

THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF TURKIC PEOPLES IN KAZAKH CINEMA: INTERSECTING WORLDS

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1. Introduction

In the modern world, the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples is becoming increasingly important as an object of scientific study. This is due not only to its significance for self-identification, but also to its influence on the formation of public perceptions of the past, present, and future of these peoples. Cinema, in turn, is a strong cultural agent capable of creating and transmitting images associated with certain national traditions, values and historical events. Thus, the question of the relationship between cinema and the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples becomes relevant to understanding how cultural identities are formed, transmitted, and changed in the modern information society. However, despite considerable amount of research in the field of cinema and cultural heritage, this topic cannot be considered fully explored. The problem is that existing studies rarely focus on specific aspects of Kazakh cinema in the context of Turkic culture. Most studies are limited to general trends or the study of the cinematic heritage of broader groups of peoples, which does not allow for a full understanding of the unique features of the interaction between cinema and cultural heritage, and their specific history and culture.

Firstly, attention should be paid to the study of the archetype problem in the context of interaction between Kazakh cinema and the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples. Archetypes play a key role in the formation of cultural images and symbols, as well as in the transmission of collective perceptions and values through cinematographic works [1-2]. The study of this problem allows us not only to understand the mechanisms of the impact of cinema on the formation of perceptions of the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples, but also to reveal the deep aspects of historical and cultural archetypes that influence the perception and interpretation of cultural images. Some authors have already studied this problem. R. Olson [3] raises the issue of the significance of archetypal images from the perspective of psychology, based on the approaches of C. G. Jung and D. Hillman, who were among the first to study the archetype problem. The author's results confirm that archetypal images not only convey certain meanings and ideas but also have a profound impact on the emotional and cultural perception of readers or viewers. The study by K. Czapkowski and A. Pankalla [4] also, is built on the work of C. G. Jung and D. Hillman by comparing their approaches. The authors examine how archetypal images are reflected in cultural norms and values. They emphasize the importance of archetypes not only for understanding human experience, but also for analysing cultural aspects, including their influence on the formation and interpretation of art, literature, and cinema.

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H. Doğan's [5] work on philosophical aspects of Martin Heidegger's writings focuses on his understanding of the meaning of being. According to the author's results, Heidegger's concepts of time, space, and being are important for interpreting and analysing cinematic images, especially when it comes to films reflecting the history, traditions, and world-view of Turkic cultures. Although the analysed works highlight the significance of archetypes for understanding human experience, personal development, and cultural aspects, there is still a lack of research on how these archetypes influence the preservation and transmission of cultural values through cinematic works, as well as the formation of ideas about the traditions, history, and world-views of these cultures. Another important aspect that requires more in-depth research is the role of cinema in preserving and transmitting the traditional values, myths, customs, and historical stories of Turkic peoples through cinematographic works. Using various artistic techniques, film directors and screenwriters can effectively convey traditional values and historical stories, making them accessible and understandable to a wide audience [6-7]. Exploring this aspect, N. Rana [8] came to a conclusion that confirms the effectiveness of digital technologies in preserving cultural heritage and transferring knowledge, including through cinema. F. J. Kiwa et al. [9] also investigate in their work the transmission of traditional culture through digital technologies. The authors analyse the use of digital platforms and resources to transmit knowledge of traditional culture, including music, dance, crafts, and customs. They conclude that digital technologies can successfully support and disseminate traditional culture in the modern world.

In addition, it is important to pay attention to the study of intercultural communication through the prism of the cinema of Turkic peoples in the context of globalization and cultural diversity. Cinema can be a powerful tool for the exchange of cultural experiences and ideas between different cultures [10-11]. Through the cinematographic works of Turkic peoples, other cultures can learn about their history, traditions, customs, art, and literature. R. Darvin and T. Sun [12] address intercultural communication and identity in their work, including through cinema, exploring the impact of cultural differences on understanding and communication. One of the works by B. R. Nogerbek [13] analyses folklore elements present in Kazakh feature films. The author explores in detail the various folklore motifs and traditions that permeate the cinematic works of this country. He identifies how these folklore elements are used to shape storylines in Kazakh cinema. In addition, attention should be paid to the study by B. R. Nogerbek and B. B. Nogerbek [14], in which the authors continue the study of folklore traditions in the context of Kazakh feature film, but with an emphasis on the analysis of the hero's image. The authors explore in more detail which folklore motifs and traditions influence the formation of hero images in Kazakh cinema, and how these motifs influence the structure of the plots and characterization of the characters. However, despite the successful results of other authors, how cinema influences the preservation and change of traditional values and customs in modern society, what aspects of culture are emphasized in cinema and how this affects their perception and transmission through generations, remains insufficiently researched. It is also important to examine what historical subjects and events attract the attention of filmmakers and how they interpret them from a cultural heritage perspective.

The study by B. R. Nogerbek [15] provides an extensive overview of the Kazakh film studio Kazakhfilm through the prism of various genres and themes, as well as the views and opinions of various authors. In this collection, the author analyses not only the creative aspects of the studio, but also its influence on the formation of the image of Kazakh cinema as an important and recognizable cultural phenomenon both inside and outside the country. It is also worth noting the work of B. B. Nogerbek and A. M. Aidarova [16], which is an interesting contribution to the study of contemporary Kazakh

cinema. The work covers topics related to intercultural relations and interactions between representatives of different cultures in the modern society of Kazakhstan. The paper is a study that expands the understanding of how different cultural foundations and traditions influence the creation of cinematic images, and how these images reflect the complexities and peculiarities of intercultural interaction in the modern world. Despite the valuable results of the research conducted, possible negative aspects in the perception of Turkic cinematic works by other cultures, such as distorted representations or stereotypes, remain insufficiently analysed.

Thus, an analysis of the authors' works allows us to conclude that in the context of visualizing the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples through cinematography, there are many unexplored aspects. Therefore, the present research is aimed at studying the evolution and influence of Kazakh mythological elements on the development and character of national cinematography. The key objectives of the study are: to examine the origin of ancient Kazakh myths; to analyse cinematographic works that have become film myths and identify the main mythological images in Kazakh cinema; to assess the influence of mythology on Kazakh cinema and its place in the context of world cinema and cultural heritage.

2. Materials and methods

For the study, a historical research method was used to explore the origin of ancient Kazakh myths, which also included the analysis and interpretation of historical poems that contain information about Kazakh mythology and religious beliefs in different historical periods [17-20]. Using the historical method, it was possible to trace the evolution of mythological representations and themes over time, to identify the historical roots of the myths, their changes, and their influence on cultural and social aspects of Kazakh society. This method also made it possible to analyse various historical events, facts, and the context in which these myths were created and transmitted over time. In addition, it was possible not only to learn about the myths themselves, but also to understand their meanings, role, and impact on the culture and identity of the Kazakh people. Analysis of the historical context revealed the evolution of mythological representations, changes in their interpretation, and the relationship between myths and socio-cultural events. Thus, the historical method was used not only to reconstruct the history of Kazakh mythology, but also to reveal its importance in the formation of the cultural values and identity of the people.

To achieve this goal, not only literary sources but also film materials were studied (Bayan-batyr, 1993; Farewell Gulsary, 2008; Hunter, 2004; Nomadul, 2005; The fall of Otrar, 1991; Zaman-Y, 1998; Zhol, 2013). The method of descriptive evaluation in the context of analysing mythological images in Kazakh cinema involves an in-depth and detailed study of each mythological element presented in the cinematic works. This method was used to analyse the external manifestations of mythological images, including their appearance, behaviour, characteristics and interaction with other characters and plot elements. In addition, special attention was paid to the context in which the mythological images are presented, their role in the development of the plot and the overall dynamics of the film. Descriptive evaluation also made it possible not only to identify the presence of mythological images, but also to understand their semantic content, their influence on the course of the plot and their overall impact on the viewer. Moreover, descriptive evaluation revealed the evolution of mythological images in Kazakh cinema over time, and the changes, and trends in their use in contemporary cinema. This method was also used to identify the key factors and trends that determine the use of mythological images in contemporary Kazakh cinema, such as the influence of global cultural trends, the development of technology in the film industry, and changes in viewers' tastes and preferences.

This analysis helped us to understand which mythological images remain relevant and which ones lose their relevance, as well as to predict possible directions of development in the use of mythology in Kazakh cinema in the future.

The study also revealed the influence of ancient Kazakh myths on modern Kazakh cinema. The study compared mythological plots, images, symbols, mythologems and mythological characters from ancient sources with their interpretation and use in modern Kazakh cinema. This allowed us to assess the degree of preservation of mythological heritage, its transformation and actualization in the modern context. In addition, the impact of ancient myths on the formation of the cultural and cinematographic heritage of the Kazakh people was analysed using the comparative method. This included assessing the significance of mythological themes and motifs for cultural identity, as well as identifying the main trends in the use of mythology in contemporary Kazakh cinema.

Thus, through the use of this set of methods, it was possible to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between mythology and the cultural identity of the people, as well as to analyse the evolution of mythological images, their significance for the formation of cinematic heritage and possible directions of development in the future.

3. Results

The mythology and religious beliefs of the Kazakh people form a rich and multifaceted heritage, reflecting the history, culture, and worldview of this people over many centuries. They are a complex mixture of ancient animistic beliefs, Islamic teachings, and folk traditions, profoundly influencing Kazakh life and identity.

The ancient mythological ideas of the Kazakh people have deep roots in the pagan beliefs of nomadic tribes that inhabited the modern territory of Kazakhstan [21-22]. These myths are closely connected with the lifestyle of nomads, where elements of nomadic life and the cult of animal-totems played an important role. The key symbols are mythical creatures such as Samruk, the sun bird, and КҮДТКА, the white she-wolf, which personify the power and primogeniture of the tribes [17]. These archetypal images pervade epic works, such as the poem "Kobylandy batyr". In this epic poem, the protagonist, acting as a batyr (brave warrior), interacts with the mythical creature Samruk, a sun bird, which symbolizes the struggle of man with the mythical forces of nature. This image carries a deep symbolic meaning, reflecting the ancient Kazakh ideas of man's connection with nature and the cosmos, his spiritual power and struggle for harmony with the world around him [19]. Through these mythological images, the poem allows readers to immerse themselves in the world of national epic tradition, where each character becomes a symbol of eternal values and ideals passed on from generation to generation.

With the passage of time and socio-cultural changes, these mythological representations have been reflected in literature, including the novels of Mukhtar Auezov, where ancient myths become part of the artistic world of Kazakh literature, conveying not only historical heritage, but also shaping national identity through artistic creation. For example, in the novel "Abay's Way", Auezov takes the reader into the world of ancient Kazakh myths and legends, where each character and event become symbols of national culture and spirituality. Mukhtar Auezov's novels have become not only key works in Kazakh literature, but also a source of inspiration for cinema. The films "Songs of Abai" and "Kunanbai" embody a visual interpretation of ancient Kazakh myths and legends, which were first presented in Mukhtar Auezov's novel "Abay's Way". In these cinematic works, one can see a living embodiment of archetypal images and Turkic mythology, about which Auezov wrote so vividly and deeply. "Songs of Abai" tells us

about the life and struggle for justice in the Kazakh steppe through the prism of the life of the poet, educator, and thinker Abai Kunanbayev, showing his struggle for the happiness of his people, while the film “Kunanbai” turns to the story of the great Abay’s father, Kunanbai Oskenbayev, his contradictory actions and the complex relationships with the world around him, which reflect the influence of traditional values and power on the lives and destinies of people. This film opens the veil of history and allows viewers to understand the contradictions that were characteristic of ancient times and influenced the formation of national identity.

The penetration of Islam in Kazakhstan influenced the evolution of mythology. The study of this period clearly traces the interweaving of ancient languages or beliefs with new Islamic motifs and images. In poetic works dedicated to the life of the Prophet Muhammad, one can find allegorical references to archaic mythological characters such as Samruk or KҮРТКА (White Wolf), symbolizing the connection with pre-Islamic traditions [20]. However, with the penetration of Islam into Kazakhstan, ancient mythological representations were gradually transformed, acquiring new meanings and values in accordance with the Islamic worldview. This process was reflected in literary works, where the legendary past of the Kazakh people was interpreted through the prism of Islamic traditions and images. The poem “Kozy Kөрpesh – Bayan Sulu” is indicative, in which the image of Kydyr-ata, the patron saint of travellers, combines the lines of an Islamic saint and an archetypal hero-defender. Kydyr-ata, according to Islamic tradition, is a mythical character endowed with divine qualities who helps lost travellers. At the same time, this image echoes archaic Kazakh ideas about patron spirits protecting passengers [19]. Thus, during this period there is an organic synthesis of ancient mythological motifs and Islamic symbolism, the expansion of cultural horizons and the formation of a unique artistic world.

During the formation of the Soviet Union and the subsequent development of Kazakhstan’s independence, interest in ancient myths and folklore traditions proved particularly relevant, playing a key role in the revival of national identity. The works of such writers as Ilyas Esenberlin in his novels “Nomads” and “The Golden Horde” have become a reflection of this trend, resurrecting long-standing archaic images. One such example is Batyr, a heroic warrior who personifies courage, wisdom, and justice. His legendary feats and deeds represent the spiritual qualities and national values of the Kazakh people; other significant archaic images include Alash (a common ancestor and the first Khan (ruler)), symbolizing wisdom and power, and Shabytai-Batyr (a mythical character), personifying nobility and valour. In his works, Esenberlin comprehends the images of these mythical characters in the context of historical upheavals and cultural changes, which allows viewers and readers to see the semantic depth of traditions and their role in shaping the cultural heritage of the people during periods of significant social change [18]. This period was a time when mythology and folklore became not just elements of artistic creation, but a powerful tool for creating identity and preserving the cultural values of the Kazakh people.

During the period of Kazakhstan’s independence, interest in mythological motifs did remain prominent, but its influence began to diminish due to globalization trends. Traditional mythological rituals associated with holidays or rituals began to give way to more universal forms of entertainment, such as music festivals featuring foreign artists. In addition, with the rise of social media and digital technology, the younger generation has access to a wide cultural diversity, which has diverted attention away from traditional mythological beliefs and practices. These changes are also related to the loss of the older generation, who were the bearers of traditional mythological culture.

Thus, the process of globalization and digitalization is having a significant impact on the traditional mythological culture of Kazakhstan, bringing new forms of entertainment and communication, but also creating challenges for the preservation and transmission

of mythological heritage to future generations. Despite the processes of globalization, however, there is a clear revival of interest in local culture and mythology in the film industry. Cinema, as a means of mass communication, has the unique ability to visualize historical events, mythological images, traditions, and customs, which makes it a powerful tool for studying and understanding the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples. Many film directors and screenwriters strive to create films based on the traditional myths, legends and historical events of their country. This helps to preserve and convey unique aspects of cultural heritage, to draw viewers' attention to national values and traditions, and to broaden global understanding of the cultural richness of different regions of the world. Mythological images occupy an important place in the history of Kazakh cinema, reflecting the evolution of national culture. The appeal to archaic mythological motifs and characters can be traced in famous films that reveal universal themes through the prism of national cultural traditions (Table 1).

Table 1. Mythological images in the history of Kazakh cinema

Film	Directed by	Year	Main idea/plot	Mythological images
"The fall of Otrar"	Ardak Amirkulov	1992	Heroic resistance of the city of Otrar to Genghis Khan's troops	Archetype of loyalty and courage; images of defence and loyalty
"Bayan-batyr"	Slambek Tauekel	1993	The love story of Bayan the batyr to the dzungar woman Kuralai and the struggle for the motherland	The mythology of love and devotion; the image of the national hero
"Zaman-Y"	Bolat Sharip	1998	The dramatic fate of the Kazakh people in crucial historical epochs	Images of the Great Mother; symbolism of change and rebirth
"Zhol"	Darezhan Omirbaev	2001	The protagonist's inner journey to self-understanding	The mythology of the road and inner growth; the image of the mother as a symbol of warmth and connection to the past
"Hunter"	Serik Apyrmov	2004	Narrates the life of a hunter and his connection to nature, expressing themes of human freedom, resistance, and the struggle for survival	The image of the hunter as an archetype of ancient hunter-warriors, symbolizing courage, independence, and interaction with nature
"Nomadul"	Ivan Passer, Sergey Bodrov Sr. and Talgat Dosymgalievich Temenov	2004	A film about the life of nomadic peoples, their customs, traditions, and problems	Nomads as an archetype of ancient tribes, personifying freedom, nomadism, and connection with nature
"Farewell Gulsary"	Ardak Amirkulov	2008	Reflection of the Soviet period in Kazakhstan through the main character's relationship with a breeding stallion, symbolizing historical roots	Gulsary as a metaphor for times gone by, fidelity to traditions and connection to the historical roots of Kazakh culture

Source: compiled by the authors based on "The fall of Otrar" (1991), "Bayan-batyr" (1993), "Zaman-Y" (1998), "Zhol" (2013), "Hunter" (2004), "Nomadul" (2005), "Farewell Gulsary" (2008).

As an example, one can point to the film directed by Ardak Amirkulov "The fall of Otrar" (1991), which is a cinematic interpretation of the historical legend about the heroic resistance of the city of Otrar before the invasion of Genghis Khan's troops in the 13th century. The plot of the film is based on the events that took place in the ancient city, which was the cradle of Kazakh civilization. The story traces the mythological image of a brave and loyal Kipchak, Unzhu, who is sent to scout for the Mongols by the ruler of Otrar, Kair-Khan. Showing loyalty and courage, Unzhu achieves a high position in the Mongol army, which symbolizes the archetypal theme of ascension through adversity and dedication to one's goal. In addition, the film also addresses mythological images of strength and military valour, represented through Unzhu's bravery and determination in protecting his people and warning them of the onset of danger. Thus, this cinematic work uses mythological imagery through a historical plot to emphasize the spiritual and cultural values of the Kazakh people, as well as reflecting the importance of courage, loyalty, and defence of the homeland during difficult historical periods.

Another noteworthy film is "Bayan-batyr" (1993), directed by Slambek Tauyekel, which is an adaptation of a historical drama based on a poem by the famous Kazakh poet Magzhan Zhumabaev. The plot of the film develops around the story of love between the batyr Bayan and the young Dzungar woman Kuralai, who was taken captive by him, which symbolizes the theme of love and devotion, and the overcoming of hostility between peoples. The mythological images in the film are reflected through Bayan's heroic behaviour, his loyalty, and bravery in the fight for his homeland and his beloved. Also, important is the image of young Noyan, the son of Bayan's associate, who symbolizes the youth, hope, and future of the people. In addition, although the plot is somewhat different from the historical events, the film portrays the image of a national hero who embodies the spirit of Kazakh history and culture.

In Bolat Sharip's film "Zaman-Y" (1998), mythological motifs play a key role in revealing the dramatic fate of the Kazakh people at crucial historical epochs. The central mythological image is the image of the protagonist, a grey-haired woman who, risking everything, returns illegally to her historical homeland. This image is endowed with the features of the archetypal Great Mother, who personifies human ties with the native land and cultural memory. Her journey across the mountain is imbued with motifs of symbolic change and rebirth. In addition, the author of the film also refers to the ancient cosmogonic ideas of the Kazakhs through the image of the "eternal sky" – Tengri, which symbolizes the connection of the characters with the sacral beginnings of existence. Through the skilful use of plastic mythological symbols and archetypes, director Bolat Sharip creates images that reflect not only the dramatic events of history, but also collective trauma and the unquenchable desire of the Kazakh people to preserve and transmit cultural heritage through generations.

The film "Zhol" (2013) directed by Darezhan Omirbaev presents not only the physical journey of the protagonist, a film director, but also an inner journey to self-understanding. The hero goes on a road trip to visit his sick mother, which becomes a symbol of connection with his homeland, cultural roots, and family values. The mythological image of the road in the film has a deep meaning. Each stop along the way becomes a metaphor for the hero's inner growth and redefinition. Encounters with various characters and events linked to the maternal bond between mother and child reflect different aspects of life and allow the protagonist to understand himself and the world around him. As the journey progresses, the protagonist experiences emotional changes and realizes his inner conflicts and values. In addition, the film uses the mythological image of the mother as a symbol of warmth, care, and connection to the past. The meeting with his mother becomes a key moment that helps the protagonist find answers to his questions and understand the meaning of his journey.

The film "Hunter" (2004) directed by Serik Aprymov is an interesting psychological thriller in which the main character, a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent, Thomas MacElway, encounters a serial killer whose crimes at first glance seem inhuman and cruel. However, through the development of the plot and the investigation of the case, MakElway comes to the unexpected conclusion that all the victims were themselves maniacs who killed other people. Thus, the hitman is doing society a favour by ridding it of dangerous criminals. This plot twist is an interesting mythological image that can be interpreted as an allegory to ancient myths about hero hunters who save society from villains and dangers. The mythological image of the hunter facing monsters and demons is reflected in the character of MakElway, who becomes a protector and hero in the eyes of society despite the difficulties and hardships. Thus, this film uses mythological motifs to create an intriguing plot and images that help to examine the film's main theme of justice and the fight against evil from a new angle.

The film "Nomadul" (2005), directed by Ivan Passer, Sergei Bodrov Sr. and Talgat Temenov, is a historical drama based on the events of the 18th century and the war of liberation of the Kazakhs against the Dzungars. The main character, Mansur embodies the mythological image of a brave and just leader who goes through trials and proves his honesty and courage to the people. This image of the Khan reflects ancient Kazakh ideas about heroic leaders with spiritual strength and courage. The love line in the film serves not only for additional emotional saturation of the plot, but also to emphasize the unity and solidarity of the people in the struggle for freedom. The girlfriend of the protagonist becomes a symbol not only of love, but also of loyalty and devotion to the ideals and goals of the people. Thus, the film uses mythological images of brave leaders and strong women to convey the historical epic and the spiritual richness of Kazakh culture.

Ardak Amirkulov's Farewell Gulsary (2008) is an interesting example of the use of mythological images in the context of the Soviet period in Kazakhstan. The plot of the film focuses on the relationship between the protagonist Tanabai and the breeding stallion Gulsary, which symbolizes a deeper meaning than just a story about an animal. The stallion becomes a metaphor for times gone by, when Kazakhstan was undergoing change and transformation under the influence of the Soviet regime. Gulsary, accompanying Tanabai through life, reflects loyalty, tradition, and spiritual ties to the historical roots of Kazakh culture. This approach to mythological images allows the film to convey not only the historical context and social changes of the time, but also the rootedness of national identity in history and tradition.

In more contemporary Kazakh screen art, a number of problems related to mythology can be identified. These problems represent a complex set of aspects, ranging from an adequate reflection and interpretation of traditional mythological images to a lack of viewers' education in this area. One of the main problems is the simplification or even loss of the original symbolism of mythological elements in a modern context [23]. This occurs for several reasons. Firstly, mythological images, stories, and concepts that are part of ancient nomadic culture are often difficult to interpret literally in the realities of the modern world. In trying to adapt mythology to the environment, directors and screenwriters resort to wilful interpretations, as a result of which the depth and multiple meanings of the source material are lost. Secondly, the commercialization of the film industry often pushes authors to simplify and "reify" mythological motifs for the sake of bringing in a broader scope. The emphasis shifts from deep cultural meanings to entertainment and visual spectacle. As a result, scientific images and plots appear on the screen that superficially resemble the original mythological sources, but do not convey their depth. This leads to the loss of the possibility of immersing the viewer in the archetypal layers of national culture, which impoverishes the artistic and cultural significance of Kazakh cinema.

Director Ermek Tursynov's film "Shal" reveals the problem of simplification and loss of the original symbolism of mythological elements in the modern context through the prosaic presentation of key values. Despite the presence of a mythological framework in the form of life lessons passed on by a grandfather to his grandson, the film tends towards a superficial and habitual understanding of these values, depriving them of their depth and archetypality. For example, kindness and the ability to forgive are seen as moral rules rather than as part of a complex mythological fabric, reducing the cultural richness and potential to convey national identity through cinematic imagery. In director Adilkhan Yerzhanov's film "The Hosts", the same problem is manifested through the realism of everyday plots. Although the main idea of the plot is the struggle for justice and one's rights, the mythological aspects here recede into the background. Instead of using mythological images or symbolism to support illusions or magical moments, the film focuses more on realistic aspects such as social problems and character relationships [24]. Thus, although mythological elements are present, their symbolism and depth are simplified for the sake of focusing on the realities of modern life and the dramatic events of the characters.

The film "The River", directed by Emir Baigazina, also illustrates the difficulty of preserving the true meaning and symbolism of mythological elements in the modern world [24]. The life of five brothers in the isolated backwoods reflects old traditions and the connection with nature through mythological perception. The river becomes a sacred place, symbolizing unity with the primordial nature. However, the arrival of the urban teenager with modern values and technology destroys this idyll, turning the river into an arena of clashes between old and new values. This reflects the problem of the loss of mythological depth and sacredness under the influence of external cultural influences, which can damage national identity and cultural heritage.

Despite the existing problems, Kazakh cinema has had a major breakthrough in the development of traditional cultural themes. A number of films in recent years testify to the desire of directors to penetrate deeply into national mythology and find new ways of representing it on screen. One example is Aysultan Seyitov's "Qas" (2023), where mythological images and plots are organically woven into the narrative, revealing archetypal layers of Kazakh culture. The film takes the viewer into the atmosphere of the difficult times of the 30s in Kazakhstan, when famine engulfed the Kazakh Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic. The plot centres on the gravedigger Isatai, who decides to go to the nearest town to save his aul (fortified mountain village) from hunger and misfortune. However, his mission faces an unexpected challenge in the form of a wanderer who shows him a path that seemingly leads nowhere. This story opens up a wide range to explore themes of hunger, survival, spiritual quest and human relationships. Isatai's encounter with the wanderer symbolizes not only his encounter with external difficulties, but also his inner journey of self-discovery and self-improvement. This twist in the story reflects the complexities and challenges people faced in hard times and in their search for meaning and purpose in their lives.

One of the key themes of the film is the theme of human sacrifice and courage in the face of merciless nature and circumstances. Isatai, playing the role of a hero, decides to undertake a dangerous and risky journey to save his settlement from hunger and misfortune, making him a character that the viewer can empathize with. This theme reflects not only the personal drama of the protagonist but also shows how a man can overcome difficulties by putting the interests of society above his own. Isatai's human sacrifice is revealed through his rejection of personal comfort and security in the name of saving others. He takes responsibility for the fate of his settlement and is willing to make any sacrifice to ensure its survival. This courage is emphasized by his determination and actions in the face of difficult and dangerous situations where every step is crucial to the survival of many.

The theme of human sacrifice and courage inherent in the film "Kash" has deep connections with Kazakh mythical images. Isatai, in turn, embodies the archetype of the Kazakh

hero-saviour. His determination to save his settlement is reminiscent of mythical heroes who undertake heavy trials to save their people. This correlates with the image of batyrs and sharks – leaders and defenders who are ready to make any sacrifice for the common good [25]. In addition, the theme of Isatai’s courage and self-sacrifice is also connected with mythological ideas about the sacral connection of man with nature and the cosmos. In Kazakh myths, nature is often perceived as a living organism with which man must maintain a harmonious relationship. Isatai, risking his life and taking on a heavy load of responsibility, symbolizes this connection and the desire for harmony with the world around him. Critics note that Seyitov masterfully operates with mythological images and archetypes, organically weaving them into the narrative fabric of the film. The central symbol “kash” (from *kash-begi* meaning to run away) acquires multiple meanings and refers to the ancient cosmogonic ideas of the Kazakhs. It symbolizes the human connection with the natural rhythms of life and death, the cyclical nature of existence. The visual representation of “kash” in the form of a mountain range roots the characters in a primordial landscape, which emphasizes their organic interaction with the mythopoetic universe [25]. In addition, the director uses metaphorical language to convey ideas of cultural continuity. The images of an old shepherd and a young shepherd who graze together become an allegory of the continuity of traditions and careful attitude to the ancestral heritage. Here, the mythological and the real merge, creating a holistic picture of national identity. These mythological aspects add depth to the film and allow viewers to see in it not only the history of an individual, but also universal values and ideals important to Kazakh culture.

Table 2. Using global trends in film directing in modern Kazakh cinema

Trends in world film directing	Description	Examples from world cinema	Examples from Kazakh cinema
<i>A return to ancient myths and legends as a source of inspiration</i>	<i>Directors are increasingly turning to folk mythology to create unique plots and characters</i>	<i>The film “Troy” (2004) directed by Wolfgang Petersen, based on Greek mythology</i>	<i>The film “Kelin” (2009) directed by Ermek Tursynov, based on Kazakh myths about love and devotion</i>
<i>Reinterpretation of classical myths in a contemporary context</i>	<i>The directors try to give new meaning and actualize known myths for modern realities</i>	<i>The film “Hercules” (2014) directed by Brett Ratner, an interpretation of the myth of Hercules</i>	<i>The film “Bayan-batyr” (1993) directed by Sylanbek Tauyeken, a revision of Kazakh epic stories</i>
<i>Creating alternative mythological worlds</i>	<i>Directors build their own mythologies and mythical universes, unrelated to known legends</i>	<i>The film “Avatar” (2009) directed by James Cameron, the creation of the mythical planet Pandora</i>	<i>The film “Shal” (2012) directed by Ermek Tursynov, a representation of an alternative universe with its own myths</i>
<i>Addressing myths as symbols of cultural identity</i>	<i>Filmmakers use myths to reveal the identity of a people and their history</i>	<i>In the film “Gladiator” (2000) directed by Ridley Scott, there are mythological images and motifs associated with the ancient religion and mythology of the Roman Empire</i>	<i>The film “Zhol” (2013) directed by Darezhan Əmirbaev, using Kazakh myths to reveal the history and culture of the people</i>

Source: compiled by the authors based on “Bayan-batyr” (1993), “Zhol” (2013), “Troy” (2004), “Kelin” (2009), “Hercules” (2014), “Avatar” (2009), “Shal” (2012), “Gladiator” (2000).

Contemporary Kazakh cinema is able to achieve deep significance based on its ability to immerse the viewer in the world of mythological and archetypal images of national culture. Directors combine these traditional motifs with current social themes to create complex and multifaceted works that resonate with both national and global audiences [26]. By comparing the direction of contemporary Kazakh cinema with mythical best practices and trends in global filmmaking, it is possible to assess the extent to which the national film industry's place on the global stage is significant (Table 2).

Contemporary Kazakh cinema demonstrates a close connection with global trends in the use of mythological imagery [27]. One of the brightest trends is the return to ancient myths and legends as a source of inspiration for creating unique plots and characters. This allows films to be enriched with symbolic and emotional content, drawing the audience's attention to deeper aspects of human nature and cultural heritage. An example of this trend from world cinema is the film "Troy" (2004) directed by Wolfgang Petersen, based on the Greek mythology of Troy. This film attracted the attention of a wide audience due to its interesting revision of the classic legend, embodied in epic battles and complex character relationships [28]. Likewise, Kazakh cinema also refers to native myths and legends, which emphasizes its uniqueness and cultural identity. An example of such a film is *Kelin* (2009) directed by Yermek Tursynov, based on Kazakh myths of love and devotion [29]. This film uses mythological images and symbols to convey deep human feelings and ideals, making it appealing to both Kazakh and international audiences.

In contemporary Kazakh and world cinema, there is also a tendency to reinterpret classical myths in a modern context. This allows filmmakers to give new meaning and make known legends relevant to modern audiences. Examples of this approach from world cinema include the film "Hercules" (2014) directed by Brett Ratner, which revisits the myth of Hercules, presenting it in a new light and interpreting its story through the prism of modern values and audience expectations [30]. Kazakh cinema also shows a similar trend. An example is the film *Bayan-batyr* (1993) directed by Slambek Tauykel, which revisits and reinterprets Kazakh epic stories and myths. This film offers viewers a new perspective on national legends, focusing on their relevance and significance for contemporary Kazakh society. Such works help not only to preserve cultural heritage but also bring new interpretations and understanding of traditional myths to cinema, making Kazakh cinema more interesting and significant on the world stage.

Modern filmmakers not only turn to classical myths and legends but also seek to create alternative mythological worlds unrelated to known stories [31-32]. This approach allows filmmakers to expand the boundaries of mythopoetic space and present viewers with new, unique mythological realities. One of the most resourceful examples of this approach from world cinema is the film "Avatar" (2009) directed by James Cameron. In this film, the audience is presented with Pandora, an alternative world to the Earth, with its own mythology, and created on the basis of the director's imagination and creative interpretation. Pandora has become the true symbol of a fantasy mythical world that deeply penetrates the consciousness and imagination of the audience [33]. Kazakh cinema also shows a desire to create alternative mythological worlds, which can be seen in the film "Shal" (2012) directed by Ermek Tursynov. This film presents the audience with a unique mythological universe based on Kazakh traditions and ideas about the world. The director uses fantasy elements and mythopoetic imagery to create a unique cinematic world that inspires the audience and immerses them in an alternative reality.

The use of myths as symbols of a people's cultural identity and national history is a significant and important trend in contemporary film directing, both globally and nationally [34-35]. In world cinema, this is evidenced in the film "Gladiator" (2000) directed by

Ridley Scott, which epitomizes the richness of the national spirit and cultural values of ancient Rome through the use of mythological images and motifs. This film, shot in an epic style, not only tells the story of a conquering hero, but also transports the viewer to the world of ancient gods, the Coliseum, and gladiatorial fights [36]. In Kazakh cinema, a similar trend is evident in the film “Zhol” (2013) directed by Darezhan Omirbayev. This film is not only a work of fiction, but also a study of the cultural history of the Kazakh people through the prism of their myths, legends, and traditions. “Zhol” demonstrates the importance of mythological images and symbols for the formation of collective memory and national identity. Such films emphasize that the use of myths in cinematography not only serves an artistic purpose but is also a way of preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage of the people.

Based on the comparison of trends in the use of mythological images and their application in contemporary Kazakh cinema, it is possible to draw a conclusion about the significance and contribution of national cinematography at the world level. Modern Kazakh cinema shows an active interest in the use of mythological images and plots, similar to the trends of world film direction. Films based on folk mythology and legends not only reveal cultural and historical aspects of the nation, but also present unique interpretations of the world-view and spiritual values of the Kazakh people.

Kazakh directors skilfully apply the main approaches to mythological images characteristic of world cinema. Their works cover a wide spectrum – from reference to classical myths of the past to the creation of original mythological worlds and mythologisation of modern plots. At the same time, the use of national history, culture, and myths gives Kazakh cinema its uniqueness and originality, which allows its works to successfully compete on the world stage and attract the attention of international audiences. Moreover, the use of universal mythological archetypes allows Kazakh directors to create works that resonate with audiences in different countries, which contributes to the geographical expansion and popularity of Kazakh cinema. Thus, Kazakh national cinematography shows maturity, competitiveness and has a high potential in the world cinema market.

4. Discussion

This study has revealed an important interaction between cinema art and the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples. The analysis of the results reveals how contemporary cinema actively uses mythological images, legends, and traditions in the creation of films, thus personifying the richness and diversity of the cultural heritage of this group of peoples. This use of mythological elements contributes not only to the preservation and transmission of heritage, but also to the formation of national identity, and enriches world cinema with new ideas and perspectives on cultural aspects of life. These results underscore the importance of cinema as a means of tapping into the depths of cultural memory and history, as well as its potential as a powerful tool for dialogue and understanding between different cultures.

Similar conclusions are supported by the studies of other authors. The works of K. Noheden [37] and S. B. Plate [38] focus on the significance of the use of mythological elements in cinema; they note that cinema is a powerful tool for the creation and dissemination of mythological images that influence the perception of the world and the formation of collective historical experience. We should agree with the authors' conclusions that cinema can not only reflect culture, but also actively revise mythological images, contributing to their renewal and reinterpretation in accordance with

contemporary socio-cultural realities. This is confirmed by the results of the study. However, we cannot fully agree with the authors' conclusion that films should be used to create their own new myths, influencing public consciousness, and shaping cultural values. The process of creating new myths and images in cinema can lead to the simplification and reinterpretation of complex historical events and cultural phenomena. This, in turn, can lead to a misunderstanding of history and culture. Moreover, the loss of tradition and distortion of history through the creation of new myths in cinema can undermine the cultural integrity of society. This can cause disorientation in society and reduce the sense of belonging and identity of its members.

A. Fischer [39] examines in detail the role of mythological elements in the modern film industry and their influence on the formation of new mythologies. The author refers to the example of the film "Land of silence and darkness" (1971) directed by Werner Herzog to demonstrate how filmmakers use myths to create deep cultural meaning and intriguing plots. The author emphasizes that such works allow us to broaden our understanding of cultural heritage and introduce new elements into contemporary cinema, which stimulates interest in mythology and contributes to the formation of new cultural paradigms and symbols. The study also confirms that mythological images and symbols in cinema can not only enrich the plot and aesthetics of a film but also broaden the understanding of cultural heritage and contribute to the formation of new cultural paradigms. An example of this can be found in the analysis of contemporary Kazakh films, where mythological motifs and images play a key role in creating a unique cultural atmosphere and attracting the attention of both national and global audiences.

At the same time, P. Zhang et al. [40] in their study, point to a decline in the use of mythological elements in contemporary cinema. This means that stories and images based on myths and legends are becoming less common and receive less attention in contemporary cinema. The authors attribute this phenomenon to changes in the film industry, audience taste preferences, and the evolution of cultural and social values. However, it is worth disagreeing with such conclusions of the author. As the results of the study emphasize, contemporary Kazakh cinema is an example of the fact that the use of mythological elements remains significant and relevant. Films by Kazakh directors often appeal to the country's rich cultural heritage, including myths, legends, and folk representations, which allows them to create unique and attractive works of art [41-42]. This approach not only preserves the connection with national identity but also enriches the cinematic space with a variety of mythological plots and images. This indicates that interest in mythology in the film industry persists and may even increase in the context of the diversity of cultural expressions and cultural heritage studies.

The work of Y. Gocuk [43] focuses on understanding the role of cinema in preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples. The author emphasizes that cinema is responsible for the preservation and promotion of cultural values, which is of great importance for the formation of national identity and the strengthening of ties between different cultures. Analysing the author's findings, we can agree that cinema is a powerful tool for promoting cultural values and national identity, especially in the context of the Turkic world, where the preservation of cultural heritage is of particular importance. We can also support the idea that cinema strengthens ties between different cultures and enhances cultural dialogue. However, it should be noted that the use of cinema as a means of transmitting cultural heritage can also raise questions about the accuracy and truthfulness of the representation of cultural elements. When creating cinematic works with mythological and cultural images, it is necessary to take into account their historical and cultural significance in order to avoid distorting the meaning and interpretation of these elements.

Analysing the study by A. K. Duisenbi and D. Isqayuly [44], conducted in the form

of a meta-analysis of studies on Abay Kunanbayev's cultural heritage in the Turkic world, it should be noted that the authors describe a certain perspective of the influence of mythology on cinema. The researchers conclude that not only general mythological concepts, but also certain aspects of cultural heritage, including those reflected in the works of certain personalities, can influence the formation of plots, characters, and images in cinema. Although one cannot disagree with this result, it should also be noted that the prospects of such a study are limited to the specific subject of Abay's cultural heritage and do not reveal the wide range of influence of the mythology of the Turkic people on cinematic creativity in general. A. Hiswara et al. [45] emphasize in their work the importance of preserving cultural heritage in a globalized world. This is important not only for the preservation of historical memory and traditions, but also for strengthening the cultural identity of peoples. The authors correctly point out the need to develop and apply strategies that will help to effectively preserve and transmit cultural heritage values from one generation to the next. Additionally, it can be agreed that this task is quite challenging in the context of globalization, where cultural meanings and traditions may be threatened by the influence of global standards. The importance of adapting and adopting flexible approaches that will preserve peoples' cultural heritage in the modern world is emphasized. The study confirms that one such strategy that has been successfully applied is the use of cinema.

The study by M. F. Silva [46] addresses the topical aspect of the use of new myths in contemporary cinema and the impact of these myths on modern society. The author highlights that modern filmmakers actively introduce new mythological images and plots in their works, which reflect contemporary socio-cultural realities and arouse the interest of the audience. These new myths can be created from scratch or based on existing mythological concepts, but they are usually adapted to contemporary challenges and themes. In addition, the author draws attention to the impact of these new myths on the contemporary world. He emphasizes that cinema not only reflects cultural identities and values, it also has the ability to shape public consciousness and perceptions of the world. The new myths used in cinema can influence viewers' perceptions, their world-views and even their behaviour. Here we should agree that the creation of new myths in cinema can have both positive and negative effects on the modern world. On the positive side, new myths can be an innovative way to enrich cultural heritage and provide alternative storylines that are in line with contemporary challenges and themes. However, some new myths may distort historical facts or revise traditional values, which can cause confusion and misunderstanding among viewers. Also, the use of untested mythological images in cinema can lead to the formation of misconceptions about cultural heritage and create illusions about reality, which can ultimately affect the audience's world-view and behaviour.

Thus, the study confirms that cinema is significant for the preservation and formation of the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples. The active use of mythological images in modern cinema reflects the richness of cultural memory and contributes to the formation of national identity. The results are consistent with the findings of other researchers who emphasize the significance of mythology in cinema. In addition, the active use of mythological motifs in contemporary Kazakh cinema highlights their relevance and significance in the diversity of cultural expressions. Cinema continues to play a key role in fostering cross-cultural connections and identity formation, despite changes in the industry.

5. Conclusions

This study highlights the importance of mythology and the cultural heritage of the Kazakh people in the development of national identity through cinema. Mythological

aspects in Kazakh films are key to the formation of cultural images and ideas, reflecting global trends in the use of myths and symbols.

The results of the historical method used confirm that the mythology of the Kazakh people has ancient roots in the pagan beliefs of nomadic tribes which contributed to the formation of national identity through the symbolization of spiritual qualities and values of the people. The transformation of mythological representations under the influence of Islam created a unique synthesis, reflected in artistic works and religious rituals. The period of Kazakhstan's independence was accompanied by a revival of interest in ancient myths and folklore, a situation which has played an important role in the preservation of cultural heritage and the formation of national identity, although globalization and digitalization present challenges to the transmission of mythological heritage to younger generations and require the adaptation of traditions to modern conditions.

However, the film industry in Kazakhstan continues to show a vivid interest in local culture and mythology despite the processes of globalization. As a powerful tool of mass communication, cinema is capable of visualizing historical events, mythological images, and traditions, which makes it an important means of studying and understanding the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples. Mythological images occupy a significant place in the history of Kazakh cinema, reflecting the evolution of national culture and universal themes through the prism of national traditions. Contemporary Kazakh cinema faces several problems related to mythology, which include the simplification and loss of the original symbolism of mythological elements in the context of modernity. This is due to the difficulties of adapting ancient myths to modern culture, wilful interpretations on the part of creators, and the commercialization of the film industry, which leads to simplification and loss of depth of the original source material.

Despite this, Kazakhstan's film industry demonstrates a deep understanding and appreciation of the mythological images of national culture, which is expressed in close connection with global trends in the use of myths. Directors successfully combine traditional mythical motifs with contemporary social and cultural themes, creating complex and attractive works for audiences. The tendency to reinterpret classical myths in a modern context allows the boundaries of mythopoetic space to expand and create unique films that can compete on the world stage and attract the attention of international audiences. The use of myths as symbols of a nation's cultural identity and a way of transmitting cultural heritage emphasizes the importance of Kazakh national cinematography, which shows maturity, competitiveness, and high potential in the global film market.

Limitations of the study include the need for a more detailed examination of the role of cinema in conveying the historical and cultural accuracy of mythological images to avoid distorting and simplifying them. The diversity of cultural contexts and interactions in the creation of cinematic works should also be explored in more detail in order to maintain cultural integrity and authenticity in the films.

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Summary

The aim of the study is to analyze Kazakh and proto-Turkic myths, and mythological aspects in Kazakh cinema, and to assess the influence of other aspects, such as film language and semiotics on film direction and the status of Kazakh cinema in a global

context. The study used the historical method and the method of descriptive evaluation to examine the evolution of mythological representations, evaluated film materials, and compared how film directing trends are used in world and Kazakh cinema. The results of the study revealed that Kazakh myths, as part of the Turkic world, play a key role in shaping imagery and storylines in national cinema. By analyzing the films that have become cinematic myths, the study revealed the depth and versatility of the use of mythological images in Kazakh cinema. The main mythologemes present in Kazakh films were identified, and their meanings and role in the formation of national self-identity in cinematic culture were analyzed. In addition, the study compared the direction of contemporary Kazakh cinema with mythical images and trends in world cinema, which allowed us to assess the place of Kazakh cinematography on a global level. The advantages and peculiarities of Kazakh cinematography that contribute to its uniqueness and originality in the context of world cinema were identified. The study also pinpointed areas for further research of Kazakh cinema, including the need for an in-depth study of the mythological aspects, the expansion of interdisciplinary interaction with world cinema, and the active use of mythological images to create unique high-quality cinematic works.

Riassunto

Lo scopo dello studio è analizzare i miti kazaki e proto-turchi, nonché gli aspetti mitologici nel cinema kazako, e valutare l'influenza di altri aspetti, quali il linguaggio cinematografico e la semiotica, sulla regia cinematografica e sullo status del cinema kazako in un contesto globale. Lo studio ha impiegato il metodo storico e il metodo di valutazione descrittiva per esaminare l'evoluzione delle rappresentazioni mitologiche, ha valutato i materiali cinematografici e ha confrontato il modo in cui le tendenze della regia cinematografica sono utilizzate nel cinema mondiale e in quello kazako. I risultati dello studio hanno messo in evidenza il ruolo cruciale dei miti kazaki, in quanto parte integrante del mondo turco, nel plasmare le immagini e le trame del cinema nazionale. L'analisi dei film che hanno acquisito un valore simbolico e culturale, nota come "miti cinematografici", ha messo in luce la profondità e la versatilità dell'uso delle immagini mitologiche nel cinema kazako. Sono stati identificati i principali mitologemi presenti nei film kazaki e sono stati analizzati il loro significato e il loro ruolo nella formazione dell'identità nazionale nella cultura cinematografica. Inoltre, lo studio ha esaminato la direzione del cinema kazako contemporaneo in relazione alle immagini mitiche e alle tendenze del cinema mondiale, fornendo una valutazione del ruolo della cinematografia kazaka a livello globale. Sono stati identificati i vantaggi e le peculiarità della cinematografia kazaka che contribuiscono alla sua unicità e originalità nel contesto del cinema mondiale. Lo studio ha inoltre identificato alcune aree che necessitano di ulteriori ricerche sul cinema kazako, tra cui la necessità di uno studio approfondito degli aspetti mitologici, l'espansione dell'interazione interdisciplinare con il cinema mondiale e l'uso attivo di immagini mitologiche per creare opere cinematografiche uniche e di alta qualità.