]), the “London” text (L.S. Prokhorova [7]), the “Yaroslavl” text (T.I. Erokhina [8]), and the “Yakutsk” text (S.E. Noeva [9]). In Kazakhstan, this concept has been explored through the lens of the “Almaty” text (E.S. Shmakova, I.T. Kakilbaeva, Zh.A. Bayanbayeva, Zh.B. Kermeshova [10-13]).

We propose a novel theoretical approach by introducing the term “Kazakhstani text”, which refers to a unique complex that encapsulates the key concepts of Kazakh national consciousness through ideas, themes, images, motifs, artistic expression, stylistics, and literary discourse within global literature. Additionally, a crucial aspect of this project, which we aim to promote within Kazakh literary studies, is the framework of “intercultural hermeneutics”.

The application of a synergistic set of categories allows for a rethinking of traditional issues in

literary studies, anthropology, cultural studies, social and historical psychology, and ethics, while also uncovering previously underexplored causal relationships.

The method of intercultural hermeneutics will help to examine the presence and development of Kazakh themes in world literature.

The historical-functional method has been utilized to understand the phenomenon of typological structures in both synchronic and diachronic contexts.

Intermedial analysis is essential for identifying interdisciplinary connections in the formation of the “Kazakhstani text” within global literature, encompassing cinema, music, theater, painting, and other forms of art.

The image of a country in literature, art, and the dissemination of culture is a phenomenon shaped by international historical, cultural, and social factors. Various research methods have been employed to analyze this multifaceted concept, each contributing significantly to understanding its complexity. The sociological method examines public perceptions of a country through mass media, literary works, and artistic representations. Surveys and interviews reveal how specific traits of a country are interpreted by external audiences. The method of intercultural hermeneutics aids in understanding how images of independence are perceived and adapted in different cultural contexts. This is particularly important when studying transnational texts and films. The historical-functional method allows for the examination of a country's image in a dynamic context, showing how it has evolved over time under the influence of changing events. For instance, historical novels and chronicles offer insights into a country's past. Intermedial analysis focuses on media forms such as film, music, and painting, which contribute to constructing a cohesive image. When applied collectively, these methods provide a nuanced understanding of a country's perception and illuminate its place within the global cultural landscape.

3. Results and Discussion

Kazakhstan in the literature of the 20th century emerges as a multifaceted and complex image. It simultaneously serves as a crossroads of cultural boundaries, a space for grand social experiments, and a backdrop for tragic events. The literature of this period provides insights into how historical changes shaped perceptions of the country, its people, and its culture. Kazakhstan became a source of inspiration for writers of various nationalities, highlighting its significance not only as a geographical entity but also as a cultural hub. Study of the Recognition of Kazakhstan's Image in the Global Artistic and Cultural Space. We refer to such instances as the “Kazakh trace”. The collection and systematization of evidence of the presence of the “Kazakh text” will help identify the factors and trends in the dissemination of Kazakh cultural codes throughout the global cultural space.

The urban text is regarded by scholars as an interdisciplinary phenomenon [14], which justifies the necessity, among other approaches, of using an intermedial method to study this phenomenon. The choice of semiotic perspectives, which view the text as a special system of signs, allows for an expanded understanding of the concept of a text. The intermedial and semiotic approach to understanding texts makes it possible to study the “Kazakh” text across various forms of art, not just literature [15]. Thus, within the proposed project, we plan to analyze musical, visual, architectural, cinematic, and design texts that contain Kazakh cultural elements.

The “Kazakh trace” is often observed in Hollywood films. For example, the movie *Borat* dominated Western perceptions of Kazakhstan in the 2000s. While contemporary Hollywood projects are gradually moving away from stereotypes, presenting the country in more complex contexts, the film stirred dissatisfaction among Kazakh officials. However, despite the negative reception, it attracted attention to the country, leading to unexpected results: increased tourist interest in Kazakhstan and heightened efforts to create a more accurate international image of the country.

In the film *The Conspiracy* (2013), for instance, Kazakhstan is mentioned in the context of international geopolitical events. In this film, Kazakhstan becomes part of a complex political plot involving nuclear weapons and international diplomacy. Although Kazakhstan itself does not play a central role in the plot, its mention highlights its recognized significance in global security issues.

Another example is the movie *Spy Game* (2001), starring Robert Redford and Brad Pitt. In this spy drama, Kazakhstan appears as an important setting related to global intelligence activities. While the portrayal of Kazakhstan is more neutral and realistic here, it remains associated with political tension and threats.

One of the most positive and realistic depictions of Kazakhstan in Hollywood films is associated with the Baikonur Cosmodrome. Baikonur, which became a key point of the Soviet and post-Soviet space programs, is mentioned in films such as *Space Cowboys* (2000) and *Gravity* (2013). In these films, Baikonur is presented as an important center of space research, emphasizing Kazakhstan's contributions to global scientific and technological achievements.

Overall, with the growth of globalization and cultural exchange, one can expect that Kazakhstan will appear more frequently on screen as a country with a rich history, diverse culture, and significant contributions to the global community.

Modern world literature increasingly turns to Kazakhstan as a place with a rich culture and history, reflecting the growing interest in regions that were previously on the periphery of the global literary process. Writers and poets from Kazakhstan are gaining international recognition; their works are being translated into various languages and becoming part of the global literary scene.

For example, although Guzel Yakhina's novel *Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes* focuses on a Tatar woman, it touches on themes of the deportation of peoples, including Kazakhs, during the Soviet era, allowing for a reflection on the collective tragedy of many nations of the former USSR. Kazakhstan becomes part of a larger cultural context that explores issues of migration, identity, and memory.

In the 21st century, Kazakhstan continues to be a subject of interest in Anglophone literature, though its portrayal often reflects a complex mix of stereotypes and modern realities. The image of Kazakhstan in these works can range from passing mentions in a global context to deeper explorations of Kazakh culture and history.

In contemporary Anglophone literature, Kazakhstan is often viewed through the lens of global political and economic processes. In such works, Kazakhstan is portrayed as part of the new global economic and geopolitical arena. For instance, in Adam Robert's *The Wonga Coup* (2006), which deals with a coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea, Kazakhstan is mentioned as a country playing a certain role in the global economy and politics. In such works, Kazakhstan is seen as a strategically important state whose influence extends beyond its borders.

Travel writings and essays about Kazakhstan also occupy an important place in modern Anglophone literature. These works often aim to present the country as an exotic and unexplored destination for Western readers, while emphasizing its cultural diversity and unique regional traditions. For example, *The Lonely Planet Guide to Central Asia* (2007) describes Kazakhstan as a country with unique natural landscapes and a rich cultural heritage. Such works help to break down established stereotypes and offer a more nuanced and personalized portrayal of Kazakhstan.

The themes of migration and cultural identity also play a significant role in contemporary Anglophone literature, where Kazakhstan often appears as a country of origin or a cultural backdrop for characters. In Adam Johnson's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Orphan Master's Son* (2012), one episode is connected to Kazakhstan, reflecting its influence on the lives of characters involved in complex political intrigues. Although Kazakhstan is only briefly mentioned in this book, its image plays an important role in the context of global processes.

Kazakhstan also appears in Anglophone science fiction. In such works, Kazakhstan may serve as a setting for future technologies or geopolitical changes. For instance, in Kim Stanley Robinson's novel *Red Mars* (1993), while Kazakhstan is not a central setting, it is mentioned as part of a global space program connected with the colonization of Mars.

Referring to imagological terminology, it can be noted that the terminological base is not yet fully developed due to the relative novelty of the field itself. Apart from the term *imagology*, which has gained a certain level of stability, the thesaurus includes concepts such as *imagotheme*, proposed by M. Świdarska. This concept encompasses *imagemes*, which include Polish characters and elements of Polish history and culture. The researcher highlights a conceptualized approach in which the author pays special attention to portraying the character of the hero.

According to E. V. Papilova, the foundation of stereotyping lies in the "historical experience of a people." This experience, manifested in cultural characteristics embedded in a nation's collective memory, forms a set of representations about a country. A crucial aspect of this process is the nature of stereotyping itself. An important task for researchers is to move away from simplistic representations of a country and strive to uncover the complexity and diversity of contemporary Kazakhstani culture.

Imagological literary studies enable a critical rethinking of stereotypes that shape the image of a country, reconstructing the complex set of elements that both comprise and convey traditional and contemporary features of a given unique culture.

By addressing the image of a country in literature, we examine how the national is objectified and how it interacts with the foreign within the text. Regarding the genres that represent images of countries, early travel notes deserve particular attention as foundational examples.

While researchers may discuss various types of *imagology*, it is equally valid to explore directions within literary studies. Within the broader field of literary studies, specialized subfields exist depending on research objectives, such as *psychoanalytic literary studies*. In this context, the relatively new subfield of *imagological literary studies* can be justified.

Imagological literary studies can be defined as a branch of comparative literature focused on examining the image of a country as a stereotypical set of elements within a national worldview. Unlike linguistic worldviews—which must be distinguished - this perspective encompasses a multi-semantic national worldview, including linguistic, cultural, literary, social, and other components of national identity.

Imagology tends toward developing fundamental methodological foundations for representing the "other" across various dimensions. In employing the term *imagological literary studies*, we outline the scope of issues within this field.

Imagological literary studies (or, in E.V. Papilova's terminology, *literary imagology*) analyze the image of a country as depicted in literary works, determining how components of the national worldview are received, with their stereotypical elements explicitly or implicitly revealed in the verbal field. A key methodological principle underpinning research in this area is the binary opposition of "self" and "other".

4. Conclusion

The portrayal of Kazakhstan in Hollywood cinema is gradually evolving from caricatured stereotypes to more complex and multifaceted representations. While films like *Borat* continue to influence perceptions of the country, new projects are emerging that aim to depict Kazakhstan in a more positive and realistic light. It is important to note that the future representation of Kazakhstan in Western films will depend not only on Hollywood's interest but also on the active participation of the country in international film projects and efforts to promote its culture and history on the global

stage.

Contemporary 21st-century Anglophone literature that engages with Kazakhstan demonstrates a diversity of approaches to its representation. Kazakhstan is portrayed as a country playing a significant role in global political, economic, and cultural processes. These representations range from exotic and little-known to complex and realistic, reflecting the growing interest in the country within global literature.

The classification of forms of transmedia and artistic representation allows for a deeper understanding of contemporary cultural processes and the mechanisms behind creating complex multimedia projects. Transmediation offers unique opportunities for artistic expression by integrating various media formats into a cohesive whole. Artistic representation, in turn, serves as a key tool that ensures the meaningfulness and expressiveness of each component. Exploring these phenomena opens new horizons for the development of culture and art in the digital age.

One of the key findings of this study is the growing importance of transmedia strategies in shaping national identity. Kazakhstan actively participates in global cultural exchange processes, leveraging media platforms, cinema, literature, music, and digital technologies to present its identity. This representation often transcends traditional narratives, reflecting an effort to comprehend the complex, multilayered history and contemporary reality of the country.

The artistic representation of Kazakhstan, as revealed through analysis, is inextricably linked to processes of historical memory and decolonial reimagining. Many contemporary authors, both literary and visual, address themes of postcolonial identity, tradition, and modernization, offering a wealth of material for transmedia analysis. Through the lens of these representations, Kazakhstan emerges as a space of dialogue between tradition and innovation, past and future.

An important aspect of the study is the examination of the role of language and narrative in the transmedia transmission of Kazakhstan's image. The use of Kazakh, Russian, and English across various media platforms opens new horizons for the perception and dissemination of national culture. Literature, in particular, remains a powerful tool for comprehending and transmitting Kazakhstan's unique cultural code, and its interaction with other media enhances the immersive experience of the cultural space.

Special attention should also be given to visual representation. Films, photography, video games, and social media play a key role in creating new symbols and archetypes associated with Kazakhstan. For instance, Kazakh cinema in recent decades has increasingly attracted international attention, presenting complex images that reinterpret established stereotypes and propose new ways of envisioning the country.

The transmedia approach to representing Kazakhstan also raises questions about globalization and localization. Global platforms such as Netflix or Instagram provide opportunities to present national images to a broad international audience but simultaneously risk losing cultural specificity. In this context, there is a need to develop balanced strategies that ensure the authenticity of the represented image while maintaining its universal appeal.

Equally important is the issue of reception and perception. Both international and domestic audiences interpret transmedia images differently, underscoring the significance of cultural context in the process of representation. Analyzing these processes helps to understand how Kazakhstan's image is formed, transformed, and utilized in various cultural and social practices.

Research on the transmedia and artistic representation of Kazakhstan's image opens up vast prospects for further exploration. This field demands even deeper study, particularly in the context of rapidly changing media technologies and cultural trends. Situated at the crossroads of East and West, Kazakhstan continues to be a unique point of convergence between tradition and modernity, making

it a consistently fascinating subject for transmedia analysis.

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