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National Code in the Literature of Kazakhstan and Central Asia

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study is to explore how the "national code," encompassing cultural values, historical memory, and identity, is represented in Kazakh and Central Asian literature through the lenses of classical narratology and distant reading. The research employs a mixed-method approach that integrates narratological analysis (drawing on Genette's and Greimas's frameworks), close and distant reading (including computational text analysis), and data validation through translation cross-checks and visualizations. The study focuses on Central Asian literary texts, revealing distinctive features such as collective narration, nonlinear time structures, and strong national identity motifs. Unlike Western narratives centered on individualism, these works employ epic structures, kinship networks, depictions of nature, and spiritual themes to convey cultural memory. Comparative analysis highlights unique narratological patterns shaped by regional traditions. The findings demonstrate that Central Asian fiction embeds history, tradition, and moral values into narrative form, turning literature into a medium for preserving cultural heritage and fostering national self-understanding. The study underscores the need to adapt classical narratology to culturally specific contexts and suggests pedagogical applications for teaching literature as both artistic expression and a means of civic education.

Keywords: Central Asian literature, cultural code, comparative literature, distant reading, Genette.

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature has long been a vessel for expressing and preserving a nation's cultural identity. In the context of Kazakhstan and Central Asia, scholars often refer to a "national code" in literature a complex set of symbols, motifs, and narrative patterns that encode a people's collective memory, values, and worldview [1]. The present study explores the national code in Kazakh and Central Asian literature from a narratological perspective, drawing on classical narrative theory (notably the frameworks of Gérard Genette and Algirdas Greimas) and employing comparative analysis with other literary traditions. By doing so, we aim to illuminate the distinctive narrative techniques that Central Asian writers use to articulate national identity, and how these techniques compare to those in other regions' literatures.

The concept of the "national code" gained traction in Kazakh literary discourse after 1991, when reclaiming cultural symbols became central to nation-building [2]. As Oisylbay notes, it acts as a "secret key" to a people's ethos, encoding core values into literary form [1]. Early novels like Baqytsyz Jamal and Kalym exemplify this, using individual fates to critique patriarchal traditions and gesture toward national consciousness [3, 4]. These works established enduring patterns in Central Asian literature: allegorical storytelling, a blend of folklore and realism, and the elevation of virtues like honor and ancestral reverence.

Narrative theory helps illuminate how such meanings are embedded in form. Genette's model foregrounds narrative voice, focalization, and time structure all crucial for interpreting how stories convey cultural memory [5]. A non-linear structure or shifting perspectives can reflect tensions between history and modernity, or collective versus individual identity. Greimas's actantial model, by contrast, reveals underlying semantic structures. His framework identifies roles like Subject, Object, Sender, and Opponent helping to uncover oppositions such as tradition vs. modernity or colonial rule vs. native resistance [6]. In Central Asian texts, ancestral inspiration may function as a Sender, propelling a hero toward national liberation, while colonial figures take on the role of Opponents.

By combining Genette and Greimas, we gain a dual perspective: how stories are told, and what deep roles they encode. This approach not only clarifies how literature expresses the national code, but also expands narratology by integrating non-Western traditions into its analytical framework.

II. RELATED WORK

The relationship between narrative, identity, and nationhood has long been a central concern in both literary studies and political theory. Benedict Anderson's influential concept of the nation as an imagined community underscores the role of cultural production particularly literature in shaping national consciousness. Building on this perspective, Homi K. Bhabha emphasizes that the nation is narrated into existence; national identity emerges through stories that reconcile difference, displacement, and hybridity [7,8]

In the post-Soviet Central Asian context, these theoretical insights offer a valuable framework for examining literature as an instrument of nation-building. Diana T. Kudaibergenova demonstrates how Kazakh writers and intellectuals engage in rewriting the nation under shifting ideological regimes, while Adeeb Khalid, in his study of the reformist Jadidist movement, reveals how Muslim intellectuals used literature and education to reimagine cultural identity during colonial transformation [9,10]. This interplay between cultural heritage and modernization is further reflected in the policy manifesto Ruhani Zhangyru, which articulates a state-driven vision for revitalizing Kazakhstan's cultural identity and recovering its "national code" [11].

Central Asian literary works provide rich examples of these dynamics. Chingiz Aitmatov's. The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years blends myth and science fiction to address Soviet alienation, cultural memory, and the cosmic dimensions of time [12]. Ilyas Yesenberlin's Nomads trilogy reconstructs a national epic to assert cultural resilience against colonial suppression, while Saken Seifullin's Tar Zhol, Tayghaq Keshu offers a revolutionary narrative rooted in the ideological tensions of early Soviet Kazakhstan. Olzhas Suleimenov's Az i Ya combines literary criticism and historical philology to challenge Russian imperial interpretations of Turkic history [13-15].

Narrative theory provides essential tools for analyzing such texts. Vladimir Propp's Morphology of the Folktale offers a foundational model for understanding the formal structures of storytelling, particularly relevant to the epic and folkloric traditions of Kazakh literature [16]. Gérard Genette's Narrative Discourse and Algirdas Greimas's on meaning enable analysis of narrative temporality and actantial roles, while Roland Barthes's S/Z draws attention to the multiplicity of interpretive codes [5, 6, 17]. Mikhail Bakhtin's The Dialogic Imagination introduces the concept of heteroglossia the coexistence of multiple voices which resonates with the multi-ethnic and multilingual realities of Central Asian societies [18]. Franco Moretti's Distant Reading challenges the primacy of close reading and advocates large-scale, comparative literary analysis, offering valuable tools for mapping postcolonial transitions across the region's literatures [19].

Recent scholarship highlights both advances and gaps in the study of Kazakh literature. Assyl Matayeva et al. point to methodological challenges and the need for greater contextual sensitivity, while A.T. Oisylbay underscores the persistence of national codes and cultural motifs in early 20th-century Kazakh novels, suggesting continuity between oral epic traditions and modern narrative forms [20, 1].

In sum, the literature on narrative, identity, and nationhood provides a robust foundation for analyzing Central Asian texts. Global theoretical models offer versatile interpretive tools, while regional scholarship and

creative works reveal how these frameworks manifest within the Kazakh and broader Turkic context. Here, literature functions not merely as a mirror of cultural and political change but as an active agent in constructing, negotiating, and preserving national identity.

III. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The corpus for this study comprised 50 literary works, including 30 texts from Kazakhstan and neighboring Central Asian countries, and a reference group of 20 works from other cultural contexts. The Central Asian selection spanned four historical periods: early nationalism (1910s), early Soviet (1920s–1930s), late Soviet (1940s–1980s), and post-independence (1990s–2020s). Key authors included Mirzhakyp Dulatov, Spandiyar Kobeyev, Mukhtar Auezov, Chingiz Aitmatov, and Ilyas Yesenberlin, whose works are widely recognized for engaging with themes of national identity, heritage, and cultural transformation.

The reference corpus comprised a limited set of non-Central Asian texts, including Western works such as F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and one East Asian novel [22]. These served as comparative benchmarks, enabling cross-cultural analysis of narrative structures and thematic emphases. For computational processing, English translations of the Central Asian texts were used; all findings derived from translations were cross-checked against the originals to ensure semantic accuracy and to mitigate potential distortions.

1. DATA COLLECTION

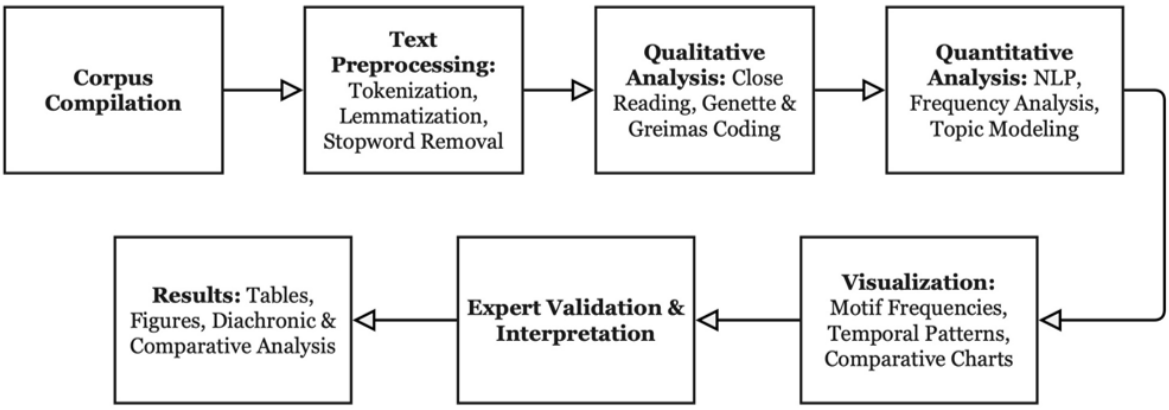

FIGURE 1. Methodological framework of the study

The diagram in Figure 1 presents the overall methodological workflow of the study. It illustrates how the research integrates corpus compilation, text preprocessing, and qualitative coding using Genette's narrative and Greimas's actantial frameworks, alongside quantitative NLP-based motif and topic analysis. The workflow culminates in visualization of results and expert validation, ensuring that both macro-level patterns and micro-level textual features are captured. This stepwise approach enables a systematic and replicable analysis of the "national code" in Central Asian literature, linking computational methods with traditional literary interpretation.

The corpus of literary works was compiled from digitized texts obtained from digital archives, ensuring representation across various historical periods and genres. Metadata for each text included the author, publication date, historical period, and cultural origin. Selected passages underwent qualitative close reading, with narrative structures coded according to categories proposed by Genette and Greimas.

The texts were processed using standard natural language processing techniques. For computational analysis, we employed Python-based NLP tools, including NLTK and spaCy for tokenization and lemmatization, Gensim for topic modeling (LDA), and Pandas for data management and preprocessing. Visualization of motif

frequencies and thematic clusters was performed using Matplotlib and Seaborn, supporting distant reading of the corpus at scale. Thematic keyword lists were developed through a combination of corpus analysis, topic modeling, and expert curation. Initially, all texts were tokenized and lemmatized to standardize word forms. Using NLP techniques, frequent terms were extracted and grouped into key domains such as kinship (mother, clan), land and nature (steppe, horse), cultural practices (wedding, feast), and values (freedom, honor). Topic modeling (LDA) was applied to identify underlying thematic clusters, which were then reviewed and refined by experts in Central Asian literature to ensure semantic and cultural relevance.

For computational analysis, the workflow followed a structured, multi-step procedure. All texts were first preprocessed by tokenization, lemmatization, and removal of punctuation and stopwords to standardize word forms. Frequency analysis was then conducted, with raw word counts normalized per 10,000 words to ensure comparability across texts of varying lengths. Quantifiable narrative features, such as verb tenses, temporal adverbs, and proportions of dialogue, were extracted to measure phenomena including flashbacks and integration of oral tradition. Results were subsequently validated by domain experts and visualized using Matplotlib and Seaborn, facilitating large-scale comparison of motifs, narrative structures, and thematic emphases across historical periods.

This integrated methodology, combining NLP, distant reading, and expert validation, ensured a robust and replicable data-driven analysis of the "national code" in Central Asian literature. In particular, the study employed quantitative motif analysis to complement qualitative insights, enabling the identification of recurrent cultural and narrative motifs across the corpus. This approach allows for both micro-level textual interpretation and macro-level trend analysis, strengthening the overall reliability of the findings.

Additionally, topic modeling was employed to identify thematic clusters related to heritage, land, and identity. This integration of NLP and distant reading tools allowed for systematic, large-scale comparison of narrative structures across historical periods, complementing close reading insights and ensuring replicable, data-driven analysis of the "national code" in Central Asian literature.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative narratological analysis with quantitative computational text analysis. The qualitative component was informed by two principal narratological frameworks.
First, Genette's theory of narrative discourse was applied to examine narratorial voice, focalization, temporal organization, pacing, and frequency [5]. Particular attention was paid to flashbacks and cyclical temporal structures, which in many Central Asian works reflect a worldview grounded in memory, tradition, and oral heritage.

Second, Greimas's actantial model was used to identify narrative roles—Subject, Object, Sender, Receiver, Helper, and Opponent—and to map binary oppositions such as Tradition vs. Modernity or Collective vs. Individual [6]. For example, in Aitmatov's Jamila [22], the heroine's pursuit of personal freedom is aided by Daniyar while being constrained by patriarchal norms. Soviet-era narratives frequently valorized progressive ideals over tradition, whereas post-independence works often reversed this hierarchy, revalorizing tradition as a cultural resource.

The quantitative component drew on Franco Moretti's distant reading approach, focusing on large-scale textual patterns across the corpus [19]. In addition, frequency-based motif analysis was applied to systematically capture recurring cultural and narrative motifs, allowing cross-validation of actantial roles and narratological patterns across historical periods.

This dual approach enabled both the close reading of individual narrative features and the mapping of broader cultural logics, thereby integrating non-Western narrative forms into the scope of narratological theory while ensuring that findings are both qualitatively nuanced and quantitatively supported.

IV. RESULTS

The results are organized into three subsections. First, we present the narratological analysis of the Central Asian texts, highlighting how narrative form and technique encapsulate national identity themes. This includes a synthesis of common narrative patterns. Second, we report on the distant reading outcomes: motif frequencies and narrative trends with visual comparisons showing regional differences. Third, we offer a direct comparative discussion of specific narratological aspects, using comparative tables to contrast Central Asian narrative structures with those from other literary traditions (particularly Western). Throughout this section, the analytical observations are supported by references to primary texts and relevant scholarship. For clarity, we present tables and graphs within the discussion.

A defining feature of Central Asian fiction especially Kazakh novels and Kyrgyz epics is the shifting narrative voice between personal and collective perspectives. Many texts blend first-person and omniscient narration. For example, Auezov's Abai Zholy [23] primarily employs a third-person omniscient narrator but frequently channels the collective Kazakh viewpoint, effectively giving voice to a communal protagonist alongside the individual hero. This contrasts with Western modernist fiction's focus on individual subjectivity. In Aitmatov's Jamila [22], the first-person narration by Seyit, a secondary character, combines personal feelings with village attitudes, reflecting both individual and communal voices. Conversely, Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby uses a first-person narrator (Nick Carraway) who expresses only his personal perspective [21].

Central Asian narratives often include diverse social voices – across gender, age, and ideological divides creating a polyphonic structure akin to Bakhtin's heteroglossia. This multiplicity makes the narrative a site for negotiating national identity.

Another hallmark is the use of framed and embedded storytelling. Oral tales and legends metadiegetic narratives per Genette are woven into the text, conveying mythic or historical codes in distinct tonal registers. For example, in Aitmatov's The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years [12], the embedded "Nayman-Ana" tale interrupts the main plot with a mythic account of ancestral resistance, reinforcing cultural reverence for heritage and ritual and orienting the narrative towards a culturally informed readership.

Western frame tales, such as Chaucer's Canterbury Tales or Brontë's Wuthering Heights, often serve structural or psychological purposes [24, 25]. In contrast, Central Asian framed narratives foreground communal values and cultural continuity, embedding the oral tradition's acoustic presence into literary form. This highlights how Central Asian fiction not only tells stories but also sustains national memory through narratological choices.

Central Asian narratives typically span extensive timeframes and frequently use nonlinear structures to weave history into personal stories. For instance, Abai Zholy [23] includes chapters recounting Abai's father's era, creating a historical novel within a biography. This temporal layering echoes Benedict Anderson's idea that nations are imagined through shared historical narratives, reinforcing continuity of national identity [7]. Western modern novels often have a tighter temporal focus Mrs. Dalloway unfolds over a single day; The Great Gatsby covers one summer with minimal historical detours [21].

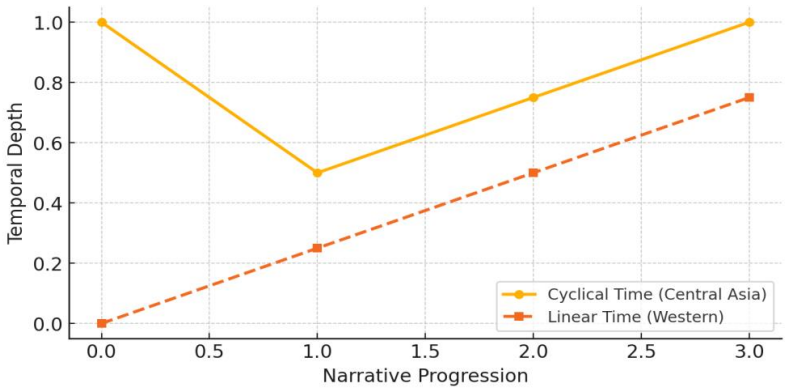

FIGURE 2. Narrative Temporality: Cyclical vs. Linear

Post-independence Central Asian literature revisits suppressed historical traumas. Smagul Yelubay's 1990s novels explicitly incorporate events like the 1930s famine and Stalinist purges, restoring these episodes to the national literary memory after decades of Soviet silence. This creates multi-layered narratives shifting between present and cultural memory.

A notable feature is the prevalence of cyclical and iterative temporal motifs. Many Central Asian stories end ambiguously, diverging from Western expectations of closure and reflecting an epic perspective where individual tales form parts of an ongoing communal saga.

Figure 2 illustrates narrative chronology: Western plots (dashed line) typically follow near-linear order, while Central Asian plots (solid line with markers) deviate through flashbacks and returns, integrating ancestral past and sometimes future episodes.

Closely tied to these voice and time features is a rich set of recurring motifs with national symbolism. Central Asian literature often treats landscape as a character steppe, mountains, deserts symbolize freedom, homeland, and tradition. For example, Jamila uses lyrical steppe descriptions to evoke emotion and liberty, reflecting Kazakh and Kyrgyz cultural values. Western works like The Great Gatsby use nature imagery metaphorically but rarely link landscape so deeply to national identity.

Genealogy and kinship are central motifs. Many Central Asian novels open with genealogical expositions – listing ancestors or recounting family anecdotes—to situate characters within a generational chain. This affirms continuity and anchors personal fate in collective history. European novels may include family trees for plot reasons, while Central Asian texts emphasize heritage. Similarly, frequent community gatherings—funerals, weddings, feasts – showcase cultural rituals and proverb-rich dialogue, conveying national values and traditions.

Endings often carry didactic or symbolic tones. Soviet-era narratives typically conclude with progressive forces triumphant over reactionary ones. Post-Soviet works like Jamila or The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years feature tragic or open endings that reject neat closure [22, 12]. These endings promote remembrance and vigilance, linking story conclusions to the reader's present and future. This epic style distinguishes Central Asian narratives from Western ones, which often favor tidy resolutions.

Figure 3 below illustrates a comparative frequency analysis of four categories of culturally significant motifs in two novels: Chingiz Aitmatov's Jamila and F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby [22, 21]. We chose these as a case study because both are relatively short novels centered on a love story within a social context, yet they stem from very different cultures. We counted occurrences of words in four semantic categories (1) family/kinship terms (mother, father, brother, relatives), (2) nature/land terms (steppe, land, sky, horse, field), (3) tradition/culture terms (custom, tribe, tent, song), and (4) spiritual/religious terms (Allah/God, prayer) – and normalized the counts per 10,000 words.

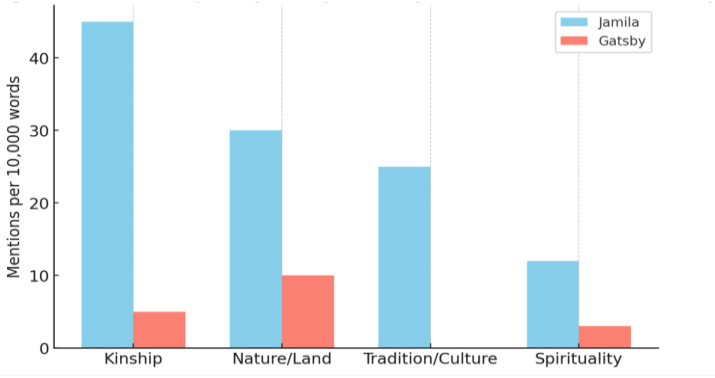

FIGURE 3. Motif Frequency Comparison: Jamilia vs. The Great Gatsby

Figure 3 compares the frequency of cultural motifs in Chingiz Aitmatov's Jamila and F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby. The Central Asian narrative shows a much higher presence of kinship, nature, and tradition-related terms, reflecting its encoding of the national code, while the Western text contains fewer such references.

Family terms in Jamila appear over 40 times per 10,000 words, far exceeding Gatsby's roughly 5 occurrences. The narrator Seyit frequently identifies characters by family roles referring to Jamila as sister-in-law, mentioning brothers at war, and elders managing households. In contrast, Gatsby barely mentions family; Nick's parents are absent, and Daisy's motherhood is rarely noted. This reflects Central Asian stories' emphasis on linking personal fate to family and society, versus Gatsby's focus on individual ambition and friendship.

Nature and land terms are also more frequent in Jamila (about 30 per 10,000 words) than in Gatsby (about 10). Jamilarichly describes the steppe, seasons, and rural life, where land functions as a symbolic character representing freedom and homeland. Western nature imagery is more symbolic and less tied to national identity.

Cultural terms like tribe, yurt, and custom appear often in Jamila but are absent in Gatsby, which depicts a modern, transactional society without communal traditions. Early Central Asian fiction preserved or critiqued traditions, later resisting Russification.

Spiritual and religious terms appear modestly in Jamila phrases like "Alhamdulillah," blessings, and ancestral spirits while Gatsby uses "God" mainly as expletives or symbolic motifs. This highlights the role of spirituality in Central Asian narratives as integral to national identity, contrasting with the secular tone of the Western text [22, 21].

Figure 4 provides a diachronic perspective on the prominence of national identity themes in Central Asian literature. It plots an estimate of the number of notable literary works (primarily novels and epic poems, excluding purely academic or political writings) that focus on national or cultural identity themes, by decade, from the 1910s through the 2010s. Each work is counted in the decade of its initial publication. The purpose of this visualization is to illustrate how historical conditions influenced the literary output on identity-related topics over time.

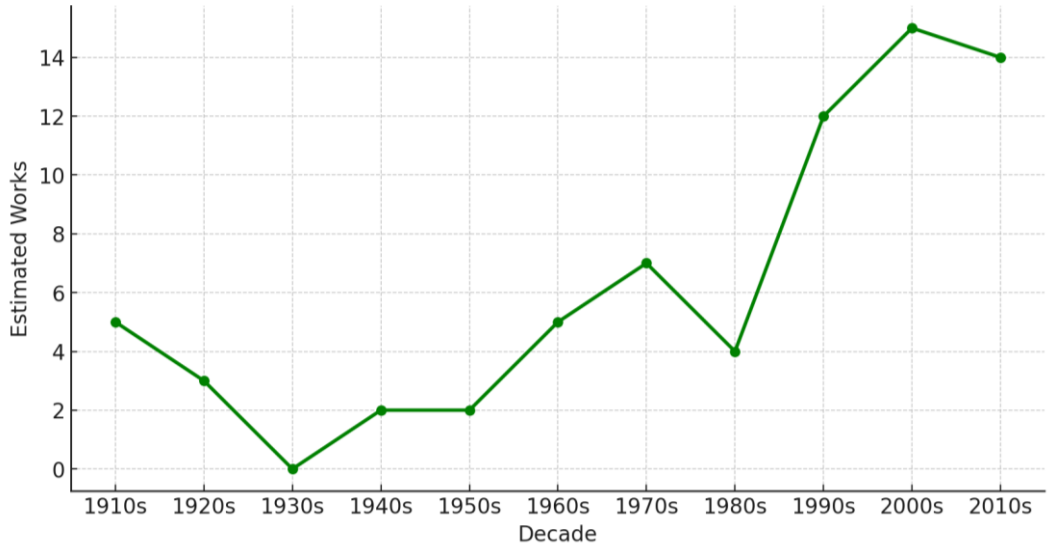

FIGURE 4. Diachronic Trends in Identity-Themed Central Asian Literature (1910s–2010s)

Figure 4 illustrates the number of notable literary works focusing on national and cultural identity themes in Central Asia (especially Kazakhstan) by decade. There is a low output during the 1920s–30s due to repression, a slight increase in the 1940s–50s, a significant revival in the 1960s–70s (the cultural "thaw"), and a dramatic rise after the 1990s during the post-independence national revival.

- 1910s: The first modern Kazakh and Central Asian works (Dulatov, Shakarim, Jadid authors) emerged, reflecting early national consciousness and critiques of feudalism, though output was limited.
- 1920s – 30s: A sharp decline due to Stalinist purges and censorship. Literature conformed to socialist realism, suppressing overt national themes or hiding them in allegory.

- 1940s – 50s: Slight increase with war and the Soviet policy of "friendship of peoples." Auezov's Abai [23] is a key example blending national codes with Soviet ideals. Most works remained Soviet-themed with traditional elements subordinate.
- 1960s – 70s: Notable surge during the cultural thaw. Authors like Aitmatov and Suleimenov reintroduced national imagery and themes, often using allegory to evade censorship.
- 1980s: Some decline before glasnost. By the late 1980s, banned topics and authors re-emerged, paving the way for open discussion of national themes.
- 1990s – 2010s: Dramatic growth after independence, with literature openly addressing national identity, history, and previously taboo subjects. New genres and voices, including women and ethnic minorities, enriched the literary landscape.

This timeline reflects cycles of suppression, cautious revival, and post-Soviet flourishing of national literature. Political shifts shaped what writers could express, making literature a key site for shaping and preserving national identity. Table 1 provides a comparative summary of key narratological features in Central Asian literature versus Western traditions, synthesizing our findings.

Table 1. Comparison of Narratological Features in Central Asian vs. Western Narratives

Narratological Aspect	Turabian Literature (Kazakhstan & Central Asia)	Western Literature (Europe/N. America)
Typical Narrator	Often mixed: omniscient third-person with shifts to first-person or collective voice. Example: The Path of Abai; Jamila.	Predominantly first-person or fixed third-person focused on individual. Example: The Great Gatsby.
Point of View / Focalization	Multiple focalization (youth/elder, society overview). Example: Nomads.	Single or limited focalization, following one protagonist. Example: Mrs. Dalloway.
Temporal Structure (Order)	Nonlinear, historical layering, flashbacks, cyclical patterns. Example: The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years.	Linear, character-centered chronology with minimal flashback. Example: The Great Gatsby.
Descriptive Focus (Duration)	Extended nature and culture description with symbolic weight. Example: Jamila.	Minimal or symbolic description, focus on action or mood. Example: The green light in Gatsby.
Use of Dialogue & Oral Forms	Dialogues rich in proverbs, oral tradition, bardic insertions. Example: Abai Zholy.	Dialogue advances plot; folklore rarely included.
Actantial Roles (Greimas)	Subject = national youth; Object = cultural values; Sender = ancestors/tradition; Opponent = oppression/customs; Receiver = people. Example: Unhappy Jamal.	Subject = individual; Object = personal goal; Sender = ambition; Opponent = rival/society; Receiver = self. Example: Gatsby.
Key Thematic Oppositions	Tradition vs. Modernity; East vs. West; Collective vs. Individual. Example: Farewell, Gulsary!	Individual vs. Society; Authenticity vs. Hypocrisy. Example: Catcher in the Rye.

Table 1 shows that narratology is universal but culturally shaped in application. Central Asian authors have adapted the novel a form originally imported from Europe and Russia to become a repository of their national

ethos, in effect making the novel perform some of the roles that epic poetry and oral histories played in the past. This appears in communal narrative voice, epic structure, and themes where social conflicts surpass individual concerns. By contrast, 20th-century Western fiction often emphasized interiority and form over communal or national themes. Though both depict romantic triangles, their actantial roles reveal distinct cultural stakes.

Table 2. Greimas's Actantial Role Comparison – Jamila (Central Asian) [22] vs. The Great Gatsby (Western) [21]

Actant Role	In Jamila [22] – Kyrgyz village during WWII	In The Great Gatsby [21] – Jazz Age New York
Subject	Jamila, a young Kyrgyz woman, representing personal freedom and implicitly the spirit of rebellion against oppressive customs. Daniyar, her lover, is a co-Subject. Jamila's quest symbolizes the community's broader desire for justice and authenticity.	Jay Gatsby, a self-made millionaire driven by his desire for Daisy and personal ambition. He represents the American Dream and individual idealism with no collective implication.
Object	True love and self-determination – a life of sincerity over tradition. The Object critiques arranged marriage and offers a vision of personal freedom as a collective good.	Daisy Buchanan's love and the validation of Gatsby's self-image. The Object is purely personal and static – it fulfills Gatsby's private fantasy, not a cultural agenda.
Sender	Circumstance (war) and the heart's calling. The absent husband and Daniyar's arrival act as catalysts. Symbolic Senders include tradition's injustice and the narrative's reformist ethos.	Gatsby's idealized memory and romantic imagination. Jordan and Nick act as situational Senders. The American Dream functions implicitly, not as a personified force.
Receiver	Jamila and Daniyar are direct recipients of love and freedom. Symbolically, oppressed women and the community receive the lesson of personal agency and change.	Gatsby is the primary Receiver, with Daisy as a potential beneficiary. There is no wider social Receiver; the outcome is personal, with society remaining untouched.
Helper	Seyit (the narrator), nature, and art (Daniyar's song). Cultural beauty and moral innocence aid Jamila. These Helpers represent justice and the natural right to love.	Nick Carraway, Jordan Baker, Gatsby's wealth, and the permissive social climate. Helpers are practical and circumstantial, lacking symbolic moral weight.
Opponent	Social norms, shame culture, Sadyk (husband), and the patriarchy. The Opponent is intangible but oppressive – moral force is clearly against it.	Tom Buchanan, class barriers, time, and reality. The Opponent wins without narrative condemnation; society's injustice is lamented but not corrected.

Table 2 illustrates how Jamila transforms a personal love story into an allegory of collective emancipation. The actantial structure is morally charged: Jamila (Subject) opposes repressive tradition (Opponent), aided by symbolic Helpers such as Seyit's innocent gaze and the natural world, which reinforce authenticity and emotional truth. The Sender role is quasi-transcendent fate or ancestral voice suggesting that her defiance is not only personal but culturally sanctioned. Though the narrative ends on a bittersweet note, Jamila's departure affirms a victory of individual freedom over unjust norms. This narrative logic reflects a broader pattern in Central Asian literature, where personal rebellion often signals collective transformation a rare convergence of Soviet modernist discourse and indigenous reformist impulses.

By contrast, The Great Gatsby centers on an individual dream detached from social change. Gatsby's idealism (Sender), supported by material resources and confidants (Helpers), is ultimately crushed by entrenched privilege (Tom as Opponent). The society represented by Tom and Daisy remains unchallenged and morally stagnant. Daisy is not a cause but a symbol; the story mourns rather than mobilizes.

The contrast is striking: Jamila asks the world to change; Gatsby mourns that it won't.

V. LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, the corpus is limited to 50 literary works, which may not fully capture the diversity of Central Asian literature. Second, English translations were used for computational analysis, potentially affecting nuance and stylistic interpretation. Third, the focus on identity-themed works may overlook other relevant narratives and genres. Finally, while NLP and distant reading provide systematic insights, they cannot fully account for cultural or historical subtleties, requiring careful qualitative validation.

VI. CONCLUSION

Our findings reveal that the "national code" the network of cultural identity markers is deeply woven into Central Asian literature and shapes both narrative form and function. Historical and political contexts strongly influence these forms, making them a significant concern for comparative and postcolonial studies. While classical narratology (Genette, Greimas, Propp) provides valuable analytical tools, these texts invite theoretical expansion to account for distinctive local features.

For instance, Genette's omniscient narrator in Abai Zholy functions less as an all-seeing observer and more as a bard, embodying communal memory and oral epic traditions a role uncommon in Western novels. In Greimas's actantial model, actants often represent abstract cultural forces: the Sender may be "the voice of the ancestors," the Receiver "the people." We propose extending the model with a "collectivized actant" that fuses individual and collective identities – as in Jamila, representing both personal rebellion and Kazakh womanhood. This approach integrates narratology with sociological perspectives and echoes Moretti's idea of characters as social types.

Our analysis affirms Barthes's concept of the "cultural code" (1974): in Central Asian literature, national code shapes plot, character, and meaning. In postcolonial terms, these texts are sites of negotiation between identity, history, and resistance particularly in relation to Soviet colonial legacies and the tensions between modernity and tradition. Aitmatov's The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years [12] exemplifies this hybridity, blending Soviet realism, mythology, and science fiction to create a temporal sovereignty that stretches beyond the Soviet present into deep cultural past and imagined futures. Such narrative forms are both aesthetic and political.

Comparative analysis positions Central Asian literature alongside other postcolonial literatures, such as Achebe's Igbo-infused English prose or Ngũgĩ's Gikuyu orature. In each case, colonial forms are appropriated and reshaped through indigenous modes of expression. In Central Asia, this produces hybrids where Russian realism interweaves with Turkic oral epics, asserting cultural voice while resisting homogenization. This perspective reframes Central Asian writing within global postcolonial discourse, challenging the tendency to overlook it due to its Soviet rather than British or French – colonial history.

Historically, the prominence of national themes has risen and fallen with political repression and liberalization. Under Soviet censorship, allegory often replaced direct critique, producing "double-coded" texts, such as Aitmatov's Farewell, Gulsary! [26], in which the death of a horse metaphorically mourns the loss of nomadic life. After independence, writers re-engaged openly with folklore and identity, experimenting with magical realism, postmodernism, and other global forms while remaining rooted in local memory. Western reception has sometimes misread didacticism as artistic weakness, yet within the Soviet context, such strategies were vital to cultural preservation.

From a narratological perspective, these works consistently integrate collective and individual narratives, in contrast to many Western traditions that prioritize individual psychology. This is not to essentialize cultural differences but to underscore how historical experiences shape narrative priorities. Narrative structures are not neutral containers they carry the imprint of a culture's history, values, and political realities.

Educationally, this narratological approach offers tools for fostering critical engagement with literature. By examining focalization shifts, actantial roles, and symbolic motifs, students can uncover how stories encode cultural heritage and negotiate identity. Such analysis supports curriculum reforms, such as Kazakhstan's Ruhani Zhangyru initiative, which links modernization with the preservation of national identity [11]. Comparative readings for example, juxtaposing Jamila with The Great Gatsby can deepen intercultural understanding, showing how narrative form reflects cultural priorities.

In conclusion, Central Asian literature emerges as a rich site for expanding narratological theory and for understanding literature's role in cultural self-definition. These narratives preserve language, archetypes, and historical memory; they address current social concerns; and they project visions of the future. As Ricoeur reminds us, narrative and identity are inseparable: the stories communities tell are not merely reflections of who they are, but active agents in shaping that identity across generations [27].

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Author Contributions

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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