

Symbolic Images Representing Cultural and Ethnic Identity of the Kazakhs in Kazakhstan Cinema

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Abstract

The issue of ethnic identity is becoming relevant due to the growing influence of globalization and multi-media culture. In this context, cinema plays an important role in the transmission and formation of ethnic identity. Cinema is becoming not just the art of entertaining the masses, not just the work of famous directors, actors, screenwriters, but is also a real space for constructing symbols, values, and behaviors that broadcast cultural and ethnic identities. Cinema as an institution of culture influences the formation or "imposition" of certain types of identity, broadcasting its stereotypes and values, meanings and symbols.

This paper examines the role of Kazakh cinema in the construction of cultural and ethnic identity. It looks at the symbolic images in Kazakh cinema, revealing one of the aspects of cultural and ethnic identity in the culture of the Kazakh people. It analyzes and define the symbols of the nomadic culture of the Kazakhs, which are important for the construction of cultural and ethnic identity.

In conclusion, the paper substantiates the statement "the horse as a symbol of the spiritual state of the people" and "Horse as a spiritual and moral state of the soul", which are indicators of the identity of the Kazakh traditional culture.

Keywords: Symbol, Symbol "horse", Nomadic culture, Traditional culture, Ethnic identity, Cinema.

Introduction

The issue of cultural and ethnic identity is becoming relevant due to the growing influence of globalization and multi-media culture. Globalization is a complex process that covers all spheres of public life. In this regard, the definition of cultural and national or ethnic identity has become a significant phenomenon and an urgent problem of the modern societies. During the colonial regime of Tsarist Russia for example, the nomadic form of cultural and economic activities of the Kazakhs was deformed to a greater extent. This has led to complex socio-cultural consequences of the Kazakh society and traditional culture. During the period of the Soviet totalitarian system in Kazakhstan, the national-historical spiritual values of the Kazakh people were significantly marginalized, which has led to the loss of many cultural values (Baudrillard, 1999).

After gaining independence, Kazakhstan is experiencing the revival of national spiritual values, the development of national identity, national culture, traditions and customs. There is a desire in the society to preserve its identity and uniqueness, and to know itself. There is an interest in the rich cultural and historical heritage of the Kazakh people. In this regard, the role of the formation of national identity, awareness of descent from a common ancestor, consanguinity, and linguistic unity is increasing (Lurie, 2022; Sertakova, 2012). This has led to the need to preserve and develop cultural and national (ethnic) identity, to understand and interpret traditional cultural meanings and symbols in human life.

In this context, cinema plays an important role in the transmission and formation of cultural and ethnic identity. Cinema is becoming not just the art of entertaining the masses, and not just the work of famous directors, actors, screenwriters, but also a real space for constructing symbols, values, behaviors that broadcast cultural and ethnic identities (Baudrillard, 1999). Cinema as an institution of culture influences the formation or "imposition" of certain types of identity, broadcasting its stereotypes and values, meanings, symbols.

Indeed, cinema is a system of artistic images created by the creativity of artists, composers, and writers, which plays an important role in the construction of ethnic identity. Cinema as an institution of culture performs certain functions, such as the creation, distribution, broadcasting, organization of and circulation, and so on. It is these functions that are assigned to cinema as an institute of culture. Its main purpose is to influence the audience through artistic and aesthetic means. Cinema, as a major industry of our time, affects the widest possible audience, productively produces a certain attitude to society both to a specific situation and to the epoch as a whole, norms and values, as well as behavioral models.

Cinema as the language of screen culture and as an element of the sign system is able to construct ethnic identity on the screen through symbols. Baudrillard noted that cinema is "not just a set of technical means for the dissemination of information content, it is the imposition of models" (Baudrillard, 1999:126). Thus, cinema becomes not just a work of art for the entertainment of the masses, not just the work of famous directors, actors, screenwriters, but also part of the real space of constructing symbols, values, behaviors that broadcast cultural and ethnic identity. Certain concepts and meanings, philosophical and aesthetic ideas, as well as cultural, ethnic and national patterns play an important role in this process. In other words, it plays an active role in the upbringing of a person.

However, there is a lack of sufficient work on the role of cinema, in particular Kazakh cinema, in the construction of cultural and ethnic identity.

This paper examines cultural identity of the Kazakhs and the role of Kazakh cinema in the construction of the cultural and ethnic identity of the Kazakh culture. The aim is to determine the role of cinematic symbols in the formation of the cultural and ethnic identity of the Kazakh culture in Kazakh cinema. The objectives of the article are:

- 1) definition of the symbols of the nomadic culture of the Kazakhs, including the symbol "horse" as an image of cultural and ethnic identity in traditional Kazakh culture;
- 2) substantiation of the position "Horse as a symbol of ethnic identity and spiritual state of the people" ("Kulager", "Kosh bol, Gulsary ("Farewell, Gulsary")) and "Horse as a spiritual and moral state of the soul" ("Kyz Zhibek", "Shoq pen Sher»).

Theoretical Framework

- Semiotics
- Symbolic approach

Theoretical Framework

The Historical, Cultural and Social Context

"Nomadic civilization" on the territory of Eurasia has developed since ancient times, having had a huge impact on the development of the culture of many neighboring people as a whole. The culture of the nomads of the Great Steppe of Eurasia reflected the realities of nomadic life, which allows scientists to reconstruct the culture of nomads. In the early Middle Ages, the Eurasian steppes began to be populated by nomadic Turks. These people fought for their own territories. The main occupation of these people is cattle-breeding and horse-breeding. The Kazakh people are the direct

heir of the equestrian nomadic civilization. The ethnic attitude of the Kazakh nomad is formed on the understanding of the natural world: mountains, steppe, sun, water, yurt, ornament, horse, cattle and falcon. These elements permeate the whole life of a Kazakh nomad, which is enshrined in the customs, rites, rituals, behavior, value systems and art. Thus, the area location, and the climatic conditions left a big imprint on everyday activities, thinking, consciousness and attitude to the world, and the worldview of the Kazakh people.

In the expanses of the Eurasian steppe, many nomadic elites lived their lives, which caused them to look for specific different types of symbols that have a special meaning, associated with philosophy: a certain kind of worldview. Each nomadic elite has its own arsenal of symbolic complexes, which make it possible to preserve the semantic meaning. In this regard, the words of the famous French philosopher and culturologist Michel Foucault are recalled.

He says,

“the world is covered with signs that need to be deciphered ... So to know means to interpret, to go from a visible sign to what expresses itself in it and that without it would remain an unspoken word sleeping in things”

Foucault, 1977: 79

Indeed, we live in a world where symbols and signs surround a person from all sides: in art, in Nature, in communication or perception, and in everyday life. Any symbol in a certain sense is a keeper and carrier of time, history, information, and a tool of society for understanding the spiritual world (Pearce, 2000).

The entire traditional culture of the Kazakh people is saturated with symbols, signs, and meanings. We believe that the symbolic nature of the traditional culture of the Kazakhs influenced all the aspects of his life from the everyday traditional side to myths, religion, philosophy and art. This feature of the Kazakh culture has had an impact on the national cinema.

The appeal to the symbolic images of traditional Kazakh culture is not accidental, since during the period of Soviet power, many aspects of Kazakh culture have been marginalized, and examples of the best mastery of the Russian language have been considered as indicators of civilization and education both in the Russian, and later in the Soviet metropolis. As a result, Kazakh people are increasingly alienated from their nomadic life, and from their spacious steppe. Undergoing a "cultural mutation", the Kazakh people have been forced to increasingly strive to eradicate the stereotypes of a nomad, begin to surround themselves with the attributes of essentially Russified, Soviet culture, imitate their values, views, communication features, norms and rules of behavior.

The same imposed identity is demonstrated by a Kazakh person both during the Soviet times, and today this topic remains very relevant for the people, since, in contrast to Russification, their reality is increasingly focusing on trilingualism. This is not always accompanied by the desire to know and speak their native language. In addition, the strengthening of the influence of the Islamic religion and other religious beliefs in modern conditions leads to the fact that the people become the object of exaggerated religious identification, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, become the object of mass culture.

This has led to the need for many representatives of the national intelligentsia to turn to many acute issues of hushing up the tragedy of the existence of the Kazakh people during the years of Soviet national construction. This is reflected in the works of Yesenberlin (1986), Kekilbayev (1979) Yelubai (2011), Bokeev (1990), Isabekov (1975), and Sh. Murtaza et al. (1980). This is reflected in the works of Yesenberlin (1986), Kekilbayev (1979) Yelubai (2011), Bokeev (1990), Isabekov (1975), and Sh. Murtaza et al. (1980). These film directors who have tried to join the anti-colonial discourse, find expression in modern conditions to create films that raise issues of representation of symbolic images of the cultural and national-ethnic identity of Kazakhs.

Appeal to their origins, understanding the lost unique cultural heritage, cultural memory, not in terms of returning to what was lost in time and space during the period of Russian colonization and Soviet internationalization of the cultures of the peoples of the USSR, but in

terms of rehabilitating their native Kazakh language, overcoming their marginality, an inferiority complex as a representative of a once “backward” culture, in realizing oneself in the stream of time and accepting oneself as a full-fledged and equal Other.

The Kazakh films presented for analysis demonstrate a number of symbolic images that are especially significant for the national and ethnic identity of the Kazakhs and represent the Kazakh traditional culture. In our opinion, these films focus on symbolic images that reproduce such aspects of the national and ethnic identity of the Kazakhs as spacious steppes under the blue sky, in which the idea of our original territory of residence is associated. Demonstration and subjective experience, symbolic associations of an indigenous subject (Kazakh) closely connected with his territory of residence, fixed in the awareness of himself as a native of the expanse of the Kazakh steppe and the blue sky above his head, in our opinion, is one of the significant attributes of the national and ethnic identity of the Kazakhs. Therefore, the foundation of deep meanings, symbols of national culture from the standpoint of constructing cultural and national identity seems to be an important scientific task. Badmaev, 2005; Mirzabekova, 2006).

The relevance of the study of Kazakh culture from the standpoint of representing its basic symbols in the format of Kazakh cinema is certainly closely related to the need to find such a methodology that would allow, to a certain extent, to remove the touch of Eurocentrism. It should be noted that in many works on national culture, Marxist methodology is still used, which to a certain extent has made it possible to explore a number of aspects of Kazakh culture. However, at the same time, the principle of settled centrism is obvious in it, which is generally characteristic of post-Soviet scientific research on traditional culture of the Kazakhs.

Review of Literature

The research on the significance of the horse as a symbol within Kazakh culture draws upon various theoretical frameworks to elucidate its cultural implications. Primarily rooted in the semiotic-symbolic approach, as advocated by Fuko (1977) and expanded upon by Lotman (1975), the study delves into the understanding that symbols transcend their immediate representation and carry deeper cultural meanings. Saussure's structural linguistics posits that symbols are arbitrary and gain significance through their association with cultural values and systems, while Lotman's semiotics focuses on the cultural code embedded within symbols, emphasizing their role in shaping cultural identity.

Furthermore, the research integrates elements of post-colonial theories, particularly Edward Said's "Orientalism," Frantz Fanon's exploration of the effects of colonization on identity, and Homi Bhabha's notions of cultural hybridity (Fliyer, 2019). These theories provide a lens through which the symbolic importance of the horse in Kazakh culture can be understood in the context of historical power dynamics, cultural representation, and the negotiation of identity in a post-colonial framework. By examining the horse as a symbol deeply ingrained in Kazakh cultural identity, the study addresses the impact of historical narratives and colonial influences on the construction of ethnic identity and cultural representation.

The theoretical underpinnings of the study also draw from a broader spectrum of scholarly work on cultural and ethnic identity, encompassing research from both foreign and domestic scholars. This multidisciplinary approach incorporates the contributions of various researchers who have examined nomadic cultures, such as Russian scholars who have explored the intricacies of nomadic lifestyles and cultural symbolism, as well as domestic researchers who have provided insights into the specificities of Kazakh cultural identity and its ties to symbols like the horse.

By synthesizing perspectives from semiotics, post-colonial theories, and diverse scholarly works on cultural and ethnic identity, the research aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the symbol "horse" in Kazakh culture. It strives to bridge the theoretical frameworks of Saussure's semiotics and post-colonial theories to illuminate the complexities of cultural symbolism and the construction of ethnic identity within the context of Kazakh nomadic culture.

Research Methodology

This paper employs a case study method. The chosen case studies are films about Kazakh nomadic culture:

“Kulager” directed by Bolat Mansurov,

“Kyz Zhibek” directed by Sultan Kozhykov,

“Kosh bol, Gulsary” directed by Ardak Amirkulov, and

"Shoq pen Sher" (director Kanymbek Kasymbekov).

To explore the significance of the horse as a symbol in Kazakh culture, this study relies on defining the symbols prevalent in traditional Kazakh culture, notably focusing on the symbol of the "horse" as depicted in Kazakh cinema. The research aims to uncover a facet of cultural and ethnic identity within the framework of Kazakh culture, particularly concerning post-colonial theories. Analyzing monologues, dialogues, and cinematic artistic techniques—such as musical accompaniment, costume design, scenery—in historical films serves as a method to illustrate and examine ideas, images, meanings, and symbols embedded within the cinematic portrayal of the horse and its cultural implications in the context of Kazakh identity.

Findings

Indicators of cultural and ethnic identity of Kazakh culture in the context of Kazakh cinema

Language is undoubtedly an important attribute of the cultural and national, ethnic identity of the Kazakhs. According to Shils (1995) the language played a crucial role in the formation of cultural identity, which is fixed in the symbolic configurations expressed in the language, while consolidating the whole people as speakers of this language, along with a common biological heritage, a common territory of cohabitation and management (Shils, 1995) with shared cultural memory and cultural heritage. As a result, when viewing the analyzed Kazakh films "Goodbye Gulsary", "Kyz-Zhibek", or "Kulager", the literary Kazakh language is presented to the audience (in the format of individual words, phrases, winged expressions, sayings and proverbs). Indeed, the rich world of the linguistic culture of the Kazakh people is reproduced.

Heidegger's definition of "Language is the House of being" is known, which bases the most important feature of the language of any nation – its ontological reality. This demonstrates the national and spiritual component of the culture of the people, representing its cultural capital, cultural memory, and the unique features of the cultural life of the people, its attitude and worldview (Mirzabekova, 2006). The representation of the reality of the existence of the Kazakh language in the analyzed films is especially important for the modern Kazakh society and the state, as well as for the Kazakh people. Since the Soviet period, most of the Kazakhs have undergone Russification, and the native language itself has turned out to be on the margins of Soviet culture. The well-known slogan of Soviet times about the culture of every nation in the USSR "national in form and socialist in content" in fact has led to the loss and marginalization of the native language.

As we believe, during the period of sovereign development of the Kazakh people, and during the period of independence, the film experience of returning to their literary Kazakh language appears on the screens for the first time. In fact, representation of the role of the Kazakh literary language appears on the screens of the analyzed films. Its role not only in the way of seeing and structuring the surrounding reality, but also in the representation of the beauty of the Kazakh steppe, voiced in the Kazakh language in films. In our opinion, the analyzed films demonstrate the Kazakh language "de jure" and "de facto" as a way of communicating in their native, official, state language, as well as a means of unity with their fellow tribesmen on both sides of the cinema screen.

According to the research, this new paradigm of vision of the surrounding reality and a new sense of oneself as a sovereign people, presented on the screens of Kazakh cinema, represents the real existence of the people, their experiences and philosophy of a new found freedom. This is a free form of entry into cultural and intercultural communication, as opposed

to the inferiority complex that has dominated the consciousness of the people for years, when they had to assimilate new cultural values, and new forms of communication verbalized in the language of the Soviet metropolis. Therefore, the construction of cultural and ethnic identity in Kazakh cinema through the representation of the richness of the literary Kazakh language and the screening of literary works of Kazakh writers, through the display of a rich language of verbal, nonverbal and paraverbal communication, saturated with deep meanings, meanings and symbols demonstrate the cultural values and spiritual capital of the Kazakh people.

The symbolic space in Kazakh cinema consists of symbols signifying the life and deeds of historical heroes, features of everyday culture and ethnic and mental features of the life of the people. The value system of nomadic society includes such symbols as the sun, steppe, ornament, soaring eagle, horses, yurt and other components of nomadic culture. It is known that each symbol means a sense of freedom, independence, and admiration of the Kazakhs for the beautiful, conveying the cultural unity of the ethnic group.

All the symbols of the nomadic culture of the Kazakhs play an important role in his life and are a way of preserving and broadcasting ethno-cultural information, in the formation of the cultural identity of the ethnos. Depending on the cultural tradition, signs can have different forms, i.e. they can be embodied in various types of material and spiritual culture. In Kazakh culture, an ornament is an aesthetic representation of a system of symbols that encodes the paradigm of the entire ethnic group. In the national decorative and applied art, the ornament represents a set of ideological and value attitudes of people, reflecting their beliefs, customs and spirituality in general.

The symbols of nomadic culture mean a sense of freedom, independence, and admiration of the beautiful. Thus, the history of the Kazakh ornament has a deep history and meaning. The ornament is the brightest element of the nomadic cultural tradition, represented in various signs and symbols that convey cultural symbols and value orientations. The world of ornament is one of the ways to preserve the ethnic identity of a nomad, his self-identification and a sense of belonging to an ancient cultural tradition. The ornamental style features signs such as triangles, spirals and ram's horns (koshkar muiz), which reveal the ideas of the ethnos about the Universe, about man and his place in the system of society. If the cosmos is represented in the form of a graphic expression in a «ush-burysh» (triangle), as clear sky, water. The shape of the «dongelek» (Circle) is the sun, the personification of eternal life. Namely, the circle is especially revered among the eastern nomads, which personifies the symbol of life, and eternity. The structure of the world is represented as a «tort kulak» (crosspiece), meaning the four cardinal directions (Kozhabaev, 2015).

In the Saka culture, the steppe eagle often appeared in the image of a totemic ancestor of a particular genus or tribe (Agapov, 1979). This archetypal symbol has now been translated into Kazakh culture. The eagle as a symbol has a special cult significance and has a wide representation both in the works of fine and cinematic art. It is impossible to imagine a portrait of a Kazakh without an eagle. After all, the eagle is a symbol of freedom, which is the basis of the outlook of the steppe Kazakh.

The Kazakh traditional yurt occupies a strong place in the life of the nomads. This reflects the level of spiritual and material development of the Turkic tribes. Indeed, it is a symbol of the steppe people. A yurt is a light portable dwelling, which in the Turkic language is called "kiiz uy", kiiz – felt, uy – house, that is, a felt house (Yurt). The nomadic people, devoutly honoring the traditions of their ancestors, have attached importance to the structural elements of the yurt. Shanyrak is not just an object, but a sacred symbol of the hearth for the Kazakh, honor and well-being, continuation of the family and traditions of the generation. If a wooden wheel (shanyrak) is represented as a rim and has four different parts that symbolize the connection of Earth and Sky. Day and night Shanyrak is open in yurts, and the nomad could watch the stars and see the sky, demonstrating the invisible contact of man with the sky, the cosmos (Fatikov, 1980. 175-185). Consequently, the yurt in the mind of a nomad is associated not only with a family heirloom, but also with time.

Kamschy (whip) is a means of controlling a horse, made more often from rawhide and soaked in the horse's sweat. It was believed that such a whip is endowed with a magical property and with the help if it is possible to cleanse the home from evil spirits.

Each society of people has its own idea of the unity of the historical past. Human culture can be represented as a multilingual space of symbols and signs. In cultural symbols, a person means his knowledge and experience about the world. The origins of any symbols have historical roots. As follows from the analysis of the works of cultural scientists, four types of cattle occupied a significant place in Kazakh society to indicate a high social status: horses, camels, sheep and cows. They are symbols of the four cardinal directions, four elements, four types of human characters and four directions – top-bottom-right-left. In addition to these general characteristics, each type of animal has its own symbolism, different from the others. Among them, a horse was considered a special place and the most sacred among the Kazakhs.

Lichman noted that

"... they worshipped the forces of nature, which they imagined in the image of gods, the gods were embodied in fantastic beasts, birds, animals, such as winged horses, griffin horses. The horse in mythology... was associated with the sun and fire. In constant motion, the natural state of the Turks, a horse reaching the stars is a symbol of conquering space, mastering the world"

Lichman, 2022:21

Kazakhs often express their spiritual culture and life philosophy through epics, myths, songs, kui, poems, as well as in relation to the surrounding world, in which the image of a "horse" appears. An example of this is the heroic epics and proverbs of the Kazakhs. Kazakh sayings like: "He is not a horseman who has not sat on a horse at least once", "The lion is the king of animals, the horse is the king of domestic animals", "The batyr's wings are his horse". In all Batyr legends and epics, myths, the image of a "horse" acts as a "smart animal", a "wise animal". The great batyr Alpamys had a faithful companion horse Baichubar, Er-Targyn Tarlan, Koblanda batyr Tayburyl, Isatai Aktaban. Poet Kultai, who is a teacher of Alpamys, wrote that these horses were outwardly different from other horses, they were like lions, the power in them boiled and "the thunder of hooves would frighten the whole army" (Tokhtabai, 2004).

Kazakhs show their love for Nature, and animals, especially horses in their attitude to children. Expressing their emotions and warm feelings for them, and pampering children. Very often they turn to their child with great love with the words – "Menin kulynim", "Kulyنشagym" ("My foal"). Sometimes the horse itself was called by human names, giving warm human nicknames: "karakatym" is the pupil of my eyes, "shiragym" is a clear light. We can see a similar appeal to the horse in the film "Goodbye, Gulsary!" when the assistant of the herdsman Bibizhan (one of the heroines of the film) turns to Gulsary (the name of the horse) or when Tanabai's wife (the main character of the film) spoils her young children with the affectionate word "Kulyنشagym", which means my foal. The same expressions are found in relation to another animal like a camel, when Kazakhs affectionately call their young children "Bota", "Botashym", emphasizing the beauty of the maiden's eyes. Indeed, Kazakhs compare them with the eyes of a camel, calling them "Bota-Koz".

It should also be noted about the tribal identity in the culture of the Kazakhs, which is represented by the form of genealogical signs. In the language of symbolism, we can call pedigree signs as index signs. Kazakhs believe that a real horseman should know his pedigree up to the seventh generation, which is the information basis of tribal identity, contributing to the prevention of incest. Usually tribal signs or index signs are carved on stones. Kazakhs often present tamga in the form of geometric shapes or from elements of the horse's decoration.

Mylnikov notes that

"the fund of national symbols will consist of those manifestations that mark typical for... ethnic psychology and ethno-cultural traditions that distinguish this ethnos from other ethnic communities"

Mylnikov, 1991:5

When a Kazakh tries to answer the question: "Who is a horse for a Kazakh", then every second recommends listening to the famous kui(tune) Kurmangazy "Adai". It is this kui that conveys the character, beauty and significance of the horse in the consciousness of the Kazakh people in the tempo rhythm. It tells the story of a Kazakh horse galloping across the steppe. Kui fully conveys the beauty of the stallion and the moral character that leads him to the peaks and stars. Kazakhs, the symbol of the horse represented in the kuy (tune), identify with a part of themselves.

All of the listed key symbols of nomadic culture are the main symbols that are widely used in Kazakh cinema to construct the cultural and ethnic identity of the Kazakh people. It is these symbols that are important indicators in demonstrating the cultural and ethnic identity of the people on the screen. Cinema is a huge field for the representation of cultural values. As Dobronitskaya notes:

"Cinema as a means of constructing ethnic identity": "Art, and cinema in particular, not only reflect the world, but also construct it anew, through feelings, influence the entire spiritual world of the individual and ensure its integrity"

Dobronitskaya, 2016:15.

"The horse as a spiritual and moral state of the soul" ("Kyz Zhibek", "Shock and Sher")

In the mythology of various people of Eurasia, the horse's connection with the gods is noted. Thus, the symbol "horse" in European culture was of great importance, but basically this symbol was a sign of "nobility", "aristocracy", denoted "status" (Edwards, 2011). Since the totemic deity was a structure-forming element of the nomads' world model, the horse played an important role in their worldview. No wonder the nomads are called the "dynasty of horsemen". It is impossible to imagine a nomad without steppe steeds; a horse is primarily the wings of a nomad.

In our eyes, in the culture of the Kazakh people, the color symbolism plays a minor role. Zhylyky (horse) has a great knowledge in all spheres of life of the Kazakhs. According to the classification of the studied Kazakhs, there were no visible areas of the Zhylyky (horse): bay (white, gray, oblique, blue oblique, spotted, dull, yellow, sorrel, sorrel-laurel, liver-chestnut, chestnut, bright red, red, yellow-red), black (including black, black-blue, black-gray, brown and other shades of brown) and piebald (including white, yellow, gray or blue, etc.) (Tokhtabay, 2004: 178). Interesting facts confirming this idea is also found among other Turkic-speaking people. Turkmens, speaking about drunks, emphasize that they have the best horses - bay (Potapov, 1991). All colors had their own meaning, so changing and mixing them was strictly forbidden. In the film "Kyz Zhibek" the color of the horse Kyz Zhibek, her father Syrlybay, immediately catches the eye.

Photo 4: Kyz Zhibek stands at the rock with Akbozat. Photo from the film "Kyz Zhibek", directed by Sultan-Akhmet Khodzhikov. 1970

Only representatives of a noble family, and the aristocrats, could afford the white color or the bay color of the horse in the steppe, since the white color emphasized the status of the rider.

In the color scheme of the traditional artistic culture of the Kazakhs, white is the most common color. Already in ancient times, it has been singled out as one of the primary colors, along with red and black. It was a well-known triad, widespread in folk art. The concepts of truth, purifying faith, sincerity, and the still existing wish for a bright road, career growth, and prosperity have been associated with white. In the past, the khan elected on the council was raised on a white felt mat, white horses and white rams were sacrificed to the gods. According to the beliefs of different times, a person who has committed a sin is cleansed of all the sins only when he enters the milk of a white mare.

For a Kazakh, a horse is always a symbol of reverence and nobility. In the two films analyzed, the rider is introduced from a lower angle, where the middle shot is shown at the beginning of the hoof. Then the camera quickly moves up to the horse's legs, and only then we see who the rider of such a stallion is. Scenes like this in the films underline the fact that in

Kazakh culture, a rider was judged by his stallion. The stallion is a kind of reflection of the status of his master. A good horse and its worthy decoration are a kind of markers not only of property differentiation, but also of the moral status and authority of the individual. The decoration has a high semiotic status, which is obviously characteristic of the entire nomadic world” (Tokhtabay, 2004). The image of a horse is represented as a symbol associated with status items and with the personality of the leader.

According to Tokhtabay, (2004), a horse is the best gift in any life situation. This aspect is represented in the frame of the film "Kyz-Zhibek". Thus, based on these established traditions, Syrlybay, as a token of gratitude for the victory, suggests to Bekezhan to choose the best horse ... therefore, the image of the horse is represented here as the best gift for a feat, and for a victory over an enemy etc.

This aspect is also presented in the film “Kyz Zhibek”, when the heroine of the film, escorting Tulegen (her lover) to her village for military help, gives her horse Akbozat and says “My dreams and desires are known only to you, you and Akbozat. My faithful companion. I trust you with the fate of my batyr. Rush like an arrow and bring him to the desired.

Photo 5: Kyz Zhibek passes Akbozat to his beloved Tulegen. Photo from the film "Kyz Zhibek", directed by Sultan-Akhmet Khodzhikov. 1970

Zhibek entrusted her loved one only to her faithful horse. The final frame of the film, when Akbozat returns without Tulegen, heartbroken Kyz Zhibek runs across the steppe towards Akbozat and asks: “Akbozat, where is your master?”. Seeing sadness in the eyes of Akbozat, Kyz Zhibek realizes that she has lost her life partner forever. The image of a horse in Kazakh culture appears as a symbol of pure and sincere love.

Here, it is necessary to pay attention to the name of the horse Kyz-Zhibek - Akbozat. “The Kazakhs called the Polar Star with an iron stake (Temir Kazyk). This name is

"probably given on account of the apparent real estate, therefore two stars close to it and having a movement near it, which is similar to the course of horses tied to a stake, are called "two white horses". These horses - Akbozat and Kokbozat - are constantly pursued by seven wolves (the Big Dipper).

Valikhanov. 1985:57

Akbozat, based on this saying, is a symbol of stability on Earth, that is, stability in love, and in relationships.

According to Lotman (year), the symbol shows more than one slice of culture, as it comes from the past and is represented in the future. This affirms the idea of the significance of symbols as the most stable elements of the cultural continuum. Thus, based on the information presented, it is possible to determine the chronotope of time covered in the film (this is the pre-Soviet period).

According to Baudrillard (1983), for a Kazakh, a horse is both a friend and a guide, to which he expressed a high degree of respect and gratitude, elevating his image “as a gift from the supreme god Tengri” . The horse, as Kazakh nomads believe, is given to a person from above, is for nomads a symbol of the higher world, the world of wisdom, and the world of ancestors (Adzhi, 2014). This means that a horse for a nomad is a divine being, endowed with a special gift, holy power and nobility. The horse in the worldview of the Kazakhs is one of the wonderful creations of the Almighty. It acts as an indispensable, intelligent, faithful companion, friend and totem representative for nomads (Tokhtabay, 2010). This characteristic of the horse expresses the attitude of the nomad to the horse: the horse and its attributes are considered the totem of the ancestors - sacred, therefore the symbol of the horse is the emblem of the Kazakh people. In the culture of the Kazakh people, the cult of the horse / horses is clearly seen in beliefs, customs, and traditions. Thus, we see that the symbol "horse" is a fundamental archetypal symbol of the culture of the Great Steppe.

In this research paper, horse has always been a symbol of wisdom for the Kazakh. Therefore, the victory of Kulager, as shown in the film, at the races is a symbolic guarantor of the independence of the people who placed their hopes on him. The director embodies the idea of the film itself in this thought, while demonstrating the harmony and spiritual connection

between Akan Sery and Kulager. In the part of the film "Race", Akan Sera, letting go of his horse, kisses him and trusts him with his hopes and dreams: "Darling, my friend. You have always been devoted to me. The people need us, the people need your victory. May your patron Zengi-baba and my faith in you help you. My friend in happiness and trouble.

Photo 1: Akan Sery releases Kulager to participate in the races. Photo from the film "Kulager", directed by B. Mansurov. 1977

This episode is given as an example in order to show how Kazakhs believe in the totem powers of the patron saint of horses Zengi-baba, demonstrating their horses as the most valuable for deciding the fate of the people. The horse as a symbol carries a deep meaning, and acquires a real artistic meaning. In the mental culture of the Kazakh people, the idea that the horse is a sacred animal has been preserved. Therefore, only the image of the "horse" reveals the true nature and being of the Kazakh, because the rider is inspired and admired only when he is on a horse. From this point of view, Kulager was perceived as a friend, colleague, and pride for Akan Sera.

According to Amrikulov (2008), the horse in the culture of the Kazakh people personifies intelligence, nobility, and wisdom. According to Kazakh beliefs, a horse is a talisman of a person; An argymak is endowed with such qualities as: happiness, wealth, and good luck. Horses in the understanding of the Kazakhs with the time of the Saks have the fearlessness of a lion and the foresight of a falcon, physical strength, and speed. Moreover, in the nomadic life of the Kazakhs, the horse is considered the first companion, a close friend. Thus, for a Kazakh, a horse is a symbol of true friendship, wisdom. Citing episodes from two films "Kulager" and "Farewell, Gulsary!" we can pay attention that in two films, the wisdom and understanding of the world of the Kazakh universe is shown through the symbol of the horse. The horse is not just an animal, he is in the mind of the Kazakh "second self". The horse is identified with the person himself; the horse is an indicator of the state of mind of a person.

These images and features of the "horse" are presented in the work of director A. Amrikulov in the film "Farewell, Gulsary!" (2008). The image of the horse appears in this film as an indicator not only of the state of mind of the protagonist of the film Tanabai, but also as a symbol of friendship, devotion, love, and a deep connection between Tanabai and Bibizhan (Tanabai's beloved). It is known that a symbol is a sign. It gives a reference to real communicative events that occur in an artificial space (Ward, 1967). It is argued that the communicative dimension in the film is the symbols that signifies the state of mind, denoting the depicted. Thus, Bibizhan's close communicative contact with Gulsary means the state of mind of the heroine, and Gulsary (horse) becomes a symbol.

Photo 2: Gulsary ran away to Tanabay with bloody legs. Photo from the movie "Farewell, Gulsary", directed by Ardak Amirkulov, 2008.

Cillia, Reigl & Wodak, (1999) in writing "The Discursive Construction of National Identities" draw attention to the fact that "through discourse, social actors form knowledge, situations, social roles, as well as personality and interpersonal relationships between various interacting social groups" (page number). Therefore, we take into account that in our case, discourse has the ability to build interpersonal relationships and identities between different social groups. First, in the understanding of the discourse researcher Kazakova, discourse has a generalized meaning:

“... be it a film text, it is information presented to the viewer through the interpretation of the idea of the director and scriptwriter”

Kazakova, 2014: 213.

A similar idea, from an extralinguistic point of view, has been expressed by Zaretskaya. She says,

“the perception of cinema art includes conditions that carry the main semantic load, and also enter the extra-linguistic context, time and place, including

the film, various non-verbal means - gestures, elements of facial expressions”

Zaretskaya, 2010:22

Secondly, film discourse is a component of film text, since the research work includes examples of films. Thus, film discourse is a very important element of the film. However, film discourse is realized in an artificial space that describes the time and period covered by the film, specially composed by the director with the help of the artist.

Film discourse is presented as one large system, but what are its components? As Lotman (1973) says, the frame in the cinema is one of the carriers of the meaning of the film language. The image of a horse is presented as semes - commonly known as "images" or even "iconic signs" (Lotman, 1973). From a semiotic point of view, culture is a huge information system of signs in which feature film scripts are created with the help of special codes. This implies the idea that all the elements of the film perform a discursive function.

Horse as a symbol of cultural and ethnic identity of the Kazakh people

Kazakh culture is very rich, comprehensive, deep and multifaceted. It is argued that, the components of this culture are language, history, traditions, and customs, representing the cultural heritage of the people. These elements of traditional culture act as indicators of cultural and ethnic identity. Thus, in the movie "Farewell Gulsary" a number of customs among the Kazakhs, closely associated with the horse, are shown. The Kazakhs, wishing well-being and happiness to the family, say this:

“Let ten thousand of your mares bring foals.” According to the traditional custom, horses were launched around the yurt during childbirth, and if they ran actively around the yurt, this meant that the birth would be easy, and all the demons would be expelled

Toktabay, 2010: 134

Another custom is associated with the birth of a child. At the birth of a boy, the umbilical cord was wrapped in cloth and tied with a bag to the stallion's neck. This was done so that the baby in the future would be a brave and courageous warrior like a horse.

As the analysis of the films shows, the traditional Kazakh life is closely connected with the horse, which plays an important role in its economic and combat life. This is especially evident in the love and care for animals, in particular, for horses. This love is perfectly represented in the famous epic of the Kazakh people "Tayburyl", which tells the image of a devoted and famous horse named Tayburyl - one of the aspects of the traditional life of the Kazakhs. Every Kazakh dream will have the same devoted and fast-footed horse Tayburyl.

Indeed, the Kazakhs pin their hopes on this horse. Therefore, at the time of the birth of a foal, the whole family usually gathers and everyone gives their moral support to the mare. According to this custom, at the time of the birth of a foal, the Kazakhs actively surround the mare with attention and courtship. This moment is well represented in the episode of the film "Shock and Sher", where the boys approach the white mare and Galimzhan (one of the characters in the film) and strokes the belly of the mare, showing that. Thereby, like all people who surrounded the mare with care and attention, they expect the birth of a foal and mentally imagine how the foal will look like the legendary Tayburyl. Thus, thanks to the film discourse, a picture with a foal appears in the mind of the viewer, informing in advance what qualities the foal will have in the future.

Photo 6: Galimzhan mentally imagined how he was holding an unborn foal by the bridle, which would be like Taiburyl. Photo from the film "Shock and Cher", directed by Kanymbek Kasymbekov. 1972

In the films "Kulager", "Kyz-Zhibek" the images of a horse are represented not only on the example of everyday rituals of Kazakh culture, but also on the example of such elements of Kazakh culture as national customs and traditions, closely related to the rites of age transitions, such as weddings and funerals. All the main plot lines of the films are connected with the representation of Kazakh rituals associated with the images of steppe horses. Each ritual in

Kazakh culture, the birth of a child, the celebration of the New Year (Nauryz), the celebration of adolescence (or mushel), matchmaking, weddings, funerals and others are always accompanied by the organization of horse races “Baiga” (competition), and “Kyz-kuu” (“catch up with the girl”). They are broadcast using symbolic and iconic elements depicting the place and significance of the image of the horse in the culture of the Kazakh people.

Thus, in the analyzed films, a number of main episodes are arranged in such a way as to show what role the horse plays in Kazakh culture. Thus, the films show that in the wedding and funeral rites, the horse plays both a utilitarian and a status role. If in the funeral rite the horse accompanies its owner on the last journey, transports from this world to another, in the wedding ceremony the horse acts as a symbol of the transition of the girl to the status of married, and the horse also acts as a sign and indicator of the prestige and wealth of its owner.

These amply demonstrate that horse is a key element in the worldview, in culture, and in the traditions of the Kazakhs. Khasanov and Karaguzova note that:

“the horse is a symbol of intellect, a symbol of the higher world, therefore it is a faithful animal that is next to a person on his journey. It is no coincidence that a white mare was sacrificed when celebrating a victory ... During the annual meal, the Kazakhs always killed horses, which was a sign that the deceased had already had success with his ancestors by that time”

Karakuzova & Khasanov, 1993: 31.

For example, one can cite an episode from the film “Kyz Zhibek”. The film begins with the horse walking on the ground covered in blood. Then we hear the cries of swans floating away from their shores, and an upside down shanyrak lies on the ground. Then the camera takes a lower angle at the beginning of the horse's hooves, then legs and, slowly rising up, introduces us to Zhibek, the daughter of Syrlybay. Cheerful music plays behind the scenes. Then we hear news of the victory from the messenger. Bekezhan rushes at the head of his army on a horse. Khan Syrlybai gives the order to slaughter a white mare in honor of the victory of Bekezhan, the first batyr in the district from the Shekty clan.

The Kazakh people identify with the horse various types of human behavior such as the emotional state of a person, and external signs that characterize the horse. This is well shown in the film due to the main type of code-language. Thus, in the film, deeply experiencing the tragic death of his beloved horse Kulager (in the film Kulager), Akan Sera (the hero of the film) voluntarily retires to the mountains. The inner pain of the hero is reflected in the frame, symbolizing the deep loss of the closest and the dearest, faithful and the beloved friend: Kulager's blood flows along with water in the ditch, and the horseshoe rushes swiftly and rolls down to the stone. A close-up view shows that the horseshoe is stained with blood, and Akan Sera's eyes are full of tears.

It is argued here that one can single out a complex multi-stage code or a set of different codes of audiovisual messages, as they are created using various expressive means of multi-channel perceptions: voluntary hermitage, an “old man” hunched with his head bowed, who sits by a withered tree on which a saddle hangs and all the equipment of Kulager, high mountains, mountain river, etc. Akan Sera turns into a living “dead man”. This state of Akan Sera illustrates how important Kulager is to him. Behind the scenes, a voice sounds, conveying the whole picture of the tragedy of Kulager: in the frame, they show how Kulager dies before reaching the finish line, at the hands of the mercenary gunner Batyrash. At the sound of a shot, the playing musical melody is abruptly interrupted, and, suddenly, silence reigns in the frame.

Using the rapid method of filming, the director shows that life seems to have stopped. At that moment, the sound of Kulager's horseshoe rolling into the water of the river appears. Eclipses are shown in the frame; thus, the sound and video sequence inform the viewer about the stoppage of time, life. This sign symbolizes the death of Kulager. Thus, the poetic lines behind the scenes convey a sign that refers to the reality of communicative events that arises in an artificial space. In the next episode, we see Akan Sera drooping from grief. This action emphasizes the belief about preserving the belongings of his horse, in order to reunite with his soul.

This topic is especially acute in the films *Farewell to Gulsary*. There is a similar episode in the film "Farewell, Gulsary!" In the final part of the film, a dramatic scene of farewell to Gulsary is shown and in close-up, we see the tired and sad eyes of the animal. They have neither hope nor faith. The sudden death of Gulsara deeply affects Tanabai, who cannot accept and come to terms with the death of his only and true friend, interlocutor. Leaning over the body of Gulsara, Tanabai desperately closes his horse's eyes and, having covered him with his cloak, stands at his head for a long time. Then, in the twilight, Tanabai walks alone along the desert steppe. On his shoulder, he carries the bridle and saddle of Gulsary, and in his eyes the pain of loss, with tears in his eyes, Tanabai utters the phrase "Farewell, Gulsary! My true friend and comrade. Goodbye!". As in the film "Kulager", this film emphasizes not only the spiritual connection between the horse and its owner, but also the importance of the horse in the life of a nomad.

This film in an allegorical form shows how, as the transformation and modernization of traditional Kazakh culture, the marginalization of its language, way of life during the period of collectivization and industrialization of Kazakh society during the Soviet period. The image of the nomad himself begins to gradually transform and change, which is increasingly approaching the model sedentary culture, and the image of the collective farmer of the Soviet era. They are more humble, more manageable, and more alienated from his former traditional culture. The film "Kulager" shows the image of the 'other', which has undergone correction and is as close as possible to the model of a pacified, disappointed, lost himself; having lost his original identity. It is the image of another now Kazakh who appears with a deformed consciousness of his former history and culture, who replaces it with a Soviet identity. The latter is presented as true, which gives the people the opportunity to be in a more civilized world, attached to a new socio-cultural reality, at the cost of losing themselves, their historical and cultural heritage.

This paper argues that the image of the horse symbolically presents us with the tragedy of the Kazakh people, the loss of hope for a better future and disappointment in gaining freedom, independence, and the entire depth of the existential experience of the Kazakh people. Thus, Akan Sery is a personality of the historical period. Indeed, Akan Sery is the translator of the hopes of the people, who entrusts the aspirations of the people, and their hopes for a better future: "If Kulager comes first at the races, then the people will receive complete freedom."

Consequently, the symbol of freedom in the film is the image of the Kulager horse, on which the great hope of the people is placed. Akan Sery and Kulager (a symbol of the people and their culture, an indicator of the cultural and ethnic identity of the Kazakhs) are victims of time and the political environment of the historical past, victims of the Tsarist colonization, the violent policy of Russification. The image of Batyrash is the antipode; he is the heir to the great Sagynay, a personified image of the colonial power of the Russian Empire.

Tanabai is a personality of the Soviet period, the period of collectivization, and the period of totalitarian establishment of law and social order. His horse Gulsary is a symbol of the disappearing cultural and ethnic identity, accompanied by the physical and spiritual destruction of the Kazakhs, which has led to the socio-cultural alienation of the people from themselves, from their culture and way of life, and the loss of cultural and historical memory.

Studying the semiotics of the film language, Lotman uses the method of deduction. Gathering the details, he generally constructs a certain picture, but at the same time, he considers all the components of the film language from the smallest feature to the film actor. The director, using this technique, shows how important every detail is in the language of cinema. After all, the detail gives rise to the ups and downs, which serves as the basis for the action (attraction) of the whole film, and not just one episode. Thus, for example, the analyzed films show a whole series of symbols that represent restrictions on the freedom of choice of the people. This is a symbol of fetters, symbols of the death of a horse during a race and this is a complex color scheme that conveys various moments of the internal spiritual struggle against injustice, violence, and a lack of choice of a life path. It is complemented by musical accompaniment that conveys existential, deep feelings about the unfulfillment of hopes, and the disappointment in the historical path, aimed at the future.

Through the images of Akan Sera and Tanabai, Kyz Zhibek, it becomes possible to identify those elements that make it possible to construct an ethnic identity inherent in a certain historical time and the existence of a people. Akan Sery, Tanabay and Kyz Zhibek are personalities of a certain historical time. They are victims of the historical time and the political environment of a certain period. The assassination attempt on the saigulik Akan and the Argymak Tanabay, the Aigyr Shok, illustrates the political situation and the appearance of the time of that period. The emerging images form in our minds an idea of the power and ethnic culture of that period.

The image of a horse in the films "Farewell Gulsary", "Shock and Sher" is a symbol, a kind of appeal to their culture, and language for every Kazakh in the period of Soviet power. Symbolically in the film, through the image of a horse, the suffering of the Kazakh people, who survived all the difficulties of socio-cultural transformation in the Soviet era, is shown. This is the hopeless situation of the people to live in a restrictive policy on the use of their native language in cultural and public life.

The same film, like others, turns our memory back to our origins, to the values that our modern generation of young people and adults who are lost at the beginning under the influence of the colonial administration of the Russian Tsarist Empire. It introduced a negative attitude towards the so-called "barbaric, uncivilized way of life", and tried to spiritually level the Kazakh worldview, and convert them to the Islamic faith with the help of Tatar mullahs. Unfortunately, this has led to the loss of many values of the steppe culture of the Kazakhs.

During the period of Soviet power, the policy of violent transformation of the Kazakh cultural identity, which has led to the loss of the basic elements of the ethnic identity of the Kazakh people, was carried out by the Soviet nomenclature. It rejected the features of traditional Kazakh culture, the semi-nomadic way of life, and methods of managing integrated into natural reality. With a reverent attitude towards all living things under view of "Soviet modernization", it has become a cultural tragedy for the Kazakh people.

As a result, over the years, the change of various ideological, ethical and aesthetic guidelines, the alienation of the people from themselves, from their cultural foundations, cultural memory, cultural heritage, and history has led to the loss of continuity between the generations. The devaluation of human life, the ecological cultural connection of the people with Nature, and the practice of renaming the territory of residence, has forced cultural assimilation under the slogan of Soviet culture. As a result, the Kazakhs themselves have begun to treat their traditional culture as backward, and archaic. After several generations, a new generation has grown up and come to life, which has a negative attitude towards the fauna and flora of its homeland, is cynical and cruel towards the animal world, and its historical, cultural and natural heritage.

Conclusions

This paper demonstrates that one can construct an ethnic identity in the format of cinema, and cinema has more opportunities for the formation of ethnic identity through a symbol than other types of art. Thus, cinema plays a greater role in revealing the meaning of symbols than in other types of art.

Strengths of the research on the symbolism of the horse in Kazakh culture:

Cultural Insight and Interpretation: The research delves into the symbolism of the horse within Kazakh culture, offering a deeper understanding of its significance beyond a mere visual representation. It connects symbols to cultural values, beliefs, and identity, shedding light on the cultural perspective of the Kazakh people.

Analysis through Art and Media: The use of Kazakh films as a basis for analysis provides a contextual understanding of how the symbol of the horse is portrayed and embedded within the cultural narratives. This approach allows for a more nuanced examination of the symbol's importance in various forms of artistic expression.

Emphasis on Symbolic Meaning: The distinction between a mere sign and a symbol is highlighted, emphasizing that the symbol of the horse carries substantial meaning beyond its

physical representation. The symbolic significance of the horse as the "second self" for Kazakhs is an intriguing cultural interpretation.

Cultural Identity and Significance: The research underscores the importance of the horse symbol in constructing and maintaining Kazakh ethnic identity. By associating the horse with wisdom, the higher world, and ancestral connections, it illustrates the depth of cultural significance attached to this symbol.

Weaknesses of the research:

Limited Research Methodology: While analyzing Kazakh films provides a cultural context, relying solely on this medium might limit the breadth and depth of the research. Incorporating other sources such as literature, historical texts, or interviews could offer a more comprehensive understanding.

Subjectivity in Interpretation: The interpretation of symbols can be subjective and may vary among individuals or subgroups within a culture. The research might benefit from acknowledging diverse perspectives or conducting broader surveys to capture a wider range of opinions and experiences related to the symbol of the horse.

Generalization: While the research identifies the horse as a significant symbol, it's essential to avoid generalizing the entire Kazakh population's perspectives or experiences regarding this symbol. Variations in interpretations and significance might exist among different regions, generations, or social groups within the Kazakh community.

Lack of Comparative Analysis: The research could benefit from comparative analysis with symbols in other cultures, providing a broader context and highlighting potential similarities or differences in the symbolic significance of animals or objects across diverse societies.

Finally, while the research offers valuable insights into the symbolic importance of the horse in Kazakh culture, it could strengthen its methodology, acknowledge subjectivity, avoid overgeneralization, and incorporate comparative perspectives for a more comprehensive analysis.

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