

The Kazakh Text as a Cultural Supertext

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ABSTRACT

The concept of "Kazakhstani text" in modern humanities is gradually emerging as an independent analytical category, reflecting the totality of artistic, cultural, and historical-memorial representations of Kazakhstan in the literature of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In the context of globalization, transnational mobility, and post-Soviet transformations, Kazakhstani literature is becoming a space for complex dialogue between national tradition and a multilingual, multicultural context, which highlights the need for a theoretical understanding of the specifics of this textual formation. The aim of this article is to identify the structural, semantic, and poetic characteristics of the Kazakhstani text as a special type of culturally marked hypertext. The study establishes that the Kazakhstani text is not reducible to a geographical or ethnographic description of a territory, but rather represents a complex model of the artistic exploration of space, in which national history, traumatic experience, and the memory of nomadic culture and the Soviet past are reinterpreted within the coordinates of modernity. It is concluded that the Kazakhstani text functions as a crucial mechanism for cultural self-identification and the transmission of national experience in a global literary context.

Keywords: Kazakhstani text, historical memory, national code, postcolonial discourse, hypertext, identity, contemporary literature of Kazakhstan

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary literary process is increasingly being understood by researchers through the prism of spatial-cultural formations, known in the humanities as "texts"—St. Petersburg, Moscow, Caucasian, Siberian, and others. Such supertexts are formed as a collection of artistic works united by common spatial, historical, and symbolic characteristics, as well as stable mythopoetic models. Within this context, the "Kazakhstani text" is becoming increasingly clear, requiring an independent theoretical description and systematization [1].

The relevance of research into the Kazakh text is determined by several interrelated factors. Firstly, Kazakhstan's acquisition of state independence in 1991 marked the turning point a radical revision of cultural and historical narratives inevitably reflected in literature. A rethinking of the Soviet legacy, the traumas of collective memory, and the experience of colonization and modernization shaped new artistic strategies aimed at reconstructing and interpreting national identity. Secondly, the multinational and multilingual nature of Kazakhstani society has determined the particular polyphony of literary discourse, in which various cultural codes, historical optics, and models of memory coexist [2].

Unlike rigidly codified "urban texts," the Kazakhstani text is not limited to a single locus. It encompasses the steppe space, urban culture, border zones, and sacred and traumatic sites of memory, forming a complex spatio-temporal model in which past and present are in a state of constant dialogue. Kazakhstan appears not only as a geographical territory but also as a cultural construct created through the means of artistic expression [3].

The category of historical memory acquires particular significance in the structure of the Kazakhstani text. Literature here serves not so much as a tool for recording historical facts as a space for their interpretation, reinterpretation, and symbolization. The collective experience of nomadic civilization, the traumas of the 20th century, the Soviet modernization project, and post-Soviet reality form a multilayered narrative in which memory functions as a key meaning-making element. In this context, the literary text becomes a mediator between individual experience and collective historical consciousness [4].

Equally significant is the question of the national code, manifested in the system of images, symbols, archetypes, and motifs consistently reproduced in Kazakhstani literature. The steppe, the road, the clan, ancestral memory, language as a marker of identity—all these elements form the semiotic core of the Kazakhstani text, ensuring its recognizability and cultural integrity. At the same time, the national code is not static: it is transformed under the influence of global cultural processes, diaspora experience, and transcultural forms of writing. Thus, using the concept of "Kazakhstani text" allows us to consider contemporary Kazakh literature not as a collection of disparate works, but as a holistic semantic space in which key issues of history, memory, and identity are artistically explored. This study aims to identify the specific features of this text, define its structural characteristics, and understand its role in shaping cultural identity in the post-Soviet and global context.

Research Methods. The methodological strategy of this study is based on an interdisciplinary approach, combining tools from literary studies, cultural studies, imagology, and the theory of cultural memory. This synthesis is necessitated by the complex nature of the Kazakh text, which functions not only as a literary phenomenon but also as a form of cultural self-knowledge, historical reflection, and the symbolic modeling of national identity. The key to this work is the historical-literary method, which allows us to examine Kazakhstani texts throughout their development—from the Soviet period to the literature of independent Kazakhstan. This method is used to identify continuities and discontinuities in artistic strategies, the transformation of thematic dominants, and changing modes of representing historical experience. Particular attention is paid to analyzing how literature reinterprets the traumatic events of the 20th century, the Soviet legacy, and the processes of post-Soviet modernization.

A significant place in the study is occupied by the comparative method, applied both within and across cultures. On the one hand, the works of various authors belonging to different linguistic and cultural traditions within Kazakhstan are compared, allowing us to identify common semantic structures and consistent motifs in Kazakhstani texts. On the other hand, the Kazakhstani text relates to the concept of other local supertexts (St. Petersburg, Moscow, Siberian), which makes it possible to determine its typological specificity and place within the system of spatial texts in world literature.

To interpret artistic meanings, the hermeneutic method is actively used, aimed at identifying the text's deep meanings, hidden semantic layers, and symbolic codes. Within this approach, a literary work is viewed as the result of the interaction between the individual author's consciousness and collective cultural memory. Hermeneutic analysis allows us to trace how historical experience and national archetypes are refracted through the writer's individual artistic lens.

Imagological analysis plays an important role in the study, aiming to examine the ways in which space, the image of the country, and cultural identity are represented. Unlike the traditional regional studies approach, imagology views the image of territory as a cultural construct formed through discursive practices. Within this methodology, the Kazakh text is analyzed as a system of images and representations of Kazakhstan, created "from within" the culture, in contrast to the external imagological models characteristic of foreign literature.

The research methodology also draws on the theory of cultural and historical memory developed in the works of J. Assmann, A. Assmann, and representatives of memory studies. Literary text is viewed as a medium of memory, in which collective historical experience is preserved, transformed, and transmitted to subsequent generations. The mechanisms of artistic actualization of memory are analyzed, including motifs of returning to the past, reconstructing ancestral and national history, and ways of symbolizing traumatic experiences.

DISCUSSION

The concept of "Kazakhstani text" should be considered within the framework of the theory of supertext, which assumes the existence of a supra-individual semantic formation formed by a collection of artistic works united by a common cultural, historical, and spatial code. In this context, the Kazakhstani text appears not as a sum of texts about Kazakhstan, but as a holistic system of representations in which stable images, motifs, symbols and narrative strategies associated with understanding the national experience are consolidated [5].

Unlike classical urban hypertexts, which are formed around a single dominant locus, the Kazakhstani text has a fundamentally different spatial organization. Its foundation is not the city as a cultural center, but an open space—the steppe, the road, the border, the nomadic camp, the periphery. This space is neither closed nor hierarchized; it implies movement, transition, and temporality, which determines the specificity of artistic thinking and narrative models. Kazakhstan is presented as a space of formation, not completion, which is directly linked to the historical experience of nomadic civilization and late national statehood [6].

The hypertextual nature of the Kazakhstani text is manifested primarily in the repetition of key semantic dominants. These include the motif of the road and path, the image of the steppe as an existential space, the figure of ancestral memory, the idea of ancestral and historical continuity, and the constant reference to traumatic episodes of collective history. These elements form the semiotic core of the Kazakhstani text, ensuring its internal coherence and recognizability [7].

It is important to emphasize that the Kazakhstani text is not a monolithic or ideologically homogeneous entity. On the contrary, its distinctiveness lies in its polyphony and multi-voice, conditioned by the multinational and multilingual nature of Kazakhstani society. Different cultural and linguistic traditions are not leveled out, but rather coexist within a common semantic field, forming a complex model of cultural dialogue. Thus, the Kazakhstani text acts as a space for the intersection of identities, in which the national does not exclude the transnational, and the local does not exclude the universal.

One of the key categories defining the specificity of the Kazakhstani text is historical memory. Literature, in this case, serves not only as an artistic reflection of the past, but also as its active construction, interpretation, and symbolic reinterpretation. History in fiction ceases to be a chronological sequence of events and becomes a space of meanings, in which trauma, loss, ruptures, and attempts to restore integrity are actualized.

Memory of the nomadic past occupies a special place in the structure of Kazakh texts. This layer of memory functions not as an ethnographic reconstruction, but as a cultural archetype, defining a unique relationship to space and time. Nomadic memory presupposes cyclicity, return, and repetition, which is reflected in the compositional and narrative patterns of the works. The past is not separated by a rigid boundary from the present; it is constantly present, defining the ways in which the characters perceive the world and self-identify [8].

Equally significant is the traumatic experience of the 20th century, associated with collectivization, famine, repression, war, and forced modernization. In Kazakh texts, this experience is often presented indirectly, through fragmented memories, family histories, and motifs of loss and silence. This strategy demonstrates the complexity of articulating trauma and literature's desire to find an adequate language for its artistic interpretation. Memory, in this case, emerges as a problematic field in which official and personal narratives, collective and individual experience, collide [9].

The Soviet period in Kazakhstani texts is often presented in a dual light. On the one hand, it is understood as a time of the loss of traditional forms of life and the suppression of national subjectivity. On the other, it is seen as a space for personal biographies, social mobility, and cultural experience that cannot be unambiguously assessed in terms of trauma or progress. This ambivalence is a characteristic feature of Kazakhstani texts and testifies to their maturity as a form of cultural reflection.

Post-Soviet literature in Kazakhstan actively engages with mechanisms for the actualization of memory, transforming the past into a subject of dialogue rather than a frozen myth. Historical memory is neither sacralized nor definitively canonized, but rather questioned, reconsidered, and deconstructed. This allows Kazakhstani texts to be viewed as a dynamic system, open to new interpretations and semantic shifts [10]. In contemporary humanities scholarship, the concepts of "Kazakhstani text" and "image of Kazakhstan" are often methodologically confused, blurring the analytical boundaries of research. However, these categories belong to different theoretical levels and require a fundamental distinction.

The image of Kazakhstan in literature is typically understood as a set of ideas about the country formed in artistic and journalistic discourse, most often from an external perspective relative to culture. In an imagological sense, the image of a country is the result of representation, dependent on cultural stereotypes, ideological attitudes, and historical context. It can be fragmented, exoticized, mythologized, or, conversely, reduced to isolated signs and clichés.

A Kazakh text, by contrast, represents an internal cultural model, formed within the framework of national literary consciousness. It does not describe Kazakhstan as an object of observation, but rather constructs it as a space of habitation, memory, and identity. While the image of Kazakhstan is oriented toward external gaze and often functions as a representation of the "other," the Kazakh text is constructed from within the culture and is aimed at self-understanding.

This distinction is fundamentally important from the perspective of imagology. Classical imagological studies emphasize the opposition of "internal versus external" and "internal versus external" perspectives. The Kazakh text disrupts this dichotomy, as in it, the image of the country is not presented as an "exotic object," but rather as a space for personal and collective experience. Thus, the Kazakh text goes beyond traditional imagology and requires the use of additional theoretical tools [11].

From this perspective, the Kazakh text can be viewed as a form of auto-imagology, in which culture develops its own means of symbolically describing and interpreting itself. Here, the image of Kazakhstan is not imposed from the outside, but rather is born through an internal dialogue with history, memory, and cultural tradition.

RESULT

In this context, the Kazakh text can be interpreted as a unique semiotic zone, located at the intersection of several cultural codes—nomadic, sedentary, Soviet, post-Soviet, national, and global. According to Lotman, it is precisely this borderland nature that is the source of meaning-making, and in this sense, the Kazakh text is a typologically borderline formation [12].

The spatial organization of the Kazakh text also correlates with Lotman's understanding of cultural space. Steppe, road, border, crossing—all these images function as semiotic markers of openness and transgression. Unlike the closed, hierarchically organized spaces of urban texts, the Kazakh text is constructed as an open model, allowing for multiple interpretations and the absence of a single center.

The mechanism of translation—the transfer of meanings from one sign system to another—acquires particular significance within Lotman's paradigm. The Kazakh text constantly engages in such translation: between oral and written tradition, between myth and history, between individual memory and collective narrative. This process makes the Kazakh text dynamic and fundamentally unfinished.

From the perspective of cultural memory studies, the Kazakh text can be viewed as a medium in which collective historical experience is preserved, transmitted, and reinterpreted. Drawing on the concepts of J. Assmann and A. Assmann, it is useful to distinguish between communicative and cultural memory, both of which are actively functioning in the literature of Kazakhstan.

Communicative memory manifests itself in the use of family histories, oral stories, and personal recollections passed down through several generations. These fragments of memory are often included in literary texts as individual narratives, which, however, acquire a generalizing character and extend beyond individual experience [13]. Cultural memory, in turn, is linked to persistent symbols, myths, archetypes, and historical narratives entrenched in the collective consciousness. In the Kazakhstani text, this manifests itself through recurring images of the steppe, clan, ancestors, and the lost past, as well as motifs of historical trauma and silence. Literature becomes a space where these elements are not only preserved but also subjected to critical reflection [14].

It is important to note that the Kazakhstani text does not strive to create a single, canonical narrative of memory. On the contrary, it demonstrates multiple versions of the past, conflicting interpretations, and the tension between official history and personal experience. This demonstrates its fundamental modernity and alignment with the paradigm of memory studies, which focuses on the analysis of competing forms of memory.

Supplementing the imagological and semiotic analysis with a postcolonial perspective allows for a deeper understanding of the specific nature of the Kazakhstani text. In the context of post-imperial legacy, Kazakhstani literature emerges as a space for deconstructing colonial and Soviet narratives, in which national culture long occupied a peripheral position.

The Kazakhstani text captures the process of reclaiming subjectivity—the right to one's own voice, one's own interpretation of history and space. This process is not declarative, but is realized through complex artistic strategies: rethinking language, reconstructing local histories, emphasizing marginalized characters and "minor" narratives.

Thus, the Kazakhstani text acts not only as a form of cultural memory but also as a space for resistance—gentle, reflective, devoid of direct confrontation, but aimed at restoring cultural balance. In this sense, it differs fundamentally from the image of Kazakhstan created in external discourse, where the country is often reduced to a geopolitical or exotic symbol.

CONCLUSION

This study allows us to consider the Kazakhstani text as an independent cultural and literary phenomenon, possessing internal integrity, stable semantic dominants, and specific mechanisms for the artistic representation of historical and sociocultural experience. Unlike the descriptive or externally imagological "image of Kazakhstan," the Kazakhstani text is formed as an internal model of cultural self-knowledge, in which the country's space is understood not as an object of observation, but as an existential and historical reality of habitation [15].

The analysis revealed that the key feature of the Kazakhstani text is its supra-textual nature, manifested in the repetition of motifs, images, and symbolic codes associated with memory, space, trajectory, and ancestral and national continuity. Kazakhstan in literature is presented not as a static geographical territory, but as a dynamic cultural space in which the past and present are in constant dialogue. This model differs fundamentally from urban and local hypertexts, as it is based on an open, borderline spatial organization.

Historical and cultural memory plays a special role in the structure of Kazakhstani texts. Literature functions as a medium of memory, ensuring the preservation, transmission, and reinterpretation of collective experience—from nomadic civilization to the traumatic events of the 20th century and post-Soviet transformations. Memory in this context is not canonical, but manifests as a field of competing narratives, consistent with modern approaches to memory studies and emphasizing the multiplicity of identities within Kazakhstani cultural space.

Drawing on the semiotic concept of culture allows us to interpret Kazakhstani texts as border zones of the semiosphere, where various cultural and symbolic systems interact. It is this borderline nature that becomes the source of meaning-making, determining the polyphony, flexibility, and openness of Kazakhstani texts to new interpretations. Within the framework of postcolonial analysis, it emerges as a space for the restoration of cultural subjectivity and the rethinking of imperial and Soviet legacies without simplified binary oppositions.

The study concludes that the Kazakh text fulfills a crucial function in shaping cultural identity in the context of globalization and transnational literary processes. It not only accumulates national historical experience but also integrates it into the global humanitarian context, offering a model of identity based on dialogue, memory, and openness. Prospects for further research include expanding the text corpus, employing digital methods of analysis, and comparative study of the Kazakh text within the framework of global cultural supertexts.

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