

**On The Service Of The State: Kenesary Khan As The National Hero In
Contemporary Kazakhstan**

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Abstract

This research investigates the case of Khan Kenesary (1802-1847) as a national hero in contemporary Kazakhstani schools and media discourses. In this research, I regard his figure as a reflection of the nation-building policy in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Khan Kenesary raised the rebellion against the Russian Empire, Kokan Khanate and Kyrgyz elites in 1837-1847. He was the last Khan, who was able to unite and restore the Kazakh Khanate, which was partially colonized by the Russian Empire and partially controlled by Kokand Khanate and Kyrgyz elites at that time.

In my analysis, I contend that the narrative surrounding Khan Kenesary has been banalized and plays a significant role in the nation-building process of Kazakhstan. This narrative serves as a reflection of the model of nation-building designed to accommodate the country's multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multireligious composition. The Critical Discourse Analysis applied in this study has uncovered recurring patterns in the portrayal of Khan Kenesary, which underscore this even further. Additionally, the media discourse dedicated to Khan Kenesary's skull, purportedly located somewhere in Russia, was examined and discussed. The arguments and discourse relating to the return of the skull back to Kazakhstan enrich the analysis and demonstrate the postcolonial struggle. Overall, this research contributes to nationalism studies, the use of historical figures as national heroes both in the media and school history textbooks on the post-Soviet space in the example of Kazakhstan.

Key words: Khan Kenesary, Kazakhstan, National Heroes, Discourse Analysis, Nation-building, Media, History Textbook

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Glossary

Arys – unit in the political-administrative division in Kazakh Khanate consisted of several clans and was governed by biy.

Batyr – brave warrior (from Kazakh). In Kazakh Khanate batyrs were respected warriors. Under the government of khan Kenesary they were also serving as people spreading news about khan and recruiting people to the army.

Biy – judge (from Kazakh). In the time frame of Kazakh Khanate these people were responsible for judicial and administrative tasks. These people were highly respected, were serving as advisors to sultans and khans. Biy was governing Arys.

Shyngyzid/Genghiszid/Chingizid – decedent of Genghis Khan, nobility. The other name of reference is Tore or Aq Suyek (white bones from Kazakh). Only the descendants of Genghis Khan's bloodline could be chosen as the ruler of Zhuz or Khanate.

Kurultai – gathering of nobility for decision-making and problem-solving purposes.

Khanate - is the largest unit in the politico-administrative division in Kazakh Khanate. It was governed by khan, chosen among sultans. Khanet consists of three Zhuzes (Horedes), i.e. Little Horde – Western Kazakhstan, Middle Horde - Northern and Central Kazakhstan and Senior Horde – Southern and South – Eastern territories of contemporary Kazakhstan. In 1837-1847 the Little Zhuz and Middle Zhuz were included in the territory of Russian Empire, while Senior Zhuz was conquered by Kokand Khanate.

Zhuz – hundred (from Kazakh). In English speaking academic literature is known as Horde. Zhuz is a political-administrative unit in Kazakh Khanate. Traditionally, Kazakh Khanate was divided into 3 parts, i.e. It was governed by khan chosen among sultans during kurultai. The chosen one was lifted on the white large felt mate

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Introduction

This thesis is about the depiction of Khan Kenesary (1802-1847) as a national hero in contemporary Kazakhstan on the materials of media articles and school history textbooks. It is difficult to find a more famous and banalized historical figure presented in the daily life in Kazakhstan, than him. The name of the last Khan of the Kazakh Khanate,¹ who raised the all-Kazakh rebellion against the Russian Empire, Kokand Khanate and Kyrgyz elites in 1837,² is widely embodied in stones and toponyms across the country.

For example, Derzhavinsk, a town in Northern Kazakhstan, with the support of locals was recently renamed Kenesary to embrace the hero and to distance itself from the Soviet legacy³. In the early 2000s both a memorial⁴ and a monument depicting Khan Kenesary were independently built in Astana, five years after the city became the capital of the Republic⁵. Also, in the last decade his name and the names of his batyrs were given to the streets around his monument in the central part of Astana⁶. The monument embracing his figure as part of the

¹ Steven Sabol, "Kazak resistance to Russian colonization: interpreting the Kenesary Kasymov revolt, 1837–1847," *Central Asian Survey* 22, no. 2-3 (2003): 232, doi:10.1080/0263493032000157703.

² Rico Isaacs, "Chapter 4. Naked In The Mirror: The Ethno-Centric Narrative Of Kazakh Nationhood," in *Film and Identity in Kazakhstan: Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture in Central Asia* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 41-45.

³ Radio Azattyq, "Soobschaetsya, chto zhiteli goroda na shode odobrili pereimenovanie Derzhavinska v Kenesaryi," Radio Ayzattyq, last modified June 21, 2023, <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/32468554.html>. [Radio Azattyq, "It is reported that city residents at the meeting approved the renaming of Derzhavinsk to Kenesary." "Radio Azattyq," is an information and analytical site. Last modified June 21, 2023.]

⁴Ruh.kz, "Kenesary Khannyn Memorialy (2006 J.)," Ruh.kz, last modified January 6, 2022, https://ruh.kz/kenesary-han-memorialy-2006-j_17583/. [Ruh.kz, "Kenesary Khan's memorial (2006)," Last modified January 6, 2022.]

⁵Astana Zagrantsa, "Pamyatnik Khanu Kenesary," Putevoditel' po Astane i Kazakhstanu, accessed July 28, 2024, <https://astana.zagrantsa.com/place/19778/pamiatnik-khanu-kenesary>. [Astana Zagrantsa, "Khan Kenesary's monument," Putevoditel' po Astane i Kazakhstanu.]

⁶Nadezhda Lyikova, "Stolichnyie ulitsy budut nosit nazvaniya kazahskih batyrov," *Zakon.kz*, last modified May 19, 2022, <https://www.zakon.kz/redaktsiia-zakonkz/4692485-stolichnye-ulicy-budut-nosit-nazvaniya.html>. [Nadezhda Lyikova, "The capital's street will be renamed after the Kazakh heroes," *Zakon.kz*, last modified May 19, 2022.]

national heroes' pantheon is placed alongside the road connecting Astana and Kokshetau (the place of birth of Khan Kenesary)⁷ etc.

In addition to other physical embodiments of memory in the last 20 years, Khan Kenesary shines in modern Kazakhstani media. Mostly media articles attract attention to the matter of the ongoing investigation on the location of the skull and negotiations between Russia and Kazakhstan on the matter of returning the skull to its homeland, which will be shown further in the Chapter Analysis. The legend about his skull located somewhere in Russia created a political movement⁸, grassroots activism⁹, journalistic investigations¹⁰, and even a semi-religious cult¹¹, which will all be described in further sections. However, the figure of the Khan does not occupy a central position in Kazakhstani media discourse or the public speeches of Kazakhstani officials, even though he steadily appears in both state-sponsored and independent media since the early 2000s and is part of the school history curriculum for the 8th grades' students.

The theoretical background places this case into a fitting academic perspective. The collapse of the USSR compelled the governments of post-communist states to adopt new nation-building strategies, which included the creation and establishment of new symbols such

⁷ Jabal Ergaliev, "Uvekovechennaya pamyat' slavnnyh synov," *Kazpravda.kz*, last modified June 2020, <https://kazpravda.kz/n/uvekovechennaya-pamyat-slavnyh-synov/>. [Jabal Ergaliev, "Immortalized memory of glorious sons," *Kazpravda.kz*, last modified June 2020.]

⁸ Kompra, "Obshchestvennyy Fond "Kenesary Khan" - Aydarov Talgat Shorayevich - 101040012432," *Kompra.kz*, last modified 2013, <https://kompra.kz/organization/101040012432>. [Kompra, "Public Foundation "Kenesary Khan" - Aydarov Talgat Shorayevich - 101040012432," *Kompra.kz*, last modified 2013].

⁹ Anton Moldin, "Vernite golovu!," *Vremja*, last modified April 25, 2018, <https://time.kz/articles/zloba/2018/04/25/vernite-golovu>. [Anton Moldin, "Return the Head!," *Vremja*, last modified April 25, 2018,]

¹⁰ Svetlana Abdrashitova, "Gde golova khana Kenesary?," *Jekspress K*, last modified September 8, 2015, <https://exk.kz/news/34176/ghdie-gholova-khana-kieniesary>. [Svetlana Abdrashitova, "Where Is The Khan Kenesary's Head?," *Jekspress K*, last modified September 8, 2015]

¹¹ Aleksandra Kancedalova, "Ne nastojashhij "Ak zhol"," *Informburo.kz*, last modified 2006, <https://informburo.kz/novosti/ne-nastoyashchiy-ak-zhol-2024.html>. [Aleksandra Kancedalova, "Not The Real "Ak Zhol"," *Informburo.kz*, last modified 2006]

as the renaming of geographical locations¹² and re-arranging the pantheon of national heroes¹³. These actions are examples of symbolic policies, which broadly represent "struggles of meaning" and an influential yet unseen discourse¹⁴. In these processes, actors with sufficient symbolic power employ various tools to generate and promote meanings, ideas, and interpretations of the past to the public to (re)shape social reality¹⁵. For example, state-sponsored media or school education are essential tools for nation-building described in classic literature in the field of nationalism studies¹⁶. Even though the state monopoly does not exclude interest groups and individual actors from the overarching dialogue dedicated to the past and framing the collective memory¹⁷, the state usually holds a monopoly over symbolic violence and possesses a greater capacity to shape the discourse¹⁸.

While media is mostly represented by private actors, school curriculum is controlled and approved by the Ministry of Education. Such characteristic of the education systems is common in Kazakhstan and several other former Soviet countries¹⁹. The Ministry regards school history education as a crucial tool for conveying the newly state-approved historical narrative²⁰. The curriculum mandates two compulsory courses: History of Kazakhstan and World History. These are distinct subjects, each with separate class sessions, grades, and

¹² Graeme Gill, "Political Symbols and Regime Change: The Russian Experience," *Symbolism and Politics*, 2020, 66-80, doi:10.4324/9780367815721-5.

¹³ Sergei Abashin, "Nation-construction in post-Soviet Central Asia," *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, 2012, 151-152, doi:10.1017/cbo9780511894732.012.

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, "Orders of discourse," *Social Science Information* 10, no. 2 (1971): 49-50, doi:10.1177/053901847101000201.

¹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, "The social space and the genesis of groups," *Social Science Information* 24, no. 2 (1985): 195-220, doi:10.1177/053901885024002001.

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2006).

¹⁷ Aleida Assmann, "Memory, Individual and Collective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* (Oxford Handbooks of Political, 2006), 1-6.

¹⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, "Symbolic Power," *Critique of Anthropology* 4, no. 13-14 (1979): 75-85, doi:10.1177/0308275x7900401307.

¹⁹ Aziz Burkhanov and Dina Sharipova, "New Narratives and Old Myths: History Textbooks in Kazakhstan," *Nationalities Papers*, 2023, 4, doi:10.1017/nps.2023.64.

²⁰ Ibidem.

textbooks—one dedicated to the History of Kazakhstan and the other to World History²¹. These school textbooks are written by independent researchers but they have to be approved by the Ministry of Education²².

Regardless, under the autocratic political regimes in Central Asia, multiple contested narratives on history and national identity are presented in public, media and cultural spaces²³, this research is focused on the state-promoted discourse on nation-building in Kazakhstan for two reasons. First, due to the ambiguous position, which will be elaborated further in the text, Kazakhstan must balance between civic and ethnic nationalism. Secondly, since the figure of Kenesary Khan is actively used by activists and intellectual elites²⁴, the state narrative should harmonize the ethno-nationalist discourse with nation-building politics.

This presence in both media and school textbooks fulfils Benedict Anderson's model of nation-building. First, the information about Khan Kenesary is spread among other members of the community via printed and digital media, which is an essential tool for nation-building within the chosen theory²⁵. Moreover, a recent study by Sára Bigazzi and colleagues demonstrates that media representation of a national hero constructs and enforces broader national ideas, values, and historical narrative of the chosen hero is connected to²⁶.

Secondly, the case of Kenesary Khan is taught in schools which is seen as one of the primary tools for the construction of a nation, being placed in the same row with a single market, shared language and culture²⁷. School history textbooks are placed in the same shell as media

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Rico Isaacs and Erica Marat, *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Central Asia* (London: Routledge, 2021), 5.

²⁴ For the further information see Chapter 2.2 The figure of Khan Kenesary in contemporary Kazakhstan.

²⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2006).

²⁶ Sára Bigazzi et al., "Social Representations of Heroes: Triggers from the Past, Values in the Present, Patterns for the Future," *Human Arenas* 6, no. 4 (2021): 830-854, doi:10.1007/s42087-021-00248-5.

²⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2006).

regarding the construction and promotion of historical narratives and national values²⁸, however, in contrast to media, they carry an educational function. So, the target audience is forced to learn and absorb the promoted interpretation²⁹.

Moreover, I argue that the case of this national hero is a great example of Kazakhstani nation-building. Despite being an essential part of the formation of the nation as an “imagined community”³⁰, heroes are public figures representing the values, character and collective identity³¹. In this case, the hero is a real historical figure, whose remains are matters of diplomacy and politics. Existing studies have shown that even though dead heroes and their lifeless bodies are speechless and cannot act, their behaviour and speeches they made when they were alive are used in contemporary memory politics³² as well as the location of their remains and other belongings determine the power dynamics between communities owning and desiring to obtain these artefacts³³. The symbolic power and shadows of the dead hero arrange the way they appear in the contemporary context³⁴ as will be demonstrated later.

However, the context of the post-Soviet state with a long traumatic experience of losing its sovereignty through colonization and forced Russification³⁵ has to be considered because it adds an additional layer of complexity to managing the nation-building in the Central Asian

²⁸ Alenka Bartulovic, "Nationalism in the Classroom: Narratives of the War in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1995) in the History Textbooks of the Republic of Srpska," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 6, no. 3 (2008): 51-72, doi:10.1111/j.1754-9469.2006.tb00098.x.

²⁹ Abdul R. Lanjwan Jat, Habibullah Pathan, and Syed W. Ali Shah, "Representation of National Heroes in English Language Textbooks Taught at Government Higher Secondary Schools of Sindh, Pakistan," *Education and Linguistics Research* 4, no. 2 (2018): 25-35, doi:10.5296/elr.v4i2.13612.

³⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2006).

³¹ Bernhard Giesen and S. N. Eisenstadt, "Chapter 1 Triumphant Heroes Between Gods and Humans," in *Triumph and Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2015), 17.

³² Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Gulnara Dadabayeva and Dina Sharipova, "The imagined nation-state in Soviet literature: The case of Koshpendiler," *Nationalities Papers* 44, no. 1 (2016): 170-175, doi:10.1080/00905992.2015.1061984.

region³⁶. Even though, postcolonial thoughts and criticism were not brightly shining in the Central Asian countries in the first decades after the dissolution of the Soviet Union³⁷, the recent invasion of Ukraine only exasperated these issues further.

With the help of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) discourses in media and school education will be analysed. The focus of the analysis is furthermore placed on the media discourse flourishing around the case of the skull and its return to Kazakhstan. This is studied to find argumentation for and against the return of the skull. Visual representation of Khan Kenesary will serve as an addition to his representation. Further, findings will be placed within historical and political context.

This paper consists of 4 chapters, Introduction and Conclusion. The first chapter establishes the theoretical framework underlying the whole analysis. Here I provide theoretical background on the role and features of national heroes for nation-building purposes combining academic literature on national heroes, myth for nation-building in the connection to the media and school textbooks connecting the wider theory to the case of post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Another part of this chapter is the material dedicated to the human remains of national heroes and the political actions surrounding them to address the post-mortem political life of Khan Kenesary in Kazakhstan. Chapter 2 presents the legend of Khan Kenesary and his place in the memory of politics and the use of his figure for nation-building in Kazakhstan. This research was conducted in accordance with CDA. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of data selection, methodology and all the steps of the investigation which were conducted. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the results of the investigation. The Conclusion summarises the whole

³⁶ Sergei Abashin, "Nation-construction in post-Soviet Central Asia," *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, 2012, 160-168, doi:10.1017/cbo9780511894732.012.

³⁷ John Heathershaw, "Central Asian statehood in post-colonial perspective," in *Stable Outside, Fragile Inside?: Post-Soviet Statehood in Central Asia* (Surrey: Routledge, 2016), 87-94.

investigation and draws on the main outtakes. The manuscript also includes Empirical Base Media in the Annex for illustration and reference.

This thesis aims to answer the following question:

How does the figure of Kenesary Khan and his representation feed into and shape the nation-building effort in contemporary Kazakhstan?

To accomplish this the study investigates:

- 1. What nominations and predications are connected to the figure of Khan Kenesary in the news articles and school textbooks in Kazakhstan?**
- 2. What arguments are presented in the digital media between 2004 and 2024 regarding the return of Khan Kenesary's head?**
- 3. What is the visual representation of Khan Kenesary in the media articles and school textbooks?**

In short, the main research objective is to contribute to the scientific discussion on the use and influence of national heroes, in this case, Khan Kenesary, on nation-building via media and educational layers of discourses. In particular, what kind of nominations, and predications are presented in the materials dedicated to Khan Kenesary. Additionally, the argumentation surrounding the return of the Khan's skull and his visual representation in the selected data should help in creating the picture of how the image of the hero (de)enforces the symbolic meaning of the Khan. This research aims to contribute to the scientific discussion on the use of the image of the hero and his remains as an important artefact in politics and nation-building in post-Soviet Central Asia on the example of Kazakhstan.

Limitations

This research has following limitations. First of all, the data consist of the digital news articles published withing the last 20 years. The printed newspapers were excluded from scope of the research due to the following reason. Kazakhstan is a country with high level of Internet

penetration (in 2019 almost 90% of population had access to the Internet³⁸) digital media are highly spread in the country. For example, in 2019 the half of the population in Kazakhstan was receiving information from the digital sources³⁹ All the articles published in the printed media, are also available in the online format.

Secondly, all the pictures of the monuments analysed in the Chapter 4 are taken from media sources as well as from the textbooks, but not during the fieldwork in Astana what provides the predetermined material for analysis. The further work can include the ethnographical fieldwork, visit of the memorials, monuments etc.

The next limitation is also related to the type of data. This research is considering the data from the recent textbooks, however it does not tackle the way this topic is taught in the classrooms. The narration from the teacher as well as the perception of the school students could provide a valuable insight into the matter of perception of the khan and memory politics related to his figure.

The scope of this research also avoids deep investigation of actors involved in the processes around the return of the skull and generally the promotion of the Khan Kenesary's figure as national hero. In the context of the current research the interactions between actors as well as their power-relations are not placed on the first place. In the sub-section 3.1 Data are briefly described media platforms and the textbooks. This description was mentioning the popularity of the resource and its dependence on the state if this information was available. Despite the sub-section 2 of the Chapter 2 places the figure of Khan Kenesary within the contemporary discourses in Kazakhstan and touches some actors actively using Khan Kenesary in construction of discourse this research does not target analysis of the actors, their political

³⁸ The Research Institute of Public Opinion, 2019 MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY SURVEY IN THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (KAZAKHSTAN, TAJIKISTAN, UZBEKISTAN), (Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, 2019), https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X2HT.pdf.

³⁹ Ibidem.

position, interconnection with other politically engaged persons, otherwise the focus of the investigation will be shifted. However, the future research might be related to the analysis of the actors' network in the field of nation-building in Kazakhstan.

1 Theoretical Framework

The first chapter draws theoretical approach towards the notion of human remains in politics and nation building. The broader theoretical framework will be also connected to the case of Kazakhstan's nation-building with the special focus on the figure of Khan Kenesary within the memory politics in the country. This chapter serves for the purpose to define terminology used further in the paper, present the theoretical framework for the analysis of media discourse regarding the return of the head of Khan Kenesary.

The first subchapter will be organized according to the following pattern. First, the notion of hero and national hero as well as the visual representation of them will be introduced. Secondly, the figures of triumphal and dramatic heroes will be discussed. Due to the specificity of the Khan Kenesary case the bigger accent will be put on the dramatic heroes and the decapitation of the king. The next subchapter will provide more specific information on the hero's remains in the connection to the nation-building as the topic of Khan Kenesary's skull is regarded in this paper. The second subchapter is mainly build around the Katherine Verdery's theory on the participation of dead heroes in the political life. The last subsections is dedicated to the nation-building model in Kazakhstan and its interconnection with the memory policies.

1.1 The hero on the service of the nation

Benedict Anderson points that the national heroes are essential for creation of the nation as stable unit⁴⁰. A hero can be a never existed or real person, a person or a group of people, who's contribution to a nation is remarkable and important as (co-)founding the nation, defeating an enemy, scarified their lives for the nation, or gained prestige for the nation etc.⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2006).

⁴¹ Johanna Pink, "National Hero," *Compendium Heroicum*, last modified September 19, 2022, <https://www.compendium-heroicum.de/lemma/national-hero/>.

However, the figure of national hero is constructed not always from the perspective of the real life achievements and contributions but it is based on the idea and image, associated with it in the community⁴². Thus, national heroes are incorporating certain functions. As it will be demonstrated below, national heroes are promoting certain historical narratives, demonstrating the set of values associated with the hero and consequently with the nation, and uniting people into an imagined community.

The study of heroes is deeply rooted in a rich tradition, originating from narratives that depict figures as descendants of Gods to those celebrating individuals who have achieved remarkable feats for their communities⁴³. Even though, the regarded hero comes from the real historical figure, the aura⁴⁴ or Charisma in Max Weber's understanding⁴⁵ shines and blinds the ordinary people⁴⁶. That is why, mythical heroes are commemorated in a legendary manner, creating a symbolic distance between them and ordinary people⁴⁷. This distance is essential; examining heroes too closely can risk diminishing their perceived heroic aura, revealing them instead as mere mortals⁴⁸. For example, in the regarded case the visual representation of Khan Kenesary follows this pattern not only in the embodiment of his figure in monuments and paintings but also by camera angles of the photos used in the texts⁴⁹.

Before going into the details on the national heroes and the two main functions of the heroes in the nation-building processes I will elaborate on the visualisation of the heroic figures. Since this research tackles the visual representation of Khan Kenesary, it is necessary to mention

⁴² Ibidem.

⁴³ Bernhard Giesen and S. N. Eisenstadt, "Chapter 1 Triumphant Heroes Between Gods and Humans," in *Triumph and Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2015), 15-17.

⁴⁴ See more in Katherine Verdery "The Political Life of the Dead Bodies"

⁴⁵ Bernhard Giesen and S. N. Eisenstadt, "Chapter 1 Triumphant Heroes Between Gods and Humans," in *Triumph and Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2015).

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁴⁹ See Chapter 4.

that national heroes are often visually represented in textbooks for more engagement and educational purposes. However, images depicting the of national figures, martyrs, and heroes are also serving as additional tool to form national identity and patriotism. National heroes are often visually represented in educational materials, particularly in textbooks. These representations are performed via small, isolated pictures of heroes, pictures of events associated with them, however the broader historical context is usually excluded from the narrative⁵⁰. As the analysis in the chapter 4 had shown, the case of textbooks on History of Kazakhstan fits within this description.

The reach scientific tradition of dead bodies' post-mortem life regards relics of the “*special people*”⁵¹ coming from not only religious institutions⁵². The focus of the scholars catches dead politicians⁵³, contemporary celebrities⁵⁴, military servants⁵⁵. Each nation-state has its own famous dead political leader, who still is presented in the public discourse.

Nation-states can also pick a historical figure basing on the needs and promote the cult of such figure. As an example, can serve the case of Kyrgyz epic hero Manas, the central figure of the Kyrgyz myth of origin and the cult of Manas in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan is massively promoted by the state⁵⁶. He is the hero from the 10th century, who united the Kyrgyz tribes and

⁵⁰ Abdul R. Lanjwan Jat, Habibullah Pathan, and Syed W. Ali Shah, "Representation of National Heroes in English Language Textbooks Taught at Government Higher Secondary Schools of Sindh, Pakistan," *Education and Linguistics Research* 4, no. 2 (2018): 25-35, doi:10.5296/elr.v4i2.13612.

⁵¹ Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁵² Steven Hooper, "A cross-cultural theory of relics: on understanding religion, bodies, artefacts, images and art," *World Art* 4, no. 2 (2014): 194, doi:10.1080/21500894.2014.935873.

⁵³ Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁵⁴ Richard Howells, "Heroes, saints and celebrities: the photograph as holy relic," *Celebrity Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011): 112-130, doi:10.1080/19392397.2011.574866.

⁵⁵ Hannah Malone, "The Fallen Soldier as Fascist Exemplar: Military Cemeteries and Dead Heroes in Mussolini's Italy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 64, no. 1 (2022): 34-62, doi:10.1017/s0010417521000384.

⁵⁶ Svetlana Jacquesson, "Claiming heritage: the Manas epic between China and Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asian Survey* 39, no. 3 (2020): 324-326, doi:10.1080/02634937.2020.1765739.

created the first united Kyrgyz polity⁵⁷. While in Kyrgyzstan he is perceived as a once lived hero, the non-Kyrgyz historian questioning his existence in the reality, and evaluate Manas more as a mythical hero from the epic poem⁵⁸. Nevertheless, his figure serves as the symbol of national unity⁵⁹. Thus, the hero has the function of creation a sense of unity among members of an imagined community.

The other type of hero and the function they can carry along is a tragic hero. This figure reflects the dark pages of the history as wars, genocides, political repressions or the loss of the independence and the statehood⁶⁰. The tragic death (for example, through decapitation) of the hero can cause both collective trauma and triumph depending on the side of the conflict⁶¹. For example, in modern Serbia the cult of Prinz Lazar was established and promoted by Slobodan Milošević. The historical and symbolic figure of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović, who perished in the Battle of Blackbird's Field in 1389 against the Ottoman Empire, has been invoked for political purposes throughout Serbian history. According to the legend Prinz Lazar was defeated by Sultan Murad Hüdavendigâr⁶². According to the myth, Prince Lazar's death and subsequent decapitation symbolized not only the fall of the Serbian state to the Ottomans but also the loss of political autonomy and national identity⁶³. During the late 20th century, Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević employed the myth surrounding Prince Lazar's martyrdom and decapitation to assert Serbian claims over Kosovo as this hero could unite Serbians⁶⁴. Milošević

⁵⁷Ibidem.

⁵⁸ Andrew Wachtel, "A Tale of Two Heroes: Kyrgyzstan in Search of National Role Models," *Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia* 5, no. 1 (2016): 1-3, doi:10.1353/reg.2016.0004.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ Bernhard Giesen and S. N. Eisenstadt, "Chapter 3 The Tragic Hero: Decapitation of the King: Triumph and Trauma in the Transfer of Political Charisma," in *Triumph and Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2015), 75-108.

⁶¹ Ibidem, 79.

⁶² Sabrina P. Ramet, "Dead kings and national myths: Why myths of founding and martyrdom are important," *Security Dialogues /Безбедносни дијалози*, no. 2 (2020): doi:10.47054/sd202031r.

⁶³ Ibidem.

⁶⁴ Ibidem.

used this narrative to galvanize nationalist sentiment, portraying the loss of Kosovo as a historical and ongoing injustice that needed rectification⁶⁵. This case demonstrates another important function of the figure of the national hero: i.e. promotion of specific historical narratives.

Overall, the heroes in nation-building models play the role of examples representing the set of values and historical narratives with the aim to unite people as members of a nation. Heroes can represent the triumph and trauma, however they will be always depicted from a distance to hide the human part of them as it can destroy the legendary aura. Monuments and paintings represent the heroes, however their remains have significant symbolic weight as well. As this research analysis the discourse around the Khan Kenesary's skull, the next subchapter highlight the use of hero's bodies in nation-building.

1.2 Why do dead bodies have political power

In the previous subchapter I was describing the symbolic meaning and functions of the figure of heroes for nation-building. This subchapter addresses the question of symbolic and political meaning of the dead heroes' remains. The corpses, funerals, mourning as well as other objects and practices belonging to death were studied in classical literature in the field of nationalism studies.

Nationalism is likened to the corps of dead heroes as ancestor worship, resembling a system of patrilineal kinship where national heroes assume the role of clan elders, shaping the identity of a nation as an esteemed lineage⁶⁶. This perspective is harmonized with Benedict Anderson's suggestion to view nationalism through the lens of "kinship" and "religion," rather than "liberalism" or "fascism"⁶⁷. He places the dead bodies, and dead heroes in particular, within

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

⁶⁶ Katherin Verdery, 3-20.

⁶⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2006).

nationalist narratives on the position similar to clan elders, defining the nation as a noble lineage⁶⁸. This kin linkage is suitable for the studied case in not only because Khan Kenesary has living descendants and some of them are still living in the same place where he was born and used to live before the rebellion⁶⁹, but also because the kinship and linkage to the hero fits the ethnic part of the Kazakhstani nation-building model, which will be elaborated in the paragraph 1.3.

This phenomenon is especially noticeable during the reburial of deceased individuals, as their placement among revered ancestors can change, potentially raising or lowering their status in the national narrative⁷⁰. Katherine Verdery's emphasizes the significance of proper burial, as the kinship relations are shared with both the state and the nation. According to Verdery, the necessity for "our" sons and daughters to find peace on "our" soil reflects a deep-seated belief that failing to do so will bring countless distress to the nation⁷¹. Additionally, Henry Myrthnen in the book *Governing the Dead: Sovereignty and the Politics of Dead Bodies* states that dead national heroes incorporate the messianic powers to save the nation in the times of need⁷². That is why the proper burial of the hero on the territory of the state are important. For example, according to the legend, the Celtic king Arthur placed within the

⁶⁸ Ibidem.

⁶⁹ DAT, Halyk. "Otzovites', POTOMKI Kenesary hana!" obshchestvennaya poziciya | Respublikalyk aptalyk Onlajn. Last modified March 10, 2010. <https://datnews.info/otzovites-potomki-kenesary-hana/>. [DAT, Halyk. "Respond, DESCENDANTS of Kenesary Khan!" public position | Respublika aptalyk Online. Last modified March 10, 2010.]

⁷⁰ Katherine Verdery, 3-20.

⁷¹ Ibidem.

⁷² Finn Stepputat and Henry Myrthnen, "Claiming the dead, defining the nation - Contested narratives of the independence struggle in post-conflict Timor-Leste," in *Governing the Dead: Sovereignty and the Politics of Dead Bodies* (2016), 101-105.

English national myth is sleeping in a cave somewhere in Britain surround by his knights. They will be awakened in the hour of need, ready to defend Britain⁷³.

Human remains, including whole corpses and body parts, are not merely physical objects but carry profound symbolic weight⁷⁴. For example, in the case of Khan Kenesary, the function and symbolic weight of this hero deepened in his skull. The heroes' remains can be exhibited in museums or public spaces, buried according to the cultural or religious practices of a particular group, or relocated to exert symbolic power over communities⁷⁵. The control over the location of the dead hero's relics or the hero's remains equals to the control over the identity and memory of the community celebrating the hero⁷⁶. However, this reason is not the only one for repatriation of the hero's remains.

As Katherin Verdery states, in the first decades of their independence post-communist and post-socialist countries faced the questions what to do with the dead bodies of the political leaders⁷⁷, and also the new states are actively looking for the artifacts belonged to the person chosen to join the national pantheon of heroes⁷⁸. These objects are described as cultural treasures. The term was introduced by Jeanette Greenfield in 1996⁷⁹ and further placed by Katherine Verdery in the context of dead heroes' remains and objects⁸⁰. The repatriation of

⁷³ Sabrina P. Ramet, "Dead kings and national myths: Why myths of founding and martyrdom are important," *Security Dialogues / Безбедносни дијалози*, no. 2 (2020): 36, doi:10.47054/sd202031r.

⁷⁴ Katherin Verdery, 3-20.

⁷⁵ Ibidem.

⁷⁶ Bernhard Giesen and S. N. Eisenstadt, "Chapter 1 Triumphant Heroes Between Gods and Humans," in *Triumph and Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2015), 30.

⁷⁷ Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁷⁸ Ibidem.

⁷⁹ Jeanette Greenfield, *The Return of Cultural Treasures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁸⁰ Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

these bodies symbolizes a reclaiming of cultural property, reinforcing national identity and territorial belonging.

This global trend of repatriation and proper burial reflects a broader concern with property rights and the localization of symbolic capital⁸¹. The imagery of possession associated with bringing back cultural treasures mirrors the struggle over national identities, as seen in various contexts worldwide, including Eastern Europe and beyond. This argument suggests that repatriating dead bodies serves to refurbish and assert national identities by anchoring them to their respective territories⁸².

However, before moving to the next subchapter, I want to elaborate on the heroes' remains as objects and provide more information on the skull collection as practice in 18th and 19th centuries as this information is helpful for the further analysis. As it was mentioned above the heroes' bodies, parts of them and artefact belonged have symbolic weight and are used by actors to rebuild the national identity. But these artifacts can be sorted in different categories. For example, Steven Hooper⁸³ developed typology of the holy relicts. They are presented below.

Type A: Body Relics/Corporeal Relics, or Relics by Substance – These are physical remains, either whole or in parts, of notable individuals (e.g., the Holy Blood of Christ, bones of saints, hair of the Prophet, Buddha's tooth, bones of Polynesian chiefs, or Nelson's hair).

Type B: Contact Relics/Touch Relics, or Relics by Association – These include objects that have been in direct contact with, or in close proximity to, the living body or body

⁸¹ Ibidem.

⁸² Ibidem, 81-90.

⁸³ Hooper, Steven. "A cross-cultural theory of relics: on understanding religion, bodies, artefacts, images and art." *World Art* 4, no. 2 (2014), 175-207. doi:10.1080/21500894.2014.935873.

relics of significant individuals (e.g., pieces of the True Cross, a saint's tunic, Luther's bed, the Prophet's Holy Mantle, Polynesian chiefly cloaks, reliquaries, Michael Jackson's glove, Nelson's watch, or paintings by Leonardo or Picasso).

Type C: Image Relics/Substitute Relics, or Relics by Equivalence – These are images or objects that are considered equivalent to, or substitutes for, the body of a notable individual (e.g., an icon of the Virgin, Leonardo's Last Supper, a statue of a saint, a Quran, a Bible, statues in Buddhist, Hindu, or Polynesian traditions, Fijian whale ivory valuables, or a portrait of Nelson).

Since in the current paper the skull of the khan is regarded (Type A category), I find it important to provide additional information on the practice of collecting the skulls of natives in the 18th and 19th centuries. This brief introduction can provide a valuable contribution to understanding the reasoning behind decapitation. In a nutshell, skulls were collected by Victorian British Army members as proof that the uprising was suppressed, as trophy and as the recognition of the royal status of local chiefs and followed traditional warfare practices in some tribes in Africa⁸⁴.

Mainly, skulls were collected as trophies⁸⁵ and for the purpose of anthropological studies⁸⁶. They were sent to the family members or to the museums' collections⁸⁷. Usually, the corpses were taken by medical servants or on their behalf from the battlefields for the further

⁸⁴ Simon J. Harrison, "Skulls and Scientific Collecting in the Victorian Military: Keeping the Enemy Dead in British Frontier Warfare," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 1 (2008): 285-303, doi:10.1017/s0010417508000133.

⁸⁵ Ibidem

⁸⁶ Elena Govor and Hilary Howes, "Russia and the Pacific: Expeditions, Networks, and the Acquisition of Human Remains," in *The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Repatriation: Return, Reconcile, Renew*, ed. Cressida Fforde, C. T. McKeown, and Honor Keeler (London: Routledge, 2020), 295-315.

⁸⁷ Simon J. Harrison, "Skulls and Scientific Collecting in the Victorian Military: Keeping the Enemy Dead in British Frontier Warfare," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 1 (2008): 285-303, doi:10.1017/s0010417508000133.

examination⁸⁸. The Russian Imperial Army also engaged in skull collection of indigenous people for the scientific purposes⁸⁹. However the practice of taking parts of defeated European looking enemies was not common during Napoleonic wars, Crimean war or against other colonial settlers or armies, what leads to the assumption that the soldiers drawn a moral borderline in this regard based on race or religious closeness⁹⁰.

Another reason behind the collection of the skulls in the colonial army is the need of proof that the uprising in the colony is suppressed. The easiest and most secure method is the decapitation of the revolt's leader⁹¹. For example, as Simon J. Harrison reports⁹² that during the last Zulu rebellion against British forces in 1906, the British killed the leader Bambatha and took his head out of practicality to demonstrate that the rebellion had been suppressed. After the demonstration of the head to the public, the head was buried together with the body with the dignity and respect. However, later in 1925 the photo of a human skull arranged as an animal trophy skulls was published in *The Nongqai* (the monthly magazine of British forces in South Africa) claiming that the skull belongs to the last Zulu chief Bambata. But in the reality the skull of Bambatha was in its grave⁹³.

The Russian Empire was also using such method. For example, in parallel to the Khan Kenesary's revolt, Russian authorities had to suppress the uprising in North Caucasus led by

⁸⁸ Ibidem

⁸⁹ Elena Govor and Hilary Howes, "Russia and the Pacific: Expeditions, Networks, and the Acquisition of Human Remains," in *The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Repatriation: Return, Reconcile, Renew*, ed. Cressida Fforde, C. T. McKeown, and Honor Keeler (London: Routledge, 2020), 295-315.

⁹⁰ Simon J. Harrison, "Skulls and Scientific Collecting in the Victorian Military: Keeping the Enemy Dead in British Frontier Warfare," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 1 (2008): 289, doi:10.1017/s0010417508000133.

⁹¹ Simon J. Harrison, "Skulls and Scientific Collecting in the Victorian Military: Keeping the Enemy Dead in British Frontier Warfare," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 1 (2008): 285-303, doi:10.1017/s0010417508000133.

⁹² Ibidem, 288.

⁹³ Ibidem.

Hadji Murat, Avarian warrior⁹⁴. His head was sent to St. Petersburg to proof the suppression of the rebellion⁹⁵. Hadji Murat's skull was kept in Kunstkamera museum among other skulls as a trophy and demonstration of symbolical dominance, even though it was never exhibited. In early 2010s the skull was found by Dagestani activists and was buried according to the local traditions⁹⁶.

Overall, the dead bodies of heroes incorporate a symbolic weight and power. The post-communist countries were trying to obtain heroes' relicts in order to fulfil the gap in the nation-building process. However, superpowers are given to the heroes' remains, in order to bring the piece to the cosmos and be protected by the ancestors these remains must be returned. Also, due to the symbolic importance, the skulls and bodies of defeated heroes are necessary to claim the territorial and national unity as well.

1.3 Memory politics in nationalising states: the case of Kazakhstan

The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 forced newborn states to solve not only socio-economic problems but also respond to the identity challenges and build a nation-state, embracing and empowering the core or titular ethnic group⁹⁷. The *nationalizing states* in Rogers Brubaker's term are aimed to create a new kind of nationalism suitable for a former Soviet state via promotion of the language, culture, history for securing the survival and dominant position of a previously oppressed group⁹⁸. However, the paths different post-Soviet countries chosen for their nation-building models demonstrate variety of approaches.

⁹⁴ Gisela Erbslöh and Ani Kokobobo, "'Why does Russia need Hadji Murat's head?'" in *Russia's Regional Identities: The Power of the Provinces*, ed. Edith W. Clowes (London: Routledge, 2018), 264-265.

⁹⁵ Ibidem.

⁹⁶ Ibidem.

⁹⁷ Rogers Brubaker, "Nationalizing states revisited: projects and processes of nationalization in post-Soviet states," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 11 (2011): 1785-1787, doi:10.1080/01419870.2011.579137.

⁹⁸ Rogers Brubaker, "Nationalizing states revisited: projects and processes of nationalization in post-Soviet states," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 11 (2011): 1785-1786, doi:10.1080/01419870.2011.579137.

For example, Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) are celebrating only the language and culture of the titular nations, while distancing from the Russia and Soviet legacies, orientating towards the EU and nurturing the European identity⁹⁹. While Moldova, with more ethnically diverse population including Ukrainians, Russians and Gagauzian ethnic minorities, was facing territorial conflicts with Transnistria and Gagauzia in early 1990s and had to adopt more inclusive model of nation-building¹⁰⁰. Even though Transnistrian case resolved into an unrecognized state, the cultural autonomy granted to Gagauzia allowed to keep the territorial unity of the Republic¹⁰¹. The “laud” nationalism of 1980s had be changed to the “quite” nationalism with more harmonized and inclusive model of nation-building.

However, the case of Kazakhstan is more difficult because the population of the Republic in 1991 was even more ethnically diverse in comparison to Baltic states or Moldova. Among approximately 130 ethnic groups living in the territory of the Republic, less than 40% of the population were ethnical Kazakhs¹⁰². On top of that the population was highly Russified and Kazakh language and culture were on the edge of extinction¹⁰³. That is why the ruling elites chose to promote the dual sense of identity: i.e. ethnic Kazakh and civic Kazakhstani¹⁰⁴.

Republic of Kazakhstan began the process of building a nation and a state, the trends of which partially fit into the logic of the behaviour of other post-Soviet states, such as: renaming

⁹⁹ Peter Rutland, "Introduction: nation-building in the Baltic states: thirty years of independence," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 52, no. 3 (2021): 418-420, doi:10.1080/01629778.2021.1944551.

¹⁰⁰ Petru Negură and Svetlana Suveica, "Everyday Ethnicity and Popular Responses to Nation-Building Projects in Moldova After 1989," *Comparative Southeast European Studies* 71, no. 4 (2023): 465-487, doi:10.1515/soeu-2023-0047.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem.

¹⁰² Aziz Burkhanov, "Kazakhstan's National Identity- Building Policy: Soviet Legacy, State Efforts, and Societal Reactions," *Cornell International Law Journal* 50, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 1-14, doi:10.31228/osf.io/2hfr6.

¹⁰³ Aziz Burkhanov, "Kazakhstan's National Identity- Building Policy: Soviet Legacy, State Efforts, and Societal Reactions," *Cornell International Law Journal* 50, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 1-14, doi:10.31228/osf.io/2hfr6.

¹⁰⁴ Nurken Aitymbetov, Ermek Toktarov, and Yenlik Ormakhanova, "Nation-Building in Kazakhstan: Kazakh and Kazakhstani Identities Controversy," *Bilig Journal of Social Sciences in Turkish World* 74 (Summer 2015): 1-20, <https://www.kaznu.kz/content/files/pages/folder1808/Nurken%20Aitymbetov.pdf>.

streets and cities¹⁰⁵, the revival of the language of an ethnic group, previously displaced by the Russian language¹⁰⁶, the proclamation of a new titular nation¹⁰⁷, but also diverged from the general narrative of the region, switching on the track of other former colonies. For example, relative to other Central Asian republics, the peaceful transfer of power new political elites¹⁰⁸, the transfer of the capital from Alma-Ata to Astana, including to suppress separatist movements in the northern and eastern regions¹⁰⁹, and the construction of the image of a new independent state through the capital's architecture¹¹⁰. At the same time, the trends of building a new nation cannot be called exclusively ethnically nationalistic, since the equality of citizens, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation, is ensured by various laws and formal institutions, such as language policy¹¹¹. Therefore, a hybrid system that ensures the absence of serious interethnic conflicts was constructed. The complicated ethno-linguistic situation described above pushed political elite to constantly balance between ethnic and civic nationalism.

Kazakhstan, as an autocratic state, maintains a monopoly on the production and distribution of ideas¹¹² trying to keep the Soviet model of interethnic model of friendship¹¹³. This autocratic regime, combined with a constant balancing act between ethnic and civic

¹⁰⁵ Gill, Graeme. "Changing Symbols: The Renovation of Moscow Place." *Russian Review* 64, no. 3 (2005): 480-503.

¹⁰⁶ Aitymbetov, N., Toktarov, E., and Ormakhanova, Y. "Nation-Building in Kazakhstan: Kazakh and azakhstani Identities Controversy." *Bilig*, no. 74 (2015): 2.

¹⁰⁷ Brubaker, Rogers. "Nationalizing states revisited: projects and processes of nationalization in post-Soviet states." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 11 (2011), 1785-1814. doi:10.1080/01419870.2011.579137.

¹⁰⁸ Isaacs, Rico, and Polese, Abel. "Between 'Imagined' and 'Real' Nation-Building: Identities and Nationhood in Post-Soviet Central Asia." *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 3 (2015): 373.

¹⁰⁹ Shatz, Edward. "Kogda stolitsyi perenosyat: politicheskaya geografiya natsionalnogo i gosudarstvennogo stroitelstva." *Logos* 4 (2013): 131. [Shatz, Edward. "When capitals are moved: the political geography of national and state building." *Logos* 4 (2013): 131].

¹¹⁰ Koch, Natalie. "The Monumental and the Miniature: Imagining 'Modernity' in Astana." 2010.

¹¹¹ Sharipova, Dina, and Aziz Burkhanov. "Nation-Building in Central Asia. Policy and Discourse." In *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Central Asia*, edited by Rico Isaacs and Erica Marat, 101-114. London: Routledge, 2021.

¹¹² Marlene Laurele, *Central Peripheries: Nationhood in Central Asia* (London: UCL Press, 2021), 213.

¹¹³ N. P. Kalashnikova and K. A. Baitureyeva, "Nation-Building in Kazakhstan: Ethno-Confessional Contexts," *EURASIAN INTEGRATION: economics, law, politics* 17, no. 3 (2023): 159-167, doi:10.22394/2073-2929-2023-03-159-167.

nationalism, has created spaces for narratives alternative to the state's official discourse to emerge¹¹⁴. But as further research on the postcolonial discourse in Kazakhstan shows that neither the ruling elites nor different groups of nationalists are incapable of formulation the clear positioning towards the former oppressive rule of Russian Empire and then Soviet Union¹¹⁵.

As Olga Malinova notices in her article "Politics of Memory and Nationalism"¹¹⁶, modern nations tend to follow the observation of *suffering in common*¹¹⁷ and *heroic past*¹¹⁸ proposed by Ernest Renan in 1882. According to Sabrina Ramet, for modern states the legends on suffering and martyrdom is central for their nation-building models¹¹⁹. For example, the post-communist states tend to build their narratives about traumatic experience of being part of the Soviet totalitarian regime, political oppressions and struggle for independence¹²⁰. Sergei Abashin reports that Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries build a distance between them and the traumatic legacy of Imperial and then Soviet times, which is essential to deal with this past¹²¹. Moreover, the closer perspective on Central Asian region shows that the narrative of liberation from inadequate and unjust Soviet system is a core narrative among Central Asian states in their independence era, even though this narrative is not actively used due to challenging ethnically diverse population¹²².

¹¹⁴ Marlene Laurele, *Central Peripheries: Nationhood in Central Asia* (London: UCL Press, 2021), 210-215.

¹¹⁵ Diana T. Kudaibergenova, "The Use and Abuse of Postcolonial Discourses in Post-independent Kazakhstan," *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 5 (2016): 917-918, doi:10.1080/09668136.2016.1194967.

¹¹⁶ Olga Malinova, "Politics of Memory and Nationalism," *Nationalities Papers* 49, no. 6 (2021): 998-999, doi:10.1017/nps.2020.87.

¹¹⁷ Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?", text of a conference delivered at the Sorbonne on March 11th, 1882, in Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*, Paris, Presses-Pocket, (translated by Ethan Rundell), 1992, 1-11.

¹¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹¹⁹ Sabrina P. Ramet, "Dead kings and national myths: Why myths of founding and martyrdom are important," *Security Dialogues / Безбедносни дијалози*, no. 2 (2020): 31, doi:10.47054/sd202031r.

¹²⁰ Olga Malinova, "Politics of Memory and Nationalism," *Nationalities Papers* 49, no. 6 (2021): 998-1000, doi:10.1017/nps.2020.87.

¹²¹ Sergei Abashin, "Nation-construction in post-Soviet Central Asia," *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, 2012, 150-168, doi:10.1017/cbo9780511894732.012.

¹²² Ibidem.

In such conditions Kazakhstan's way to deal with the traumatic past demonstrates that in Kazakhstani-produced pop culture, the traumas of the 20th century¹²³ are often avoided¹²⁴. The primary source for constructing national identity is rooted in the pre-Soviet and pre-Russian historical periods¹²⁵. But the Soviet legacy and its associated traumas are not entirely neglected. For example, Soviet heroes are incorporated into the new national pantheon, as seen with figures like Aliya Moldagulova and other heroes of the Second World War¹²⁶. But the principal source of heroization remains focused on the pre-Russian and pre-Soviet eras¹²⁷.

Overall, the official pattern in nation-building in Kazakhstan has following features: promotion of Kazakh language and culture is combined with embracing diversity and inclusion of other ethnic minorities in the way to create inner harmony and stability. At the same time, the distancing from Russia and Soviet legacy allows to highlight the value of independence. Such nation-building model affects the memory policies, what leads to celebrating Kazakh nationhood and traditions rooted in pre-Russian and pre-Islamic times, the claim over the territory and importance of sovereignty gained through suffering and fight. Simultaneously, the memory regime tends to show the history of other ethnic groups via, for example, such public holidays as the 1st of May which is celebrated as the day of national unity. As the result, the Kazakhstan's nation-building model proposes a project for a civic nation in single civil-political

¹²³ For the further information on political repressions in Kazakhstan in 20st century see Ainash Mustoyapova, *Decolonization of Kazakhstan* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 231-281.

¹²⁴ Rico Isaacs, *Film and Identity in Kazakhstan: Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture in Central Asia* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

¹²⁵ Tomasz Wański, "Historical Narrative and Tradition as Instruments of Creating the Image of the State on the International Arena: The Case of Kazakhstan," *Historia i Polityka*, no. 30 (37) (2019): 56, doi:10.12775/hip.2019.035.

¹²⁶ Kristoffer M. Rees, "Recasting the nation: transforming heroes of the Soviet Union into symbols of Kazakhstani patriotism," *Central Asian Survey* 39, no. 4 (2020): 445-462, doi:10.1080/02634937.2020.1803213.

¹²⁷ For the more complex and detailed information see Isaacs, *Film and Identity in Kazakhstan: Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture in Central Asia*.

aspects, but for the cultural-historical and spiritual-moral components the Kazakh people's legacy is used¹²⁸.

¹²⁸ Vladimir Dunaev, Valentina Kurganskaya, and Mukhtarbek Shaikemelev, "Identity Politics in Managing the System Risks of Nation-Building: On the Example of the Republic of Kazakhstan," *Baltic Journal of European Studies* 9, no. 1 (2019): 111, doi:10.1515/bjes-2019-0006.

2 The figure of Khan Kenesary in contemporary Kazakhstan

This chapter is dedicated to the Khan Kenesary and his figure in contemporary Kazakhstan. First, I will provide information on his biography combining facts and mythical influence based on both academic literature and empirical data base because the narration of the legend of Khan Kenesary in media is based on the school textbooks, which are written by academicians. In the second part of the chapter the overview on the representation of Khan Kenesary as national figure in Kazakhstan will be drawn. This chapter is aimed to extend the context and provide deeper information on the figure of Khan Kenesary.

2.1 The legend of Khan Kenesary

Khan Kenesary, the last Khan of the Kazakh Khanate, was born in 1802 near Mount Kokshetau into a noble and wealthy family. While his name, literally meaning in Kazakh “The yellow tick”, was supposedly chosen for this small size at birth it did little to foreshadow his influential life. Being born into the clan Genghisid-Tore made him a direct descendant of Genghis Khan, which still held great significance at the time. Additionally, he was the grandson of a respected ruler of the former Kazakh Middle Horde, Abylai Khan (ruling Kazakh Khanate between 1771 and 1781), who was the last independent Kazakh Khan before the Khanate was absorbed by the Russian Empire, beginning in 1731.

Khan Kenesary's upbringing was heavily influenced by the traditional nomadic warrior culture, such as horse riding, supposedly showing surprising leadership skills from an early age. Over the course of this 45 year long life he fathered eight sons from two different legitimate wives and left a legacy that is still felt even today in modern Kazakhstan. Khan Kenesary's upbringing was heavily influenced by the traditional nomadic warrior culture, such as horse riding, supposedly showing surprising leadership skills from an early age. Over the course of

this 45 year long life he fathered eight sons from two different legitimate wives and left a legacy that is still felt even today in modern Kazakhstan.

In his mid-thirties, in 1837, he positioned himself right into the middle of a conflict between the Russian Empire, which sought to absorb all of the Kazakh lands and a growing Kazakh liberation movement which wanted to free itself from imperial colonialism. In December of 1838 he wrote a letter to the Russian Emperor Nicholas I urging for peace and a stop to Russian expansionism¹²⁹. When this effort proofed to be futile he became the defacto leader of the resistance movement.

The movement, which started in 1837 and ended after his death in 1847, soon grew into a full military rebellion with a force of around 20 thousand warriors, all gathered under Kenesary to free the Kazakh people from foreign rule. In addition to imperial Russia, the rebellion was also aimed to free the southern parts of Kazakh inhabited lands from the rule of the Khanate of Kokand.

In 1941 he was elected to be Khan, which is effectively a supreme leader, at a so called Kurultai, solidifying his role in the national freedom movement and making him the last Khan of the Kazakh Khanate which was absolved after his defeat and the consequent failure of the resistance movement.

Khan Kenesary died in 1847 during a battle in modern-day Kyrgyzstan. Specifically, he was killed at Maitobe in the Kekilik-Sengir valley at the southern tip of the Zhetizhal ridge. This occurred after he had joined the Kyrgyz struggle against the Khanate of Kokand and was betrayed by his allies.

¹²⁹ Nazarbayev University, "Documents Related to the Kenesary Revolt," Studocu.com, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.studocu.com/row/document/nazarbaev-universiteti/history-of-kazakhstan/collection-of-russian-sources-on-kenesary/17740277>.

The specifics of his death are contentious, and it is unclear whether he was killed directly in combat or whether he was captured and executed. Additionally, it is uncertain whether his head was ever severed and if it was done posthumously. According to one of the version actively promoted in media, after the decapitation the body was lost in Northern Kyrgyzstan (Maitobe area), while the head was sent to the Siberian Governor-General Garchakov and then lost in Omsk during the Russian Revolution in 1917. Kazakh nationals claim that his head was severed and transported to Russia (Moscow, St. Petersburg or Omsk are named as different possible locations¹³⁰) but no proof of its current location in Russia or even existence can be traced. After the head was lost, the figure of the Khan became mythical, surrounded by conspiracy theories and desirable object to be returned. The further presented narrative on his biography is presented in the school textbooks¹³¹, and in the media with the emphasis on the decapitation of the khan.

2.2 The figure of Khan Kenesary through academic and political lense

In the context of modern Kazakhstan, Khan Kenesary is depicted as national hero, who fought for the independence of Kazakhstan. Thus, his rebellion is marked as “peoples’ liberational” or “national liberational” on the academic¹³², political, media¹³³ and educational¹³⁴ levels of discourse. Remarkably, that the narration on national liberational character of the

¹³⁰ Telizhenko, Nikita. "Ostanki gosudarstvennoj vazhnosti: kak zhurnalist Orda.kz iskal cherep hana Kenesary Kasymova." Orda.kz - novosti v Kazahstane i mire. Last modified 2023. <https://orda.kz/ostanki-gosudarstvennoj-vazhnosti-kak-zhurnalist-ordakz-iskal-cherep-hana-kenesary-kasymova-379223/>. [Telizhenko, Nikita. "Ostanki gosudarstvennoj vazhnosti: kak zhurnalist Orda.kz iskal cherep hana Kenesary Kasymova." Orda.kz - news in Kazakhstan i mire. Last modified 2023.]

¹³¹ Z. E. Kabzldinov, J. N. Kaliev, and A. T. Beisembaeva, *Kazakh Tarihi 8 (7) synyp* (Almaty: Atamura, 2018), 89. [Z. E. Kabzldinov, J. N. Kaliev, and A. T. Beisembaeva, *History of Kazakhstan for grade 8 (7)*].

¹³² R. S. Karenov, "Ğūmyryn ğylım jolyna bağystağan ūly ğalym, ūlağatty ūstaz Tarihsy E.Bekmahanovtyñ tuğanyna — 100 jyl," *Habarsysy Vestnik*, 2015, 57-64, <https://history-philosophy->

¹³³ Caravan.kz, "Karim Masimov hochet vernut' golovu Kenesary iz Rossii," *Karavan - novosti, sobytija, analitika v Kazahstane i mire*, last modified August 12, 2016, <https://www.caravan.kz/news/karim-masimov-khochet-vernut-golovu-kenesary-iz-rossii-381017/>.

¹³⁴ Aziz Burkhanov and Dina Sharipova, "New Narratives and Old Myths: History Textbooks in Kazakhstan," *Nationalities Papers*, 2023, 9, doi:10.1017/nps.2023.64.

revolt in the academic papers bring the revolt of Kenesary to mythological level and contributes to the process of nation-building process¹³⁵ However, in their recent research Dina Sharipova and Aziz Burkhanov pointed that the term “peoples’ liberational movements” comes from the Soviet academic sources and school textbooks¹³⁶. This structure of narration the history, i.e. the idea of peoples’ fight against the tsar and Russian colonial regime was the core for the Soviet nation-building policy¹³⁷. Steven Sabol points out the purposes of the rebellion marked as “peoples’ liberational” are questioned and explained more through the lenses of tribal loyalties¹³⁸ rather than through the interest of the nation, where nation is explained the abstract national (in Benedict Anderson’s terms) ideas and loyalties.

At the same, Soviet state regarded Khan Kenesary as bandit and rebel with ethno-nationalistic views, which did not fit the Soviet framework of nation building, promoting idea of inter-ethnic friendship within one territory under the domination of Russia as “big brother”¹³⁹. Moreover, the Soviet post-war scholars officially regarded colonization of Kazakhstan as peaceful and voluntary process.¹⁴⁰ That is why the historian Ermukhan Bekmakhanov was sent to GULAG camp for his monography on the revolt of Kenesary, where he was positively reviewed and evaluated his rebellion as anti-colonial struggle with the further purpose to establish an independent Kazakh state.¹⁴¹ However, he was pardoned in 1954 after

¹³⁵ Yuriy Malikov, "The Kenesary Kasymov Rebellion (1837–1847): A National-Liberation Movement or “a Protest of Restoration”?, " *Nationalities Papers* 33, no. 4 (2005): 369, doi:10.1080/00905990500354137.

¹³⁶ Aziz Burkhanov and Dina Sharipova, "New Narratives and Old Myths: History Textbooks in Kazakhstan," *Nationalities Papers*, 2023, 9, doi:10.1017/nps.2023.64.

¹³⁷ Ibidem.

¹³⁸ Steven Sabol, "Kazak resistance to Russian colonization: interpreting the Kenesary Kasymov revolt, 1837–1847," *Central Asian Survey* 22, no. 2-3 (2003): 232, doi:10.1080/0263493032000157703.

¹³⁹ Diana T. Kudaibergenova, "“Imagining community” in Soviet Kazakhstan. An historical analysis of narrative on nationalism in Kazakh-Soviet literature," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 5 (2013): 840, doi:10.1080/00905992.2013.775115.

¹⁴⁰ In Yuriy Malikov, "The Kenesary Kasymov Rebellion (1837–1847): A National-Liberation Movement or “a Protest of Restoration”?, " *Nationalities Papers* 33, no. 4 (2005): 571, doi:10.1080/00905990500354137.

¹⁴¹ Steven Sabol et al., *The Soviet Historiography And The Question Of Kazakhstan’s History A Retrospective of the Life and Works of The First Kazakh Historian Ermukhan Bekmakhanov*, ed. Abdulvahap Kara (Istambul: Union of Turkic World Municipalities (TDBB), 2016).

the death of Stalin caused the changes of the totalitarian regime, so the voices of his colleagues in Moscow were heard and the processes of amnesty were speed up¹⁴².

Later in 1960s the popular Kazakh writer Ilias Essenberlin was published novell on the pre-Soviet times of Kazakh Khanate. The last book “Khan Kene” was anti-Russian and anti-colonial by its nature¹⁴³. The collapse of the Soviet Union and restored sovereignty of Kazakhstan gave the opportunity to review the pantheon of heroes and brought Khan Kenesary to the light spot by the highly educated nationalists. In the post-Soviet era, Khan Kenesary’s figure is actively promoted by Sultan Khan Akkuly, university professor, and representative of intellectual elites.¹⁴⁴ As it was mentioned earlier, political nationalism was banned and squeezed into the level of intellectual circles¹⁴⁵. Marlene Laurelle in her analysis of nationalistic groups in contemporary Kazakhstan stressed that intellectual elite is dominated by urban born and raised ethnical Kazakhs, who are proficient in both Kazakh and Russian languages¹⁴⁶. Within this group Sultan Khan Akkuly, the most visible in public sphere representative of the group, is famous for fervently advocating for the repatriation of Khan Kenesary's remains to Kazakhstan¹⁴⁷. While their activism contrasts with the previous ruling elite under Nursultan Nazarbayev, it does not necessarily align with a direct challenge to current political structures. Instead, they have managed to strike a balance, pursuing their objectives within the confines of academic and cultural discourse without overtly involving themselves in formal politics or disrupting the current political landscape¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴² Ibidem.

¹⁴³ Gulnara Dadabayeva and Dina Sharipova, "The imagined nation-state in Soviet literature: The case of Koshpendiler," *Nationalities Papers* 44, no. 1 (2016): 170, doi:10.1080/00905992.2015.1061984.

¹⁴⁴ Marlene Laurelle, "Language and ethnicity: the landscape of Kazakh nationalism," in *Central Peripheries: Nationhood in Central Asia* (London: UCL Press, 2021), 172-174.

¹⁴⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem.

The state authorities meanwhile soften the radicalism of the intellectuals in the promotion of the khan's figure and his legacy as the state model of nation-building has to harmonize the civic and ethnic elements. For example, the absence of celebrations or public collective commemorative events as it could be observed in the cases of Kyrgyz hero Manas or Serbian Prinz Lazar. Academic tradition emphasizes the importance of commemorations and rituals to celebrate a deceased hero's past triumphs or failures¹⁴⁹. Such practices serve to solidify the hero's legacy within the collective memory of a community. However, in the case of Kenesary Khan, the absence of public celebrations or organized commemorative practices can be observed.

Instead, all commemorative actions are performed as private initiatives, lacking the formal recognition typically accompanying national heroes. Even though, Khan Kenesary appeared in the public speech of president Tokaev during the annual Kurultai in 2023 due to the return of Khan's Quran to Kazakhstan¹⁵⁰. Even though, the position of the state is vague regarding the repatriation of the khan's skull, the steady work on return of other cultural treasures is observed.

Despite the absence of public commemoration, in the Kazakhstani media landscape there exists a persistent media discourse focused on locating and repatriating Kenesary Khan's skull. This ongoing effort raises the question of whether it can be considered a form of commemoration. The media's role in keeping Kenesary Khan's memory alive and in advocating

¹⁴⁹ Bernhard Giesen and S. N. Eisenstadt, "Chapter 1 Triumphant Heroes Between Gods and Humans," in *Triumph and Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2015), 22.

¹⁵⁰ Kasyim-Jomart Tokaev, "Vyistuplenie Glavyi gosudarstva Kasyim-Zhomarta Tokaeva na vtorom zasedanii Natsionalnogo kurultaya "Adiletti Kazakhstan-Adal azamat"," Akorda.kz, last modified 2023, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/vystuplenie-glavyi-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-na-vtorom-zasedanii-natsionalnogo-kurultayaadiletti-kazakhstan-adal-azamat-175233>. [Kasyim-Jomart Tokaev, "Speech by Head of State Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the second meeting of the National Kurultai "Fair Kazakhstan - Honest Citizen"," Akorda.kz, last modified 2023].

for the return of his remains might serve as a modern, but unconventional, method of honoring his legacy. This discourse could be seen as an alternative commemorative practice that underscores the continuing relevance of Kenesary Khan's legacy in contemporary Kazakhstani society, where the political nationalism was prosecuted for decades and was pushed to the intellectual elites' circles¹⁵¹. . In the nutshell, the figure of the last khan of Kazakh Khanate has significant political potential and symbolical weight among the ethnic Kazakh population. This hero has the energy and aura of rebellious warrior fighting against colonisation of Kazakhstan. For decades positive review of Khan Kenesary's rebellion was prosecuted by the Soviet state and it was adopted in the independent era to the extent of giving the status of a national hero.

¹⁵¹ Marlene Laurele, "Language and ethnicity: the landscape of Kazakh nationalism," in *Central Peripheries: Nationhood in Central Asia* (London: UCL Press, 2021), 172-174.

3 Methodology

This chapter aims to develop a suitable methodology for the investigation on the depiction of Khan Kenesary in the state discourse in Kazakhstan. Since our data consists of state-sponsored media and school textbooks for the subject “History of Kazakhstan”, the analytical toolbox belongs to the rich tradition of qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This method is employed as the main analytical tool due to its flexibility, allowing analysis of textual and visual components of several discourse layers. The visual component includes the pictures incorporated into the text of news articles and school textbooks to depict the Khan Kenesary. Overall, this chapter is divided into two main sections: data base formation and CDA as a research toolbox.

The argumentation constructed around the return of the head of Khan Kenesary in the Kazakhstani media discourse between 2004–2024. Ruth Wodak writes: “*The Discourse Historical Analysis is three-dimensional after (1) having identified the specific contents or topics of a specific discourse, (2) discursive strategies are investigated. Then (3), linguistic means (as types) and the specific, context-dependent linguistic realizations (as tokens) are examined.*”¹⁵².

3.1 Data: Description and selection

As for the media, I choose the materials where the process of search for the Khan’s skull is actively discussed. To achieve the main objective of this paper I analyse articles published in Kazakhstani digital independent and state sponsored media dedicated to the head of Khan

¹⁵² Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2009). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 87–121). London, UK: Sage P. 87

Kenesary and the return of the Khan's head to Kazakhstan. In many instances, platforms that duplicated content from other media sources were excluded from the sample. After careful consideration of materials, the textual corpus for the analysis included 34 original articles dedicated to the head of Kenesary published in Kazakhstani media between 2004 and May 2024. I have to mention the peculiarity of the articles published in 2022, the year of 220 birthday anniversary of Kenesary Khan. These articles were dedicated only to the Kenesary as historical figure without mentioning the mystery around the skull, neither its location, nor return to the homeland.

Overall, the selected articles belong to the four following subgroups: (1) coverage of the events, (2) interviews with experts, activists, and local residents, (3) investigations into the head's location, and (4) the response on the video or podcast dedicated to the studied topic. The timeframe had been limited by the lack of publications written earlier, which would be accessible online. However, as the earliest text in the sample reports, the attempts to find and return skull took place back in 2002¹⁵³. Despite the skull as the artifact takes the dominant position withing the media discourse, it is regarded here as an artifact shaping the discourse and demonstrating nation-building processes in the public sphere.

Despite the fact that several articles in the Kazakhstani media were published as the response to the articles in Russian media (state-sponsored), the (hyper)links to the articles were absent or did not work. A small number of articles (was analyzed. The Kyrgyz media is also of interest because of the Kyrgyz Khan Ormon fighter batter with Kenesary Khan and the further decapitation of Kazakh rebellion. But the number of reports in the Kyrgyz media is limited. This historical moment has an ambiguous position in contemporary Kazakh-Kyrgyz relations¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Aleksandra Salihova, "Rossija ne vozvrashhaet Kazahstanu golovu poslednego hana Kenesary potomu, chto ee... poterjala," *Centrasia*, last modified 2004, <https://centrasia.org/newsA.php?st=1091417640>.

¹⁵⁴ See more in Empirical Database

and respective nation-building strategies. However, these are not in the focus of the current paper. These articles were considered, however without deep analysis. Despite the main corpora of media publications in the database are presented in Russian language, suitable articles in Kazakh language were analyzed as well. These articles were published as the both state-sponsored platform Egemen Kazakhstan (Sovereign Kazakhstan) and private platforms as, for example, ORDA.kz.

The majority of articles were published as a response to the significant events dedicated to the return of the Kenesary's skull. For example, the meetings of (ex)presidents or prime ministers (in 2021, 2016), the grassroots activities and the reflections on the promise of returning the head announced in 2021. However, the articles were published consistently between the events, mentioned above. These articles can be characterized as texts aimed at reminding to the audience about the recent events or the legends around the head. Thus, the absence of informational hiatus allowed to create a permanent attention to the topic, what can also demonstrate the importance of the topic.

Another source for the database consists of 4 school textbooks for the pupils studying in the 8th grade aiming as Kazakh and Russian speaking students. The books were published in 2018 in 2 main textbooks publishers in Kazakhstan: Mektep and Atamura. They will be replaced in the next years after the new textbooks for the subject "History of Kazakhstan", based on the new state-sponsored historical research and one unified textbook for the subjects "History of Kazakhstan" and "World History".¹⁵⁵ The chosen textbooks are the last history textbooks were published under Nazarbayev's rule and were taught during the transition period, before Tokaev took over the full political power.

¹⁵⁵ Tamara Vaal, "Tokaev poruchil razrabotat edinyie shkolnyie uchebniki po istorii Kazahstana i vseмирnoy istorii," Journal Vlast', last modified January 26, 2021, <https://vlast.kz/novosti/43520-tokaev-porucil-razrabotat-edinye-skolnye-ucebniki-po-istorii-kazahstana-i-vsemirnoj-istorii.html>. [Tamara Vaal, "Tokayev charged to develop unified school textbooks on the history of Kazakhstan and world history," Journal Vlast', last modified January 26, 2021]

The texts were further analysed within the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) tradition. The text was coded according to the codebook developed after the pilot research. The further details are presented in the next section.

3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis: approach, strategies, and plan

M. Reisigl and R. Wodak define discourse within the framework of Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) as clutch built of context-dependent semiotic practices constructed, distributed among certain social groups in the specific contexts¹⁵⁶. Thus, discourse here is understood as the omnipresent combination of texts, actions, signs performed for the specific audience within specific context with the aim to set certain arguments and visions by various actors. At the same time, the visual representation of the Khan Kenesary on the digital pages of the textbooks and articles. In the case of Khan Kenesary, this discourse is not monopolised by the state but shared among various groups such as Kenesary's descendances, grassroots activists, spiritual practitioners, political actors, social scientists, journalists.

Critical Discourse Analysis as a flexible method illuminating the phenomena of layers of the discourse and intertextuality. Despite Ruth Wodak suggests incorporating 4 layers of the discourse¹⁵⁷, here I use two of them: the level of the text itself and the level of the broader historical discourse connected to the text on hand. The two levels of discourse were selected for the analysis: media and educational.

The concept of intertextuality or the interconnection and interinfluence of texts, visual and audial parts of discourses allow to work with the corpus of textual data as interconnected

¹⁵⁶ Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2009). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 87–121). London, UK: Sage P. 87

¹⁵⁷ Markus Rheindorf, "Combining Analyses at Different Levels of Discourse," in *Revisiting the Toolbox of Discourse Studies: New Trajectories in Methodology, Open Data, and Visualization* (Basingstoke: Springer, 2019), 141.

materials¹⁵⁸. Additionally, intertextuality draws the border between texts, discourse, and order of discourse, because the concept considers not only the texts and references in it, which it, but it also catches the wider socio-economic context beyond provided information¹⁵⁹. In other words, the articles are bounded together by the (in) direct references. The concept of interdiscursivity helps to link several texts together due to the (possible) presence of different discourses within one text¹⁶⁰.

For the analysis of discourse, I have chosen to follow three Reisigl's Discursive strategies¹⁶¹, with the focus on argumentation. The other two are serving as supportive instruments. They are:

1. **Nomination** – “How are persons, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically in the discourse in question?”¹⁶².

This strategy serves as a supportive line to identify the common ways to refer to the Khan Kenesary and his skull in the chosen discourse.

2. **Predication** - What kind of characteristics or qualities are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions mentioned in the discourse?

The second strategy is also used as supportive line for this research. Predication strategy is used to catch characteristics related to the Kenesary Khan, his skull, and the return of his skull to the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well of some items of material heritage. Such actor as Russia is also included in the list because of the symbolic powers it has by keeping the dead

¹⁵⁸ Michael Farrelly, "Rethinking intertextuality in CDA," *Critical Discourse Studies* 17, no. 4 (2019): 359-376, doi:10.1080/17405904.2019.1609538.

¹⁵⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁰ Samuel Bennett, "New “Crises,” Old Habits: Online Interdiscursivity and Intertextuality in *UK Migration Policy Discourses*," *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 16, no. 1-2 (2016): 147, doi:10.1080/15562948.2016.1257753.

¹⁶¹ Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2009). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 87–121). London, UK: Sage P. 52.

¹⁶² Ibidem.

heroes' head on its territory. The first two strategies served as the preparation for the main interest of this research, i.e. argumentative strategy.

3. **Argumentation** – What arguments are incorporated in discourse?

The third category is the essential category for the current investigation to look at the justifications advocated by the actors. Also, politicians use narratives as an argumentative strategy with the references to the historical event within the broader speech to bring or support certain interpretation¹⁶³.

In such a way, the methodological framework should allow to highlight way Khan Kenesary is depicted in the regarded discourses with the purpose to compare it with the nation-building model implemented in Kazakhstan.

The analysis consists of the following steps:

1. The data collection and selection of the sample.
2. The qualitative content analysis with the purpose to find themes circulated in the discourse as well as dynamics of the discourse within the last 20 years.
3. Finding and systematizing relevant nomination of Kenesary and his skull, qualities they were given and finally identify the argumentation.
4. The last stage is placement of the argumentation within the context this argumentation was developed.
5. Description of the visual representation of Khan Kenesary on the base of selected data.

¹⁶³ Anna De Fina, "Narratives and storytelling processes in the analysis of political discourse," in Handbook of Political Discourse, ed. Piotr Cap (Gloucestershire: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 210.

4 Findings and Discussion

In the current chapter are presented results and discussion of them. First, the overview on the narratives, dynamic of the discourse in media and school textbooks materials will be provided. Then nominations and predications given to Khan Kenesary and his skull appearing in the school textbooks and digital newspapers will be analysed. The third part of this chapter captures the argumentation dedicated to the return of the skull to Kazakhstan, which helps to investigate the depiction of the khan in public discourse. The final section tackles the notion of visual representation of Khan Kenesary.

4.1 Overview

In order to capture the wide picture of Khan Kenesary in Kazakhstani public discourse the data in Kazakh and Russian languages were analysed. The narration about the khan's biography in both school textbooks and media are harmonized. However, the topic of Khan Kenesary's death and post-mortem punishment (decapitation and the loss of the skull to Russia) are highly promoted in the media but not in the educational materials.

The Critical Discourse Analysis of the media articles has shown the gradual escalation of the discourse dynamics and an interesting trend, i.e. around argumentation branches as spiritual and postcolonial various fields of action including political movements, activism, filmmaking, debates and even semi-religious cults have been built around. Therefore, the argumentation of the necessity of the skull's return transformed into intersected discursive network, which will be presented in the next sections. I also have to mention that the return of the head as the topic of the interests in this paper is the not the central topic within the regarding discourse. All of the articles in our sample published in Kazakhstani media are emphasizing the importance and sacred aura of the Khan Kenesary. But the main concerns and mysteries around

the case are connected to the location of the skull. Since every article consist of the theories regarding the location of it.

The analysis identified specific dynamics within the discourse surrounding the head of Khan Kenesary. Publications from 2000 to 2010 can be characterized as efforts to foreground the figure of Kenesary and the issue of his head. In the earliest article in the sample dated back to 2004 was found the critique of political use of the Khan's head as the part of the election campaign for the elections in 2005. During this period, media outlets aimed to bring attention to the matter, with a notable increase in activity in 2009 following an investigation by Radio Liberty that suggested the possible location of the Khan's head in Omsk¹⁶⁴.

The second stage of discussions occurred between 2010 and 2020, peaking in 2016 when Kazakhstan's former Prime Minister Karim Masimov met with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in Sochi to discuss the possible return of Kenesary Khan's skull¹⁶⁵. This phase of media discourse is characterized by numerous grassroots activities, including the "Movement for the Returning of Kenesary Khan's Head"¹⁶⁶, a documentary dedicated to the path of the skull¹⁶⁷, and an unexpected appeal to the head of the Chechen Republic by a blogger

¹⁶⁴ Sultan-Khan Akkuly, "Sledy ostankov poslednego kazahskogo hana Kenesary vedut... v Omsk," Radio Azattyk, last modified November 4, 2009, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/Head_of_Kenesary_Kasymov/1868201.html.

¹⁶⁵ Caravan.kz, "Karim Masimov hochet vernut' golovu Kenesary iz Rossii," *Karavan - novosti, sobytija, analitika v Kazahstane i mire*, last modified August 12, 2016, <https://www.caravan.kz/news/karim-masimov-khochet-vernut-golovu-kenesary-iz-rossii-381017/>. [Caravan.kz, "Karim Masimov Wants To Return The Head Of Kenesary From Russia" *Karavan - novosti, sobytija, analitika v Kazahstane i mire*, last modified August 12, 2016]

¹⁶⁶ Komptra, "Obshchestvennyy Fond "Kenesary Khan" - Aydarov Talgat Shorayevich - 101040012432," *Komptra.kz*, last modified 2013, <https://komptra.kz/organization/101040012432>. [Komptra, "Public Foundation "Kenesary Khan" - Aydarov Talgat Shorayevich - 101040012432," *Komptra.kz*, last modified 2013].

¹⁶⁷ Svetlana Abdrashitova, "Gde golova khana Kenesary?," *Jekspress K*, last modified September 8, 2015, <https://exk.kz/news/34176/ghdie-gholova-khana-kieniesary>. [Svetlana Abdrashitova, "Where Is The Khan Kenesary's Head?," *Jekspress K*, last modified September 8, 2015]

from Northern Kazakhstan¹⁶⁸.¹⁶⁹. His head, which had been kept as a trophy in the Kunstkamera Museum in St. Petersburg, was returned to Kazakhstan in 2016¹⁷⁰. This case elaborated the discussions around the head of Kenesary and especially its existence. The logic behind is simple, if Russia returned the skull of Keiki Batyr, who was marked in Soviet times also as a bandit, fighting against Russian rule over the region, maybe the skull was lost, and it is impossible to return it. While the Russian-language articles are built only around the head, Kazakh-language Newspaper Egemen Kazakhstan (Independent Kazakhstan) produces articles related to other artifacts belong to the Khan. For example, the bag, found in Omsk museum in 2017¹⁷¹.

The third stage in the process of returning Kenesary Khan's head is ongoing. In April 2021, it was reported that the skull had been found in Omsk¹⁷², with an official announcement following in the summer. On June 30, 2021, the Head of the Security Council, N. Nazarbayev, met with V. Putin to discuss security issues related to the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan, economic matters, and the return of Kenesary Kasymov's head¹⁷³. In August, media articles

¹⁶⁸ Anton Moldin, "Vernite golovu!," *Vremja*, last modified April 25, 2018, <https://time.kz/articles/zloba/2018/04/25/vernite-golovu>. [Anton Moldin, "Return the Head!," *Vremja*, last modified April 25, 2018,]

¹⁶⁹ Caravan.kz, "Karim Masimov hochet vernut' golovu Kenesary iz Rossii," *Karavan - novosti, sobytija, analitika v Kazahstane i mire*, last modified August 12, 2016, <https://www.caravan.kz/news/karim-masimov-khochet-vernut-golovu-kenesary-iz-rossii-381017/>. [Caravan.kz, "Karim Masimov Wants To Return The Head Of Kenesary From Russia" *Karavan - novosti, sobytija, analitika v Kazahstane i mire*, last modified August 12, 2016]

¹⁷⁰ Rahat Mamyrbek, "«Po cherepu vidno, chto golovu otrubali tupym ketmenem»,," *Radio Azattyk*, last modified October 6, 2016, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan_head_of_keyki_batyr/28036158.html. [Rahat Mamyrbek, "You can tell from the skull that the head was chopped off with a blunt hoe," *Radio Azattyk*, last modified October 6, 2016]

¹⁷¹ Egemen Qazaqstan, "Reseide Kenesary Khannyn kisesi saqtalghan belgili boldz," Egemen Qazaqstan, last modified December 5, 2017, <https://egemen.kz/article/162131-reseyde-kenesary-khannynh-kisesi-saqtalghany-belgili-boldy>. [Egemen Qazaqstan, "The bag of Khan Kenesary was found in Russia," Egemen Qazaqstan, last modified December 5, 2017]

¹⁷² Zhan Murza, "«Cherep v vitrine – pozor nacji»: politologi o vozvrashhenii golovy Kenesary hana," *Rus.azattyq-ruhy.kz*, last modified April 10, 2021, <https://rus.azattyq-ruhy.kz/analytics/22849-cherep-v-vitrine-pozor-natsii-politologi-o-vozvrashchenii-golovy-kenesary-khana>.

¹⁷³ Aidos Ukibai, "EJeS, koronavirus i ostanki hana Kenesary. Itogi peregovorov Nazarbaeva i Putina," *Glavnye novosti Kazahstana - Tengrinews.kz*, last modified July 2, 2021, <https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/eaes-koronavirus-ostanki-hana-kenesaryi-itogi-peregovorov-1111/>.

reported that the head had mysteriously appeared in Omsk, despite previous denials by Omsk museums regarding its presence in their collections. Currently, the skull remains in Russia for CDA analysis¹⁷⁴.

The discourse within the last two years following the announcement of the skull's discovery has shifted. The prolonged duration of the CDA analysis has fuelled scepticism, and, surprisingly, the Kazakhstani Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested that the skull may never have existed¹⁷⁵, leaving open the question of whether the skull found truly belongs to Kenesary Khan according to the documents. This has led to widespread disappointment among the public and has perpetuated conspiracy theories surrounding the skull. However, the highlight of 2023 was the return of the Quran belonged to the Khan Kenesary back to Kazakhstan. While the passed months of 2024 brought the trope of never-ending search for the skull.

4.2 Different accents in the textbooks

An essential component of Kazakhstan's nation-building politics is the narrative emphasizing the unity of all ethnic groups residing within the country (Images 1a and 1b). This theme is notably exemplified in educational materials, such as the school textbooks for students in Russophone schools. The illustrations and text within these books depict a diverse coalition of ethnic groups—including Kazakhs, Russians, Bashkirs, Tatars, Uzbeks, Poles, Turkmen, and Karakalpaks—participating in historical events, such as the rebellion led by Khan Kenesary. In these depictions, he is portrayed as a charismatic leader capable of forging strong

¹⁷⁴ Tengrinews.kz, "Cherep Kenesary-hana nashli, on budet vozvrashhen v Kazahstan - SMI," Glavnye novosti Kazahstana - Tengrinews.kz, last modified August 25, 2021, https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/cherep-kenesaryi-hana-nashli-budet-vozvrashchen-kazahstan-smi-446673/.

¹⁷⁵ Asiya Marat. "Nazarbaev byl protiv vozvrashcheniya cherepa Kenesary - uchenyj-alasheved." «Golos Naroda» - informacionno-analiticheskij sajt. Last modified February 9, 2024. <https://golos-naroda.kz/27268-nazarbaev-byi-protiv-vozvrashcheniia-cherepa-kenesary-uchenyi-alashoved-1707454928/amp/>. [Asia Marat. "Nazarbayev was against the return of Kenesary's skull - Alash scientist." "Voice of the People" is an information and analytical site. Last modified February 9, 2024.]

bonds with people from various backgrounds, even attracting Russians who were fleeing the Russian Empire.

In the Kazakh-language version of these educational materials, there is a particular emphasis on the predominance of Kazakhs within Kenesary's army. This narrative also acknowledges the involvement of other ethnic groups, including Russians, Bashkirs, Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, Turkmens, and a small number of Poles. The portrayal of Kenesary in this context underscores his ability to unify a diverse set of communities, thereby reinforcing a broader national identity that transcends ethnic divisions. This dual narrative in educational content reflects a deliberate effort to foster a sense of inclusivity and shared history among Kazakhstan's multi-ethnic population.

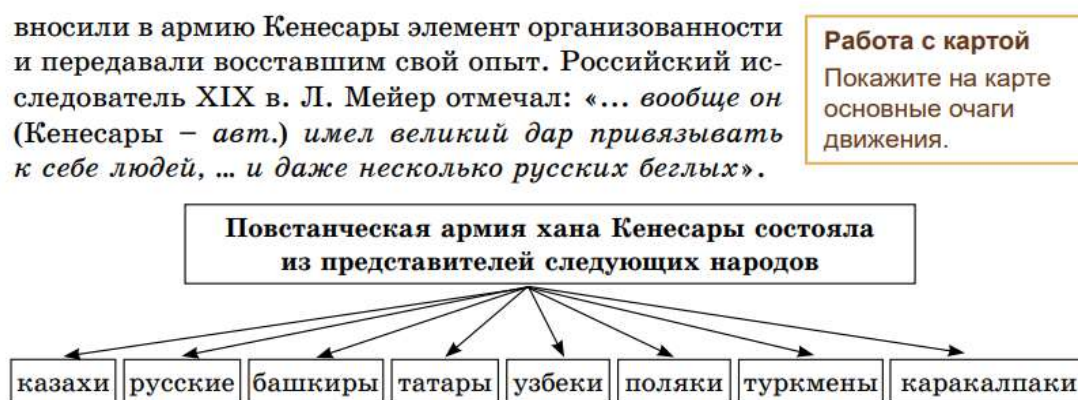


Image 1a Ethnic diversity in the army (textbook by Kabuldinov - Kazakh version)

Көтерілістің басты мақсаты – қазақтардың патша үкіметі тартып алған атамекен қонысын қайтарып алу, округтерді тарату, отаршылар енгізген алым-салықтарды жою еді.

Қозғаушы күш ретінде көтеріліске қатардағы қарапайым халық, сондай-ақ старшындар мен би, батырлар, тіпті сұлтандар да қатысты. Көтерілісшілердің қалың қолына үш жүздің атақты батырлары жетекшілік етті.

Кенесарының отаршылдық билікке қойған талап-тілектеріне талдау жасаңдар.

Көтеріліске қатысушылар негізінен қазақ халқы еді. Бірақ олардың арасында орыстар мен башқұрт, өзбек, қарақалпақ, түрікмен, тіпті поляктар және басқа халық өкілдері де болды. Олардың кейбіреулері ханның ерекше сенімі мен құрметіне ие болып, жоғары лауазымды қызметтер атқарды. Наурызбай сұлтанның атқосшысы Николай Губин есімді орыс еді. Татар Әлім Ягудин Әскери кеңестің мүшесі болатын. Дипломатиялық қызметке ханның атынан өзбек Сейдаққожа Оспанов басшылық етті. Бұлардың бәрі де Кенесарыға жақсы ұйымдастырылған тәртіпті әскер құруына көмектесті және көтерілісшілерге өздерінің жеке тәжірибелерін үйретті.

Image 1b Ethnic diversity in the army (textbook by Kabuldinov - Kazakh version)

Overall, the textbooks by the same authors both in Kazakh and Russian languages were having the same narratives and information, however visual and textual highlighters within the textbooks of the same authors might be different. The textbooks state that the support of the Khan was widely spread among people, however, by 1846, Kenesary's forces were significantly weakened due to continuous fighting, lack of resources, and betrayal by some allied tribes. His position became increasingly precarious as Russian forces intensified their campaign against him. his rebellion was not successful due to the lack of unity¹⁷⁶. But the emphasis on the ethno-religious inclusion of the rebellion fits the civic features within the Kazakhstani model of nation-building.

4.3 Nominations and Predications

Below is presented the table with nominations and predications detected within the analysed corpus of texts. Below the tables is presented an analysis of the figure of Khan Kenesary and his skull appearing in the media and school history textbooks.

¹⁷⁶ Steven Sabol, "Kazak resistance to Russian colonization: interpreting the Kenesary Kasymov revolt, 1837–1847," Central Asian Survey 22, no. 2-3 (2003): 232, doi:10.1080/0263493032000157703.

^[1] Rico Isaacs, "Chapter 4. Naked In The Mirror: The Ethno-Centric Narrative Of Kazakh Nationhood," in Film and Identity in Kazakhstan: Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture in Central Asia (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

Table 1a Examples of nominations in the Media		
Nomination	English translation	Original language
Khan Kenesary	Kenesary Khan Khan Kene Kenesary Kasymuly Kenesary khan's remains, Abylay Khan's grandson Kene	Кенесары хан Хан Кене Кенесары Касымұлы Кенесары ханның сүйегін Абылай ханның немересі Кенекең
Khan Kenesary	Khan Kenesary, Kenesary, Kenesary Kasymov, Kenesary Kasymuly, Khan Kene, Chingizid rebel khan, last khan of the Kazakh Khanate, hero, rebel sultan, headless horseman, all- Kazakh khan, Kazakh sultan, rebel	Хан Кенесары, Кенесары, Кенесары Касымов, Кенесары Касымұлы, Хан Кене, чингизид мятежный хан, последний хан Казахского Ханства, герой, мятежный султан, всадник без головы, всеказахский хан, казахский султан, бунтовщик
The skull	Head, trophy, skull	Голова, трофей, череп
The skull	Sacred artefact Kenesary Khan's head, skull	қасиетті артефакті Кенесары ханның басы, бас сүйегі

Table 1b Examples of nominations in the textbooks		
Nomination	English translation	Original language
Khan Kenesary	Kenesary Khan Kenesary Kasymuly Brave batyr, commander, diplomat, eminent person, statesman, Genghisid sultan, strateg	Кенесары хан Кенесары Касымұлы қаһарман батыр, қолбасшы, дипломат, аса көрнекті тұлға, мемлекет қайраткері шынгизид султан, стратег
Khan Kenesary	Khan Kenesary, Kenesary, Kenesary Kasymov, Kenesary Kasymuly, Chingizid last khan of the Kazakh Khanate,	Хан Кенесары, Кенесары, Кенесары Касымов, Кенесары Касымұлы, чингизид последний хан Казахского Ханства, народный герой, султан, внук Абылая,

	people's (national) hero, grandson of Abylay sultan, commander, diplomat, statesman	полководец, дипломат, государственный деятель.
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In Russian-language media, there exists a notable dichotomy in the usage of his family name. It is often presented either in its Russified form as "Kasymov" or in its traditional Kazakh version as "Kasymuly," which translates to "son of Kasym." This variation in nomenclature—Kasymov versus Kasymuly—highlights the ongoing dispute between the Russified adaptation of the family name and its original Kazakh form and can reflect the contradictions withing the nation-building in Kazakhstan.

A similar inconsistency is evident in textbooks written in Russian. For instance, in the works of Omarbekov et al., the khan is referred to as Kenesary Kasymov, while the Kazakh version uses "Kasymuly." Moreover, in Kabuldinov's textbook, the family names are mixed, resulting in a lack of consistency. This linguistic divergence reflects deeper cultural and identity tensions within the region, emphasizing the broader discourse surrounding national identity and heritage common for nationalising states. These inconsistencies underscore the complex interplay between language, identity, and historical narrative in Kazakhstan's educational and cultural contexts, where at the moment can be noticed the process of Kazakhisation and change of the ethno-linguistic hierarchy¹⁷⁷.

Although terms such as "rebel khan," "rebel sultan," and "rebel" might initially be interpreted with negative connotations, a closer examination of the discourse reveals that these figures are imbued with positive significance. In the context of contemporary Kazakhstan's nation-building narratives, these rebel leaders symbolize the relentless pursuit of freedom,

¹⁷⁷ Doszhan Kaliyev, "Interpretation of History and Nation Building in Kazakhstan: Official Historiography and Ethnic Narratives," *LOGOS - A Journal of Religion, Philosophy, Comparative Cultural Studies and Art* 116 (2023): 99-211, doi:10.24101/logos.2023.64.

independence, and the establishment of a sovereign nation-state. These values are held in high regard and are integral to the collective identity and historical consciousness of modern Kazakhstan as it was highlighted in the recent article on the importance of independence and the price paid by the ancestors written by president Tokaev¹⁷⁸.

In Kazakh-language sources, the designation "Khan Kene" appears more frequently, particularly within official state-sponsored media. In contrast, in texts written in Russian, the term "Khan Kene" is predominantly encountered in the interviews of Sultan Akkuuly. According to Sultan Akkuuly, the use of "Khan Kene" is a way to show respect. This respectful designation underscores the reverence held for this historical figure within Kazakh culture. Additionally, "Khan Kene" is also the title of the first book published in 1963 by Ilias Esenberlin, a renowned Kazakh writer. Esenberlin's work further cemented the cultural significance of this term, contributing to its prominence in Kazakh literature and national identity narratives¹⁷⁹. This nomination was not detected in the school textbooks.

The depiction of Khan Kenesary and the circumstances surrounding his death are notably absent or inconsistently presented in various historical textbooks. Specifically, references to the beheading of Khan Kenesary are conspicuously omitted from these academic resources. This omission contrasts sharply with media narratives, which often emphasize this particular aspect of his demise. Such discrepancies highlight the divergent portrayals of historical figures across different mediums and the selective nature of historical documentation.

In examining textbooks, it was observed that while the titles and descriptions used are generally consistent, significant differences emerge in the portrayal of Khan Kenesary across

¹⁷⁸ Kasyim-Zhomart Tokaev, "Kasyim-Zhomart Tokaev napisal statyu "Nezavisimost prevyishe vsego". Polnyiye tekst," Informburo.kz , last modified 2024, <https://informburo.kz/stati/kasym-zomart-tokaev-napisal-statyu-nezavisimost-prevyise-vsego-polnyi-tekst>. [Kasyim-Zhomart Tokaev, "Kasyim-Zhomart Tokaev wrote the articles "Independence comes first". Full text," Informburo.kz , last modified 2024]

¹⁷⁹ Gulnara Dadabayeva and Dina Sharipova, "The imagined nation-state in Soviet literature: The case of Koshpendiler," *Nationalities Papers* 44, no. 1 (2016): 170, doi:10.1080/00905992.2015.1061984.

Kazakh and Russian editions of Kabuldinov's works. In the Kazakh version, Khan Kenesary is called a "brave warrior," underscoring his valour and leadership in resisting imperial encroachment. This portrayal emphasizes his role as a national hero and a symbol of resistance against foreign domination.

Conversely, the Russian edition of the same work refers to him only as the "Grandson of Abylay," placing greater emphasis on his lineage and heritage. This distinction subtly shifts the focus from Kenesary's personal attributes and actions to his familial connections, particularly highlighting Abylay Khan's diplomatic endeavours with the Russian Empire and China. The differences in these narratives are not merely superficial but reflect deeper historiographical biases and cultural perspectives.

Further, while the core text remains largely consistent between the Kazakh and Russian versions, the organization of the content differs. In the Kazakh edition, the narrative initially presents Kenesary as a formidable leader of the largest all-Kazakh rebellion of 1837, followed by a reference to his heritage. This sequence prioritizes his revolutionary activities and positions him as a pivotal figure in Kazakh resistance. In contrast, the Russian version introduces Kenesary through his ancestry, only subsequently acknowledging his leadership in the revolt. This order of presentation can subtly influence the reader's perception, potentially downplaying his agency and highlighting a narrative of continuity with his grandfather's legacy rather than his independent actions.

These variations in portrayal, as illustrated in the images provided (Images 2a and 2b), underscore the complex and often contested nature of historical representation. The Kazakh version's emphasis on Kenesary's warrior attributes aligns with a nationalist narrative that celebrates resistance and heroism. On the other hand, the Russian version's focus on lineage and diplomatic relations suggests a narrative that situates Kenesary within a broader historical context, potentially diminishing the emphasis on conflict and resistance.

In conclusion, the portrayal of Khan Kenesary in historical textbooks is a reflection of the broader political and cultural narratives prevalent in Kazakh and Russian historiography. The selective emphasis on certain aspects of his life and legacy, as well as the omission of others, reveals the underlying biases and intentions of the authors and publishers. This analysis highlights the importance of critical engagement with historical texts and the need for a nuanced understanding of how history is recorded and remembered.

2. Кенесары Қасымұлы – қаһарман батыр, қолбасшы, дипломат, аса көрнекті тұлға, мемлекет қайраткері. 1837 жылы Кенесары Қасымұлы жетекшілігімен көтеріліс басталды. Ол Қазақстандағы ірі көтерілістердің бірі еді. Оған үш жүздің қазақтары түгел қатысты. Кенесары тарих сахнасында өзінің бабасы Абылай ханның ісін жалғастырушы ретінде көрінді.

Image 2a Textbook by Kabuldinov Kazakh version

2. Кенесары – внук Абылая, народный герой, полководец, дипломат, государственный деятель. Кенесары вступил на историческую арену как продолжатель дела своего деда – Абылай хана. В 1837 г. под его руководством началось одно из крупнейших восстаний в Казахстане, охватившее все три казахских жуза.

Почему восстание Кенесары хана приобрело общенародный характер?

Image 2b Textbook by Kabuldinov Russian version

4.4 Argumentation 1: Postcolonial

Earlier in the Chapter 1 tragic heroes and decapitation of the hero as a source of trauma and loose of the polity were described. This was further illustrated with the help of the Prinz Lazar's case. This theoretical ground is common for the case of Kenesary Khan as well: "*Khan is the head. The people are the body. Therefore, the separation of the head from the body is a symbol of the deprivation of the Kazakh people of the head, of sovereign statehood...*"¹⁸⁰. Moreover, despite postcolonial thoughts are underrepresented in the official rhetoric in Kazakhstan, the further claims discovered in the digital news articles can provide another view on the matter.

¹⁸⁰ Isabaeva, Saule. "Nurlan Amrekulov: 'Vernut' hana Kene - znachit vosstanovit' svyaz' s predkami'." Central Asia Monitor. Accessed June 6, 2024. <https://camonitor.kz/19852-nurlan-amrekulov-vernut-hana-kene-znachit-vosstanovit-svyaz-s-predkami.html>. [Isabaeva, Saule. "Nurlan Amrekulov: 'Vernut' hana Kene - znachit vosstanovit' svyaz' s predkami'." Central Asia Monitor. Accessed June 6, 2024.]

Within this field of action were discovered following claims:

Postcolonial claim 1 *“The return of the head will allow make Russian-Kazakh relations horizontal because the unburied Khan Kenesary’s head save the colonial attitude toward Kazakhstan and the head is still perceived as the trophy”.*

Postcolonial claim 2 *“The return of the head is the way to transform into an independent nation”.*

These two claims around the head’s returning have two different connotations depending on the sites. In Kazakhstani discourse the absence of the head and its burial according to Islam tradition exposes the collective cultural trauma of the Kazakh nation. For example, *“The skull is the trophy there. <...> As long as it is there, we are the trophy state for Russia”.*

On the other hand, the Russian side demonstrates the lack of importance of the head and place it in the less important priority. It can be seen in the responses of the Omsk museum employees: *“They say that Kenesary's head is something from the category of even unscientific fiction. Yes, she was, yes, she came, but no one knows where she is now and where she has gone”*¹⁸¹ or the response of Kunstkamera Museum employee on the same question about the location of the skull given in 2009 *“We are not barbarians to keep the heads on vitrines”*¹⁸². However, the shadow processes from the Russian side such as hiding and securitization of the documents possibly related to the Kenesary rebellion¹⁸³ highlight the ambiguity of the Russian

¹⁸¹ Telizhenko, Nikita. "Ostanki gosudarstvennoj vazhnosti: kak zhurnalist Orda.kz iskal cherep hana Kenesary Kasymova." Orda.kz - novosti v Kazahstane i mire. Last modified 2023. <https://orda.kz/ostanki-gosudarstvennoj-vazhnosti-kak-zhurnalist-ordakz-iskal-cherep-hana-kenesary-kasymova-379223/>. [Telizhenko, Nikita. "Ostanki gosudarstvennoj vazhnosti: kak zhurnalist Orda.kz iskal cherep hana Kenesary Kasymova." Orda.kz - news in Kazakhstan and world. Last modified 2023.]

¹⁸² Sultan-Khan Akkuly, "Sledy ostankov poslednego kazahskogo hana Kenesary vedut... v Omsk," Radio Azattyk, last modified November 4, 2009, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/Head_of_Kenesary_Kasymov/1868201.html.

¹⁸³ Matritca.kz. "Najden dokument, oprovergajushhij legendy o sud'be golovy Kenesary hana." Matritca.kz. Last modified 2014. <https://www.matritca.kz/culture/14630-nayden-dokument-oprovergayushchiy-legendy-o-sudbe-golovy-kenesary-hana.html>.

position and may point on the colonial power relations or on the indifference to the head in general, what makes the case of Kenesary Khan similar to the case of Hadji Murat's head¹⁸⁴.

Hadji Murat is the Avari warrior and Dagestani national hero during the Caucasian War (1817-1864) happening in parallel to the Khan Kenesary's revolt. Hadji Murat was decapitated and buried in Azerbaijan, while his head as a trophy was sent to the Nicolai the First in St. Petersburg. The head was exhibited in Kunstkamera museum even the museum denied it and then after hidden resistance of the Russian side was returned and buried in Dagestan¹⁸⁵. The discourses around the head from the Russian, Dagestani and Chechen sides have similar narratives and the procedure of the head's return, what can point on the certain pattern of Russian-former colonized lands.

The second claim "*The return of the head is the way to transform into an independent nation*" is linked with the next argumentation line. The spiritual one. Despite the different focus of the claims (external in the first claim and internal in the second one) they are linking to the phenomenon of cultural treasure that Katherine Verdery was incorporated in her theory¹⁸⁶. The cultural treasure is an artefact that is desired and chased by a state in order to use it in the nation-building and identity formation. In Katherine Verdery's theoretical lens the new-born post-socialist states of Eastern Europe were trying to collect artefacts belonging to the national hero, they chose. Usually, this term is applicable to the situations, when the artifacts are pursued due to the desire of obtaining the object.

¹⁸⁴ Gisela Erbslöh and Ani Kokobobo, "'Why does Russia need Hadji Murat's head?'" in *Russia's Regional Identities: The Power of the Provinces*, ed. Edith W. Clowes (London: Routledge, 2018), 275.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁸⁶ Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

4.5 Argumentation 2: Spiritual

So called spiritual argumentation and field of action is based on the forecasting made by Bulgarian oracle Vanga back in the Soviet times. According to the legend, in 1984 young Nazarbayev travelled to Bulgaria and met the famous Vanga, who told that he will become rich and powerful, however that will not bring him happiness¹⁸⁷. Moreover, when the head of the last Kazakh Khan will unite with his body, Nazarbayev will lose his political power and prosperity will come to the Kazakh lands¹⁸⁸. In 1989 Nazarbayev was appointed to the position of the head of the Soviet Kazakhstan¹⁸⁹ and in further years established cult of his personality in the autocratic regime. Articles published within the last 2 years accusing Nazarbaev and the state servants in sabotaging the return of Kenesary's skull because "Nazarbaev was scared of the forecast"¹⁹⁰. In addition, texts suggest "We hope that our new president Tokaev does not believe in this nonsense (meaning Vanga's forecast)¹⁹¹.

Within the spiritual field of action were identified two claims presented below. I split them into two separate claims, however, in many cases these claims were interconnected.

Spiritual claim 1 *"We need to return the Khan Kenesary's head because it will bring prosperity to the Kazakh lands".*

¹⁸⁷ Alex Bruni. "Kak izvestno, v 1984 godu Vanga...". Script History. Last modified July 7, 2020. https://alexbruni.ru/script_history/page.php?p=118706.

¹⁸⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁸⁹ Official Website Of The First President Of The Republic Of Kazakhstan , "Nursultan Nazarbayev-Mature Years," official website of the first president of the republic of kazakhstan — elbasy nursultan nazarbayev, accessed April 25, 2022, <https://elbasy.kz/en/mature-years>.

¹⁹⁰ Asiya Marat. "Nazarbaev byl protiv vozvrashcheniya cherepa Kenesary - uchenyj-alasheved." «Golos Naroda» - informacionno-analiticheskij sajt. Last modified February 9, 2024. <https://golos-naroda.kz/27268-nazarbaev-byi-protiv-vozvrashcheniia-cherepa-kenesary-uchenyi-alashoved-1707454928/amp/>. [Asia Marat. "Nazarbayev was against the return of Kenesary's skull - Alash scientist." "Voice of the People" is an information and analytical site. Last modified February 9, 2024.]

¹⁹¹ Kurmanov, Bajtas. "Populizm chinovnikov ili nacional'naya ideya: najdyot li han Kenesary upokoenie na rodine." Ulysmidia.kz: Novosti i analitika v Kazahstane | Ulys, Ylys, Ulys, Ulus. Last modified August 17, 2023. <https://ulysmidia.kz/analitika/19639-populizm-chinovnikov-ili-natsionalnaia-ideia-naidiot-li-khan-kenesary-upokoenie-na-rodine/>. [Kurmanov, Bajtas. "Populism of officials or national idea: will Khan of Kenesary find rest in his homeland." Ulysmidia.kz: News and analytics in Kazakhstan | Ulys, Ulys, Ulys, Ulus. Last modified August 17, 2023.]

Spiritual claim 2 *"He (Kenesary Khan) has to have proper burial in Kazakhstan because he is national hero and human being"*

Spiritual claims are presented in various of articles and attracts people with various social, economic, educational backgrounds. For example, in early 2000s this argument was used in the religious cult "Ak Zhol"¹⁹². They were providing the detailed description of the burial procedure, where descendants of Kazakh and Kyrgyz tribal leaders, Romanov royal family, local kozaks will gather, sacrifice a white horse and ask for forgiveness from Kenesary's spirit¹⁹³. Here it can be seen intersection with the decolonial line of argumentation, which also refers to the two practices: religious and therapeutic in the sense of collective trauma treatment. These claims are supported with the predictors related to the skull. It is described as "sacred" and the Khan was referred as "legendary".

The other side of this argument relates to position of the official Kazakh authorities. If the grassroot activists stresses the further prosperity, the high levelled political dance on the toes around the head's returning allows the population to make an assumption that ex-president of Kazakhstan stressed the first part of the Vanga's prediction. In Kazakh speaking media, the protective powers of the ancestors and Khan Kenesary¹⁹⁴ in particular has wider representation than in news articles targeting Russophones.

The spiritual argumentation makes the head a complicated material because on the one hand it is perceived as a part of the dead human body, which must be buried. However, on the

¹⁹² Aleksandra Kancedalova, "Ne nastojashnij "ak zhol"," Informburo.kz, last modified 2006, <https://informburo.kz/novosti/ne-nastoyashchij-ak-zhol-2024.html>. [Aleksandra Kancedalova, "Not The Real "Ak Zhol"," Informburo.kz, last modified 2006]

¹⁹³ Saule Isabaeva, "Nurlan Amrekulov: "Vernut' hana Kene - znachit vosstanovit' svjaz' s predkami"," Central Asia Monitor, last modified November 27, 2015, <https://camonitor.kz/19852-nurlan-amrekulov-vernut-hana-kene-znachit-vosstanovit-svyaz-s-predkami.html>. [Saule Isabaeva, "Nurlan Amrekulov: "The Return of the Khan Kenesary's Head means to restore the connection with the ancestors", Central Asia Monitor, last modified November 27, 2015]

¹⁹⁴ Janat Ardaq, "Resey nege Kenesery khannyn basyn bermey otyr?," Inbusiness.kz, last modified July 25, 2023, <https://inbusiness.kz/kz/news/resej-nege-kenesary-hannyn-basyn-bermej-otyr>. [Janat Ardaq, " Why does Russia not give Kenesary Khan's head?," Inbusiness.kz, last modified July 25, 2023]

other hand, the magical aura around the head turns it into holy relic of type A (Body relics/Corporeal relics belonged to the “special person”)¹⁹⁵ withing the typology proposed by Steven Hooper. Even without the current journeys or other religious practices around the unburied head¹⁹⁶, khan’s remains have potential to become a source of attraction for people. For example, after the burial of the head, the Khan’s mausoleum might attract pilgrims to visit the mausoleum for the donation¹⁹⁷.

This argumentation line fits the theoretical framework provided above. First, there is the kin linkage to the land and the living members of the nation. Second, here is presented the argument about proper burial and returning of the hero back to the ancestors’ land. Third, proper burial also means the burial according to the Islam tradition so the spirit and the body will be brought back to the cosmos.

4.6 The visual representation of Khan Kenesary in media and school textbooks

While no contemporary artistic impressions of Khan Kenesary survived into the modern day there are multiple statues and monuments in his image created after his death. One that is most widely represented in media is a monument in Astana depicting him on a horse, see images 3a, 3b and 3c below. It is located in a newer part of Astana near the river Ishim. It was built in 2001 by the sculptor Nurlan Dalban and the famous architect Shota Valikhanov. The monument consists of the bronze Khan riding on a horse on top of a granite base. The Khan is depicted in traditional military clothing and aims to express an aura of authority and strength similar to other equestrian monuments all over the world.

¹⁹⁵ Steven Hooper, "A cross-cultural theory of relics: on understanding religion, bodies, artefacts, images and art," *World Art* 4, no. 2 (2014): 194, doi:10.1080/21500894.2014.935873.

¹⁹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁷ Saule Isabaeva, "Nurlan Amrekulov: 'Vernut' hana Kene - znachit vosstanovit' svjaz' s predkami'," *Central Asia Monitor*, last modified November 27, 2015, <https://camonitor.kz/19852-nurlan-amrekulov-vernut-hana-kene-znachit-vosstanovit-svyaz-s-predkami.html>.



Image 3a Photo of the Khan Kenesary's monument in Astana (source inform.kz)



Image 3b Photo of the Khan Kenesary's monument in Astana (TengriNews newspaper)

He is often referred to as a great symbol of Kazakhstan's independence and freedom of Russian rule and widely used in media as such. The close-up shots of the used photos are creating impression of dominance and distance, important to protect the charismatic and heroic aura of the khan. The third image depicts the khan on the panorama of the city creating impression of incorporation of the monument in the daily life and cut off the aura of dominance as it is presented on the second close-up image. These shots are very common

in the visual representation of national heroes in the newspapers or school textbooks. Usually, visual elements such as flags, emblems, or other national symbols are commonly incorporated into heroic monuments helping to reinforce the hero's connection to national identity and pride¹⁹⁸. In this case Khan is wearing Kazakh traditional clothes and is depicted on the horse, what celebrates the traditional for Kazakhs nomadic way of life.



Памятник Кенесары хану, г. Астана

Image 3c Photo of the Khan Kenesary's monument in Astana (textbook by Omarbekov – Russian version)

There are two paintings of Khan Kenesary which are commonly used to depict him in textbooks for both Kazakh- and Russian speaking students, see images 4a and image 5 below. Similar to his depiction in monuments he is portrayed with military armor and a sword, specifically traditional clothing and scimitar reminiscent of his Mongolian ancestry and his military upbringing. The image 4b is an example of the portrait in colour. It was not used in school textbook but periodically appears in various media articles.

¹⁹⁸ Johanna Pink, "National Hero," *Compendium Heroicum*, last modified September 19, 2022, <https://www.compendium-heroicum.de/lemma/national-hero/>.

қасиеті ерекше күшті еді. Әкесі-
арымен бірге жүрген кездерінде
пылық тәжірибесін едәуір үйреніп

тің басталуы. Көтеріліс Кенеса-
дкіметінің саясатын жарамсақта-
тандар мен билердің ауылдарын
басталды. Ол шегара шебіндегі
патша үкіметінің әскери жасақ-
сіі шабуыл жасап тұрды. Мәселен,
аяқ кезінде Кенесары хорунжий
ын тас-талқан етіп жеңіп шықты.
дан Ташкентке бет алған сауда
п бара жатқан еді.



Кенесары Қасымұлы

зінің адамдарын 1837 жылы Ба-
рал-губернаторына жіберіп, оған арнайы хат жолдады.

бекінісі мен Акмола приказын жоюлы. Омбыла тұтқынла
Image 4a Portrait of Khan Kenesary (textbook by Kabuldinov-Kazakh version)



Image 4b Portrait of Khan Kenesary in colour. Used in various media article.

The most widely used portrait of him, see images 4a and 4b presented above, was painted by Aubakir Ismailov between the years 1941 and 1946. The original painting was

lost, the helmet was supposedly added at after its creation¹⁹⁹. Although the image was later used in Soviet textbooks Aubakir Ismailov suffered from politically driven pressure from the Soviet authorities as the positive depiction of Khan Kenesary was prohibited at the time as it was mentioned in the second Chapter. The painting is titled “The hero of Kazakh people, Khan Kenesary Kasymov”. The appearance of Khan Kenesary was part of its authors research into folklore²⁰⁰.



О. Жубаниязов. Кенесары Касымов

Image 5 Jubaniyazov Khan Kenesary (the textbook by Kabuldinov)

In image 5 Khan Kenesary is also depicted riding a horse with a bow, again reminiscent of his Mongolian heritage and its root in its famous horseback archery. This painting by O.Jubaniyazov is dated to the post-Soviet time period. Unfortunately, I failed to find more precise date and more background information. Except the interview with the artist, where

¹⁹⁹ Kali D. Sassenbay, "Burabay Resort — Portrait of Kenesary Khan," Burabay Resort, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://burabayresort.kz/ru/places/Q2F0YWxvZ1Byb2R1Y3Q6MTk1>.

²⁰⁰ Ibidem.

he confesses that the work on this painting took all his energy and was challenging, that mirroring the uneasy character of Khan Kenesary²⁰¹.

These depictions clearly try to present him as a formidable warrior, military leader and national hero. Without any contemporary descriptions it is hard to say whether this impression of him has existed since his rule or whether this has been cultivated and made him into a personification of national pride.

Furthermore, in recent years images of his supposed skull have been circulating through social media, see image 6 below. These depict a skull in, what seems to be a museum, and claim that this is Khan Kenesary's skull. There is no evidence of the authenticity of any of those pictures or origin of the depicted skull and the existence of the skull is still unknown but it illustrates that there still is an active engagement and is part of modern Kazakh culture.



Image 6 The image of the skull. Circulating in the digital space.

²⁰¹ Tatiana Aladiena, "Kazahstanskiy hudozhnik napisal kartinu, posvyaschennuyu dekabrskim sobyitiyam 1986 goda," PARAGRAPH, last modified January 27, 2012, https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=31113023. [Tatiana Aladiena, "The Kazakhstani artist painted a painting dedicated to the December 1986 events," PARAGRAPH, last modified January 27, 2012]

Conclusion

Death and national heroes are sensitive topics. They tackle a wide range of emotions and traumas. However, dead bodies and, more specifically for this research, dead heroes are carrying inside of them potential political power, which is unleashed in the conditions created in the relatively newborn nation-state. This thesis had the aim to answer the question: How does the case of Kenesary Khan fits into and shape the nation-building effort in contemporary Kazakhstan? With the help of Critical Discourse Analysis was revealed that Khan Kenesary is depicted as national hero, the “Genghisid”, fighting for independence of the Kazakh state. He is described as “great leader”, “brave and cruel warrior”, “wise diplomat”, “unsubmissive” and “rebellious”, where the last predicator assigned with the positive connotation.

The comprehensive analysis of media articles and history textbooks for the 8th high school students revealed that the use of Khan Kenesary’s legacy as national hero reflects the nation-building model used by Kazakhstani elites. The model combines elements of both civic and ethnic nationalism. Kenesary Khan can be seen as a leader of Kazakh state, fighting for the independence and future prosperity of his people. Meanwhile, the understanding of the people belonging into the polity includes those, who are fighting against colonisations without anti-Russian connotations as it could possibly affect the ethno-religious balance in the country.

Overall, the Khan Kenesary promotes such values as struggle for independence, embracing Kazakh traditions and inclusiveness within the community as well as using violence as last resort trying to use diplomatic ways to achieve the goals. Such position reflects also the positioning of Kazakhstan towards Russia: the Republic is an independent state neighbouring Russia but it is not its part. Despite, this narrative varies in its radicalisation’s depending on the

source and distancing from the state narrative, the chosen layers of discourse have not shown any extreme radicalisation. Below you can find the detailed results.

School textbooks used in schools with Russian and Kazakh languages of command were not presenting totally contradictive narratives on the Khan's revolt and depict him as a national hero with minor alteration depending on the author and the language. So, for the Russophone students the emphasis was put on the multiethnic component of the revolt, while for Kazakh speaking pupils the most important was the struggle for independence and the heroic figure of Khan Kenesary. This difference can be noticed due to the visual highlights within the texts.

The brief analysis of the visual representation were both the depiction of Khan Kenesary in monuments and in paintings where discussed. It was shown that he is portrayed as a national icon and hero to the national independence of Kazakhstan. He is depicted with traditional clothing reminiscent of his Mongolian warrior heritage. While modern-day media often utilizes these depictions it often does not capture the full history of the creation of these works as is the case with the painting by Aubakir Ismailov who suffered from oppression by the Soviet regime after his depiction of Khan Kenesary in his painting "The hero of Kazakh people, 'Khan Kenesary Kasymov'".

With the help of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) were identified 4 main arguments build around the return the head of Kenesary. Spiritual claim 1 "We need to return the Khan Kenesary's head because it will bring prosperity to the Kazakh lands", Spiritual claim 2 "He (Kenesary Khan) has to have proper burial in Kazakhstan because he is national hero and human being", Postcolonial claim 1 "The return of the head will allow make Russian-Kazakh relations horizontal because the unburied Khan Kenesary's head save the colonial attitude toward Kazakhstan and the head is still perceived as the trophy". Post colonial claim 2 "The return of the head is the way to transform into an independent nation".

This investigation had shown that the notion of the skull fits the term “cultural treasure”, applied by K. Verdery in the regard to dead bodies political life. The skull of Kenesary Khan, who is constantly presented in the Kazakhstani media as informational background is regarded as a source of nation identity building, is perceived as a promise of the Golden Age in Kazakhstan. At the same time, the argumentation is built around the necessity to go through the colonial trauma, and return of the skull will take away symbolical power from Russia in relations between two states.

Interestingly, the central topic for the articles dedicated to the skull of Khan Kenesary is the desire to find it. The location of the skull is the main mystery of the past years within studied discourse. Actors rarely provide a clear argument, which fits the typical characteristics of *tapos*. Instead, they stress the importance of Kenesary as national hero and necessity of his return to Kazakhstan without formulating the clear outcome. In most of the cases the clear outcomes were stated in spiritual types of arguments.

The current paper prepared a trampoline to the further research. Firstly, there is an opportunity to dig into relations between Russian and its former colonies from the lenses of dead heroes' bodies and objects they owned while being alive. It can lead to the comparative case study including both ethnic republics within the Russian Federation and currently independent states. As additional source for the further research can serve the following citation: *“Why are the bones and graves of Kazakh khans located outside of Kazakhstan? Jochi Khan's grave is empty, his skull was taken to Gerasimov's laboratory and forgotten there. And the graves of khans Yesim and Tauke, located near the Khoja Ahmed Yassawi mosque, were demolished by a bulldozer during the last restoration of the monument. I'm not even talking about the ashes of Kenesary's brother Nauryzbai, his nephews and 15 other Kazakh sultans, left in Kyrgyz soil”*.

Secondly, the current paper prepared the foundation for the research on the social perception of Khan Kenesary's figure and scull. Here was mentioned the importance of the Khan for ethnic Kazakhs since this historical figure is an important hero for ultra-nationalists in Kazakhstan. However, considering the model of nation building in Kazakhstan, the next research should discover the importance or indifference expressed to the question "Where is the Head of Kenesary?" among younger population of Kazakhstan, coming from different ethnic backgrounds. These people were growing up surrounded by media discourses, which were analysed earlier in the research, but what is more important they were attending history classes in Kazakhstani schools, which are important tools of national identity formation in accordance with the Benedict Anderson's theory. In other words, the further research could investigate the perception of younger Kazakhstani on the national identity on the example of Kenesary Khan's case. Such investigation can contribute to the discussion on the nation-building model in modern Kazakhstan.

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Annex

Nominations' tables

Examples of nominations in the Media		
Nomination	English translation	Original language
Khan Kenesary	Kenesary Khan Khan Kene Kenesary Kasymuly Kenesary khan's remains	Кенесары хан Хан Кене Кенесары Касымұлы Кенесары ханның сүйегін
Khan Kenesary	Khan Kenesary, Kenesary, Kenesary Kasymov, Kenesary Kasymuly, Khan Kene, Chingizid rebel khan, last khan of the Kazakh Khanate, hero, rebel sultan, headless horseman, all- Kazakh khan, Kazakh sultan, rebel	Хан Кенесары, Кенесары, Кенесары Касымов, Кенесары Касымұлы, Хан Кене, чингизид мятежный хан, последний хан Казахского Ханства, герой, мятежный султан, всадник без головы, всеказахский хан, казахский султан, бунтовщик
The skull	Head, trophy, skull	Голова, трофей, череп
The skull	Sacred artefact Kenesary Khan's head	қасиетті артефакті Кенесары ханның басы

Table 1a Examples of nominations in the Media

Examples of nominations in the textbooks		
Nomination	English translation	Original language
Khan Kenesary	Kenesary Khan Kenesary Kasymuly Brave batyr, commander, diplomat, eminent person, statesman, Genghisid sultan	Кенесары хан Кенесары Касымұлы қаһарман батыр, қолбасшы, дипломат, аса көрнекті тұлға, мемлекет қайраткері б шынғизид султан
Khan Kenesary	Khan Kenesary, Kenesary, Kenesary Kasymov, Kenesary Kasymuly, Chingizid last khan of the Kazakh Khanate, people's (national) hero, grandson of Abylay sultan, commander, diplomat, statesman	Хан Кенесары, Кенесары, Кенесары Касымов, Кенесары Касымұлы, чингизид последний хан Казахского Ханства, народный герой, султан, внук Абылая, полководец, дипломат, государственный деятель.

Table 1b Examples of nominations in the textbooks