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RECEIVED 23 March 2026

REVISED 07 May 2026

ACCEPTED 11 May 2026

PUBLISHED 29 May 2026

CITATION

Zeinullin R, Dauletova G, Biyazdykova K,
Edelbay S and Askerova S (2026) Cultural
memory and the transformation of
traditional values in Post-Soviet
Kazakhstan: a hybrid model of national
identity.
Front. Commun. 11:1837180.
doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2026.1837180

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Cultural memory and the transformation of traditional values in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: a hybrid model of national identity

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This study examines the transformation of cultural memory and traditional values in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan as a key component of national identity reconstruction. The main objective is to identify the mechanisms through which cultural memory preserves traditional values and reinterprets them within contemporary socio-cultural contexts. The research is based on a qualitative design and analyzes a corpus of materials from 1991 to 2024, including state programs, cultural texts, and epic heritage, notably the Rukhani Zhangyru program and the Koblandy Batyr epic. Data was examined using discourse analysis, thematic coding, and symbolic-interpretive methods. The findings demonstrate that cultural memory in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan functions not only as a mechanism for preserving historical experience but also as a dynamic system that adapts traditional values to modern social conditions. State discourse, the education system, and media are identified as key institutional mediators that reinterpret and transmit cultural values. In addition, epic heritage is recontextualized in contemporary cultural space, acquiring new symbolic and social functions. The study argues that the interaction between tradition and modernization leads to the emergence of a hybrid model of national identity. This model ensures continuity with the past while enabling adaptation to current societal demands. The findings contribute to a better understanding of cultural transformation processes in Post-Soviet societies and propose an integrative analytical framework for studying cultural memory and national identity.

KEYWORDS

cultural memory, cultural transformation, hybrid model, national identity, Post-Soviet Kazakhstan, traditional values

Introduction

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has undergone a profound socio-cultural transformation. Processes of urbanization, globalization, and digitalization have significantly influenced the structural foundations of national culture, creating conditions for the reinterpretation of traditional values and historical experience within new social contexts. The fact that more than 60% of the population currently lives in

urban areas, combined with the country's multiethnic composition comprising over 130 ethnic groups, reflects the rapid transition from a traditionally nomadic way of life to a modern urban culture. In addition, Kazakhstan's bilingual policy, centered on the coexistence of Kazakh and Russian languages, distinguishes the country as a unique socio-cultural model within Central Asia (Dave, 2007; Laruelle and Peyrouse, 2015).

These developments are closely connected to broader transformation processes across the Post-Soviet space. The collapse of the Soviet ideological system, political and economic reforms, and market modernization fundamentally restructured the former hierarchy of values, making the relationship between historical memory, national cultural codes, and civic identity an important subject of contemporary scholarly inquiry (Akimbekov, 2016; Masanov, 1995).

International comparative studies have played an important role in empirically explaining shifts in value systems. Data from the World Values Survey indicate that Post-Soviet societies, including Kazakhstan, are gradually moving from traditional values toward more secular-rational and self-expression values (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). However, this transformation is not uniform. In Kazakhstan, traditional values such as family cohesion, respect for elders, collectivism, and cultural continuity continue to retain significant social importance. At the same time, younger generations increasingly emphasize individualism, freedom of personal choice, and professional self-realization. This demonstrates the emergence of a complex axiological space in which elements of tradition and modernity coexist simultaneously.

Over the past decades, memory studies have developed into an influential interdisciplinary field within the humanities and social sciences. Questions related to collective memory, historical representation, symbolic politics, and cultural codes have been extensively examined not only in Western Europe and North America but also in post-socialist contexts (Assmann, 2011; Connerton, 1989; Halbwachs, 1992). Nevertheless, these theoretical frameworks were primarily formulated on the basis of Western historical experiences, which limits their direct applicability to post-Soviet, post-nomadic, and postcolonial societies such as Kazakhstan.

In Kazakhstan, the issue of national identity became a central component of state and public discourse following independence. The Rukhani Zhangyru ("Spiritual Modernization") program has served as a major ideological and cultural policy initiative aimed at preserving the national cultural code while adapting it to contemporary social realities (Rukhani zhangyru: Future orientation, 2017; Schatz, 2004). The program represents one of the key institutional mechanisms for restructuring cultural memory at the national level.

From an anthropological perspective, cultural transformation should be understood as a dynamic process rather than a static phenomenon. Alan Barnard conceptualizes cultural systems as changing structures shaped by historical experience and social interaction rather than as fixed entities (Barnard, 2021). This approach provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding the transformation of traditional values in Post-Soviet Kazakh society.

Although both international and domestic studies have examined various aspects of national identity and cultural policy, most of them do not comprehensively analyze the relationship between cultural memory and value transformation. For instance, Kudaibergenova (2017) emphasizes the role of elites in reconstructing national identity through literature, while Kulsarlieva (2025) explores the transformation of traditional values in Kazakhstan. However, these studies do not sufficiently explain the interaction between symbolic and institutional dimensions of cultural transformation.

Accordingly, several important research gaps remain insufficiently addressed. First, there is a lack of integrative studies combining theories of cultural memory with theories of value transformation in the context of Post-Soviet Central Asia. Second, the relationship between symbolic elements and institutional mechanisms in the process of cultural transformation has not been systematically examined. Third, the specific role of state programs such as Rukhani Zhangyru in shaping and reconstructing cultural memory remains underexplored.

This study seeks to address these gaps by integrating cultural memory and value transformation theories to explain the emergence of a hybrid model of national identity in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan. In doing so, the article proposes an integrative theoretical approach that contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural transformation processes in contemporary Post-Soviet societies.

Literature review

The theory of cultural memory emerged as an independent field of research in the humanities during the second half of the twentieth century. One of the foundational scholars of this approach was Maurice Halbwachs, who in *La mémoire collective* (1950) conceptualized memory not as an individual psychological phenomenon, but as a collective process constructed and reproduced through social groups (Halbwachs, 1992). By introducing the concept of *cadres sociaux* (social frameworks of memory), Halbwachs demonstrated that historical experience is always interpreted through the prism of contemporary social contexts. His work made it possible to understand cultural memory not merely as a collection of personal recollections, but as a mechanism for preserving social cohesion and collective identity.

The theory of collective memory was further developed at the cultural-functional level by Jan Assmann. In *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization* (2011) and *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis* (1992), Assmann distinguished cultural memory from social memory and interpreted it as a long-term civilizational code preserved through symbolic structures, texts, rituals, and cultural symbols. Assmann emphasized the normative dimension of cultural memory and its role in stabilizing systems of values within society. Moreover, he argued that cultural memory contributes to the preservation of historical experience and social continuity through intergenerational transmission (Assmann, 2011).

The relationship between memory, space, and symbolic sites was further explored by the French historian Pierre Nora in his

multi-volume work *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1984–1992), where he introduced the concept of lieux de mémoire (“sites of memory”). According to Nora, as “living memory” weakens in the process of modernization, societies begin to attach historical meanings to symbolic objects such as monuments, rituals, archives, and texts. This concept has become an important methodological framework for understanding the symbolic reconstruction of national identity (Nora, 1989).

These theoretical approaches make it possible to conceptualize cultural memory not only as a mechanism for preserving the past, but also as a structural factor shaping contemporary processes of value transformation. In the context of Kazakhstan, these perspectives provide a theoretical basis for analyzing the preservation and reinterpretation of traditional values.

Understanding socio-cultural transformation in Post-Soviet space also requires an examination of Soviet modernization as a historical and civilizational phenomenon. Soviet modernization sought to reconstruct traditional social structures through rapid industrialization, urbanization, and ideological homogenization. This process weakened the institutional foundations of national cultures and replaced them with socialist systems of values (Eisenstadt, 2017). Although the Soviet project proposed a universal model of modernization, its cultural consequences simultaneously generated latent forms of national identity.

Following the collapse of the USSR, post-socialist societies entered a period of identity reconstruction. Newly independent states sought new forms of political and cultural legitimacy by revitalizing historical memory, language policies, and symbolic heritage (Assmann, 2011; Connerton, 1989). In Kazakhstan, national symbols, epic heritage, and traditional values were reinterpreted through state discourse and cultural policy.

The post-socialist period was also characterized by a crisis of values and a normative vacuum. The collapse of the previous ideological system and the emergence of market relations transformed established hierarchies of values. These processes can be interpreted within the framework of post-materialist value theory (Inglehart, 2000). However, modernization in the Post-Soviet context did not represent a straightforward process of Westernization; rather, it developed in a selective and hybrid form (Eisenstadt, 2017).

Thus, Post-Soviet transformation can be understood as a complex axiological process characterized by the reactivation of cultural memory, the reconstruction of national identity, and the hybridization of value structures (Kulsariev, 2025).

National studies of Kazakh culture and values combine axiological, philosophical, and ethnographic perspectives. From a historical perspective, the core values of traditional nomadic culture – honor, hospitality, kinship solidarity, and respect for elders – continue to play a decisive role in the formation of contemporary national identity (Esim, 2019; Gabitov, 2022; Nurmuratov and Kurmangaliyeva, 2021; Toyshanuly, 2022).

For example, Tursun Gabitov (2022) analyzes the civilizational code of Kazakh society and systematizes values transmitted through cultural continuity and tradition. Garifolla Esim (2019), from the perspective of national philosophy, examines the reinterpretation of traditional values within modern social contexts through the concept of Kazak Eli. Serik Nurmuratov and Galyia Kurmangaliyeva (2020) describe the transformation

of Kazakh axiology within the framework of the Rukhani Zhangyru program, while Akedil Toyshanuly (2022), drawing on ethnographic evidence, explores the role of mythological consciousness and epic archetypes in cultural memory.

Within an international theoretical context, these studies can be linked to Jan Assmann’s theory of cultural memory (2011) and Schwartz’s theory of values (2012). Assmann emphasizes the role of cultural memory in preserving and transmitting historical experience, whereas Schwartz explains the mechanisms through which values undergo transformation. Together, these approaches create a bridge between national scholarly traditions and international theory, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the preservation and reinterpretation of values in Kazakh culture.

The relationship between modernization and value transformation in Kazakhstan has also been widely discussed in domestic scholarship. For instance, E. Tukumov (2024) argues that modernization processes directly influence transformations in social value orientations. According to the author, socio-economic reforms, urbanization, demographic change, and globalization all contribute to the reinterpretation of traditional value systems.

The studies discussed above provide important theoretical and practical foundations for understanding the transformation of cultural memory and traditional values in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Theories of cultural memory (Assmann, 2011; Halbwachs, 1992; Nora, 1989) help explain the formation of national identity, the preservation of historical experience, and its reinterpretation within contemporary social conditions. At the same time, traditional values and cultural symbolism continue to play an important role in shaping public policy, educational programs, and cultural projects (Kudaibergenova, 2017; Kulsariev, 2025).

In the context of Kazakhstan, this literature review demonstrates that combining cultural anthropology, ethnography, and philosophy allows for a comprehensive analysis of Post-Soviet socio-cultural transformation. Furthermore, comparative engagement with international theories and experiences contributes to a deeper understanding of transformational processes within national culture.

Critical review of the literature and positioning of the study

Although the theoretical and empirical studies discussed above have established an important scholarly foundation for understanding cultural memory and value transformation, several limitations remain evident. First, the theories of cultural memory proposed by Maurice Halbwachs and Jan Assmann were developed primarily within the historical experience of Western societies. Consequently, these theories require adaptation when applied to post-Soviet, post-nomadic, and post-colonial contexts such as Kazakhstan.

Second, Pierre Nora’s concept of sites of memory was formulated within the context of nation-states with long historical trajectories. In newly independent states such as Kazakhstan, however, the formation of cultural memory is far more dynamic and closely connected to institutional and

ideological factors. Therefore, the direct application of Nora's framework remains limited.

Third, most contemporary studies examine cultural transformation either at the symbolic level (epics, cultural symbols, heritage) or at the institutional level (state policy, education, media). Research integrating these two dimensions into a comprehensive analytical framework remains insufficient.

Moreover, while Kudaibergenova (2017) emphasizes the role of elites in constructing national identity, such studies predominantly focus on top-down discourses. Less attention has been paid to everyday cultural transformation within urban environments, the reinterpretation of cultural symbols in media spaces, and the role of ordinary social practices in shaping contemporary identity.

In this regard, the present study aims not merely to describe cultural memory and the transformation of traditional values, but to identify the mechanisms through which they interact. By integrating symbolic and institutional dimensions, the study proposes an integrative analytical approach for explaining the formation of national identity in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on the integration of Cultural Memory and Value Transformation theories. The research proposes a comprehensive conceptual model explaining the transformation of traditional values and the formation of national identity in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

Within the framework of cultural memory theory, Jan Assmann conceptualizes cultural memory as a mechanism for preserving historical experience, transmitting it across generations, and constructing collective identity through symbolic systems (Assmann, 2011). From this perspective, cultural memory not only preserves the past but also enables its reinterpretation within contemporary social contexts

Halbwachs (1992). argues that collective memory is shaped through social structures and that historical experience is continuously reconstructed in accordance with present social realities. Connerton (1989) describes cultural memory as a system of values transmitted through social practices and rituals, while Barnard (2021) emphasizes the dynamic nature of cultural systems and explains the interaction between cultural memory and processes of social change.

Value Transformation theory explains the restructuring of traditional values within new social, economic, and cultural contexts. Schwartz (2012) conceptualizes values as an interconnected system, arguing that during processes of transformation some values are preserved, whereas others acquire new meanings and functions. Inglehart (2000) analyzes the dynamics of value change under modernization, while Eisenstadt (2017) demonstrates that such transformations do not occur uniformly across societies but rather develop through hybrid and context-dependent forms.

By integrating these theoretical approaches, the study explains the interaction between cultural memory and value transformation through an integrative conceptual model. As

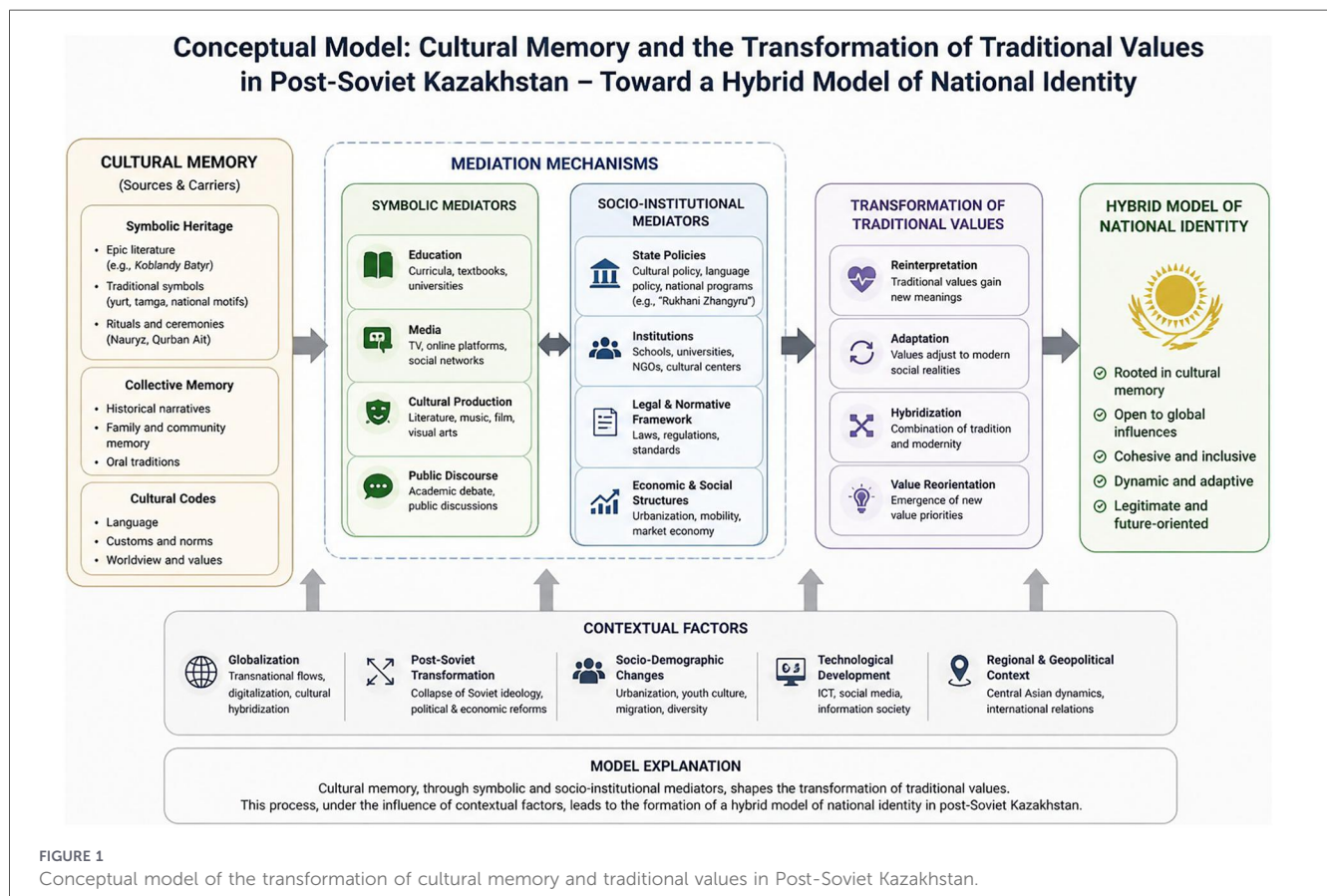


FIGURE 1

Conceptual model of the transformation of cultural memory and traditional values in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

illustrated in [Figure 1](#), this model demonstrates the sequential relationship between cultural memory, symbolic and institutional mediators, value transformation, and the emergence of a hybrid model of national identity. In this model, cultural memory is understood as the primary system preserving symbolic cultural structures, whereas value transformation represents the process through which these structures adapt to changing social conditions.

The central logic of the model can be summarized as follows:

- cultural memory (historical experience, symbolic heritage, cultural codes);
- reinterpretation through symbolic and institutional mediators;
- transformation of traditional values;
- emergence of a hybrid model of national identity.

The mediators are examined at two levels: symbolic (epics, the yurt, cultural symbols, rituals, and traditional cultural practices) and institutional (state policy, the education system, and media space). These mediators adapt elements of cultural memory to contemporary social realities and contribute to the production of new meanings and forms of cultural interpretation.

This conceptual model systematically illustrates the mechanisms through which cultural memory influences the transformation of traditional values in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan. At the foundational level, cultural memory is conceptualized as a basic structure encompassing the historical experience, symbolic systems, and cultural codes of society.

At the next level, elements of cultural memory are re-signified within the contemporary socio-cultural context through symbolic mediators (epics, traditional symbols, rituals, and customs) and institutional mediators (state policy, the education system, and media space). These mediators function as the principal mechanisms through which traditional values are transferred into a new semantic and social framework.

At the third level, the transformation of traditional values takes place through processes of reinterpretation, adaptation, and hybridization. This process facilitates the interaction between elements of tradition and modernization, thereby contributing to the formation of a new axiological structure.

At the final level, these processes result in the emergence of a hybrid model of national identity. Although this model is rooted in historical cultural memory, it appears as a dynamic system adapted to the social, cultural, and institutional transformations associated with globalization.

Thus, the proposed model provides an integrative theoretical framework for understanding the interrelationship between cultural memory, value transformation, and national identity, while offering a comprehensive approach to analyzing cultural change in Post-Soviet societies.

Materials and methods

This study is based on a qualitative research design and aims to analyze the transformation of cultural memory and traditional values in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan from philosophical-anthropological and cultural perspectives. The research was

conducted within an interpretive-anthropological paradigm, in which cultural phenomena were examined within their social, historical, and symbolic contexts. The primary objective was to identify the mechanisms through which cultural memory preserves, re-signifies, and adapts traditional values to contemporary socio-cultural conditions ([Assmann, 2011](#); [Connerton, 1989](#)).

The research corpus consisted of textual and cultural materials covering the period from 1991 to 2024. This time frame made it possible to examine the formation of national cultural policy, the reconstruction of historical consciousness, and the major stages of value transformation following Kazakhstan's independence ([Akimbekov, 2016](#); [Masanov, 1995](#)). The corpus included approximately 25–30 sources, comprising state documents, epic texts, educational and media materials, as well as scholarly publications.

The research materials were divided into four main groups of sources. The first group included state programs and official documents related to national identity and cultural policy. The principal empirical source was the 2017 policy article Rukhani zhangyru: Future orientation, as it reflects the contemporary reinterpretation of traditional values through concepts such as “national code,” “modernization,” and “competitiveness” ([Gabitov, 2022](#); [Rukhani zhangyru: Future orientation, 2017](#)).

The second group consisted of Kazakh epic and literary heritage. The epic Koblandy Batyr was selected as the main case study because it represents the symbolic core of cultural memory, embodying values such as heroism, collectivism, and national identity. Its contemporary reinterpretation within educational and media spaces also provides an opportunity to analyze the transformation of traditional values ([Gabitov, 2022](#); [Toyshanuly, 2022](#)).

The third group included educational and media materials, such as school curricula, cultural projects, television programs, and digital media content. These materials were used to examine how traditional values are retransmitted in contemporary society and how they acquire new semantic meanings within modern cultural contexts ([Kudaibergenova, 2017](#); [Nurmuratov and Kurmangaliyeva, 2021](#)).

The fourth group comprised scholarly literature on cultural memory, national identity, and value transformation theories. These works provided the theoretical foundation for interpreting the empirical materials ([Assmann, 2011](#); [Barnard, 2021](#); [Brubaker, 1996](#); [Halbwachs, 1992](#); [Nora, 1989](#)).

The materials were selected using purposive sampling. The selection criteria included:

1. relevance to cultural memory and national identity in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan;
2. representation of the preservation or transformation of traditional values;
3. inclusion of symbolic or institutional mediators;
4. broad circulation within public and cultural discourse.

Several interrelated analytical methods were employed in the study. First, discourse analysis was applied to identify the meanings and functions of key concepts within state programs and official documents. Through this method, concepts such as “national code,” “modernization,” and “tradition” were analyzed

in relation to contemporary cultural policy (Etkind, 2020; Gabitov, 2022).

Second, thematic analysis was conducted. The coding process combined inductive and deductive approaches, integrating predefined theoretical categories with themes emerging directly from the texts. As a result, several major categories were identified, including cultural memory, national code, land cult, collectivism, urbanization, media representation, and the synthesis of tradition and modernization (Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Schwartz, 2012).

Third, symbolic-interpretive analysis was used to examine the meanings of cultural symbols such as epic narratives, the yurt, and national symbols in contemporary society (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 2012). For example, traditional and contemporary interpretations of the Koblandy Batyr epic were compared to analyzing its role in shaping national identity.

The analysis was conducted in several stages. During the first stage, materials for inclusion in the research corpus were identified. In the second stage, key concepts and themes were extracted from the texts. In the third stage, these themes were interpreted through the theoretical frameworks of cultural memory and value transformation. Finally, state discourse, epic texts, and contemporary media representations were comparatively analyzed (Barnard, 2021; Brubaker, 1996).

To ensure the reliability of the findings, theoretical triangulation was employed. Different types of sources – state documents, literary texts, media materials, and scholarly literature – were systematically compared, and the results were interpreted within the frameworks of cultural memory and national identity theories (Assmann, 2011; Halbwachs, 1992).

Since the study did not involve human participants or personal empirical data, formal ethical approval was not required. All materials were obtained from publicly accessible sources.

The limitations of the study include its qualitative nature and the relatively limited size of the analyzed corpus. Although this constrains the generalizability of the findings, it enables an in-depth interpretive analysis of cultural phenomena.

To enhance analytical validity, the study employed theoretical triangulation by comparing governmental discourse, cultural texts, and academic interpretations within a unified analytical framework. In addition, repeated thematic coding and cross-textual comparison were used to minimize interpretive bias and ensure conceptual consistency across the analyzed corpus.

Results

This section analyzes the formation of cultural memory, the transformation of traditional values, and their reinterpretation within the contemporary socio-cultural context of Post-Soviet Kazakh society based on concrete empirical materials. The research findings are systematized into three main dimensions: (1) the institutional reconstruction of cultural memory, (2) the social transformation of traditional values, and (3) the formation of national identity through symbolic and institutional mediators.

The findings demonstrate that, in the Post-Soviet period, cultural memory functions not only as a mechanism for preserving historical experience, but also as a means of

restructuring and adapting it to new social contexts. Following the formalization and weakening of national traditions during the Soviet era, cultural memory was reactivated at the institutional level after independence.

A clear empirical manifestation of this process can be observed in the Rukhani Zhangyru program adopted in 2017. The program systematically employs concepts such as “national code,” “modernization,” and “competitiveness,” reflecting the logic through which traditional values are reinterpreted within a contemporary framework. For example, the statement that “preserving the national code is the main condition of modernization” illustrates the coexistence of cultural continuity and social adaptation. Discourse analysis revealed that the concept of the “national code” functions as a stabilizing category representing historical continuity, whereas “modernization” operates as a dynamic category associated with social transformation. The simultaneous use of these concepts indicates an institutional effort to construct a hybrid cultural model at the state level.

During the textual and discursive analysis, it was revealed that the concepts of “national code,” “national consciousness,” “competitiveness,” and “spiritual modernization” are used with particularly high frequency in the Rukhani Zhangyru program. The program contains such statements as: “The very concept of national modernization implies the maturation of national consciousness” and “the ability to preserve the national code” (Rukhani zhangyru: Future orientation, 2017). This rhetoric demonstrates that the state discourse is aimed at harmonizing the preservation of traditional cultural values with processes of modernization and development.

Within the framework of the program, projects such as Tugan Zher (“Native Land”), 100 New Textbooks, and Sacred Geography of Kazakhstan were implemented, establishing cultural mechanisms aimed at revitalizing national historical memory at the institutional level.

From a discursive perspective, the concept of the “national code” functions as a symbol of historical continuity, while the notion of “modernization” appears as a legitimizing mechanism for social adaptation and transformative change. Thus, state discourse restructures cultural memory at the institutional level and contributes to the formation of a hybrid model of national identity.

To illustrate the symbolic transformation of cultural memory, the Koblandy Batyr epic was analyzed as a key empirical case. The findings demonstrate that while the content of the epic has remained relatively stable, its social function has significantly changed. In traditional society, the epic symbolized heroism and tribal unity; in the contemporary period, however, it has increasingly been presented as an instrument for constructing national identity and patriotism. Moreover, the reinterpretation of the epic within educational curricula and media spaces – including theatrical productions, television programs, and digital content – has expanded its symbolic significance. This process confirms the dynamic nature of cultural memory and demonstrates how cultural symbols acquire new meanings in different historical contexts.

The results of the content analysis demonstrated that the epic Koblandy Batyr is currently represented not only as a historical and literary heritage, but also as an instrument for the formation of

TABLE 1 Transformation of traditional values in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

Aspect	Soviet Period	Post-Soviet Period	Transformation Mechanism	Empirical Example
National holidays	Limited and formalized	State-supported revitalization	Institutional reinterpretation	Nauryz integrated into state cultural policy after 1991
Epic heritage	Secondary ideological role	National identity symbol	Symbolic reinterpretation	“Koblandy Batyr” included in educational and media discourse
Kinship relations	Socially restricted	Symbolically revitalized	Adaptation to urban society	Family rituals maintained in urban environments
Traditional symbols	Marginalized	Commercialized and mediatized	Cultural hybridization	National clothing in tourism and media branding
Collective values	Soviet collectivism	Hybrid communitarianism	Selective modernization	Preservation of respect for elders alongside individualism

patriotic consciousness and cultural identity. For example, within school curricula, the epic is interpreted as a model of national heroism, while in the media sphere its visual representations are integrated with elements of national cultural branding.

This situation indicates a transformation in the social function of epic texts: whereas in traditional society the epic served to strengthen clan and communal unity, in the contemporary context it has become a symbolic instrument for the construction of civic-patriotic and national cultural identity.

The transformation of traditional values is also evident at the social level. The findings indicate that urbanization and broader social changes have restructured both the meaning and function of traditional values. First, intergenerational relations have changed, with younger generations selectively adopting traditional norms. Second, in urban environments, the social role of kinship relations has weakened and been partially replaced by new forms of social interaction. Third, the synthesis of traditional values and modern norms has generated new cultural practices. For instance, national clothing and traditional cuisine have increasingly been incorporated into commercial and media spaces as cultural symbols, thereby expanding their social and symbolic functions.

The study identified several core components of traditional values, including the cult of land, collectivism, respect for elders, and genealogical identity. These values are preserved through cultural memory while simultaneously being reinterpreted within contemporary social realities. For example, the cult of land is understood as a historical and spiritual space, whereas collectivism is adapted to modern forms of social responsibility and mutual assistance.

Overall, the findings empirically demonstrate the interrelationship between cultural memory and value transformation. State policy, the education system, and media space were identified as the primary mediators through which traditional values are reinterpreted. Through these mediating mechanisms, traditional cultural elements acquire new meanings within contemporary social contexts and contribute to the formation of a hybrid model of national identity.

As shown in Table 1, the transformation of traditional values is characterized not only by changes in their content but also by the restructuring of their social functions. Cultural elements that were subjected to ideological restrictions during the Soviet

period were reactivated in the Post-Soviet era at both institutional and symbolic levels and adapted to new social contexts. This process contributed to the formation of a synthesis between tradition and modernization, thereby laying the foundation for the emergence of a hybrid model of national identity (Zeinullin et al., 2026).

Discussion

As demonstrated by the findings of this study, the transformation of cultural memory and traditional values in Post-Soviet Kazakh society represents a multilayered and dynamic process. This transformation occurs through the interaction of historical, social, and symbolic factors. While the ideological restrictions imposed on national cultural elements during the Soviet period hindered the full development of cultural memory, the post-independence era witnessed its reactivation, turning cultural memory into one of the principal mechanisms for reconstructing national identity.

This conclusion partially confirms the theories of cultural memory proposed by Halbwachs (1992) and Assmann (2011), while also revealing some of their limitations. Since these theories were primarily developed based on Western social experiences, they cannot fully explain the specific features of cultural transformation in Post-Soviet and post-nomadic societies. In the Kazakh context, cultural memory functions not merely as a mechanism for preserving historical experience, but also as a dynamic system capable of adapting to ongoing social transformations.

The findings demonstrate the institutional reconstruction of cultural memory through concrete empirical materials. The discourse analysis of the Rukhani Zhangyru program indicates that a hybrid model integrating tradition and modernization is being consciously constructed within state cultural policy. This finding complements the theories of Post-Soviet national identity proposed by Brubaker (1996) and Laruelle and Peyrouse (2015), demonstrating that cultural memory in Kazakhstan has become a state-managed symbolic resource.

At the same time, the study clarifies the transformation occurring at the symbolic level. The analysis of the Koblandy Batyr epic reveals that although the content of cultural symbols

remains relatively stable, their social functions undergo significant transformation. This conclusion corresponds with [Nora's \(1989\)](#) concept of *lieux de mémoire*, yet the findings further demonstrate that epic texts function not only as symbolic objects, but also as active social instruments continually reinterpreted within contemporary cultural contexts.

The transformation of traditional values is directly connected to broader changes in social structures. Urbanization, globalization, and social mobility reshape the meaning and function of traditional norms, reconstructing them within new social realities. Although this process aligns with the theories of [Inglehart \(2000\)](#) and [Schwartz \(2012\)](#), the Kazakh case demonstrates that transformation does not lead to complete secularization. Instead, it proceeds through selective adaptation and cultural hybridization.

While [Kudaibergenova \(2017\)](#) primarily emphasizes the role of intellectual elites in reconstructing national narratives, the present study demonstrates that cultural transformation in Kazakhstan also occurs through everyday symbolic practices, media representations, and educational institutions. Thus, the research expands the analysis from elite-centered discourse toward broader socio-cultural mechanisms of identity reconstruction.

The findings further indicate that traditional values are not eliminated but rather acquire new social functions. For example, although the role of kinship relations has changed, kinship continues to exist at the symbolic level and remains an important component of national identity. This phenomenon empirically confirms the theories of cultural hybridization under globalization developed by [Appadurai \(1996\)](#) and [Castells \(2011\)](#) within a specific Post-Soviet context.

The role of cultural symbolism in the formation of national identity is particularly significant. The study demonstrates that traditional cultural elements – such as epic narratives, national symbols, and traditional clothing – are reintroduced through contemporary media and educational systems, thereby acquiring new layers of meaning. This process corresponds to the concept of “invented traditions” proposed by [Hobsbawm and Ranger \(1983\)](#). However, in the Kazakh context, these traditions are not simply reconstructed artificially; rather, they retain a strong connection to historical continuity while simultaneously undergoing transformation.

Thus, the study offers a new theoretical interpretation of the relationship between cultural memory and value transformation. The findings suggest that cultural memory should be understood not only as a mechanism for preserving the past but also as a structural force shaping contemporary social change. In this regard, the study expands cultural memory theory by proposing new possibilities for its application within Post-Soviet and postcolonial contexts.

From a practical perspective, the findings contribute to the development of national cultural policy, the improvement of educational programs, and the preservation of cultural stability. Furthermore, the study provides an analytical foundation not only for understanding cultural transformation in Kazakhstan but also for examining similar processes across the broader Central Asian region.

The limitations of the study are related to its qualitative nature and the relatively limited corpus of analyzed sources. Future

research should complement the present findings with quantitative methods and comparative analyses involving other Central Asian countries. In addition, investigating the influence of digital media and online communication on cultural memory may provide deeper insights into contemporary processes of cultural transformation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the transformation of cultural memory and traditional values in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan represents a dynamic and multi-layered process. The findings reveal that cultural memory functions not merely as a mechanism for preserving historical experience, but also as an active system that reinterprets and recontextualizes traditional values within new socio-cultural conditions.

The study further shows that traditional values in the Post-Soviet period have not disappeared; rather, they have acquired new meanings through processes of adaptation, reinterpretation, and hybridization. Although urbanization, globalization, and social change have accelerated these transformations, cultural memory continues to function as a key mechanism maintaining continuity between tradition and modernization.

In addition, the findings indicate that the transformation of cultural memory and values is mediated through both symbolic and institutional mechanisms. State policy, the education system, and the media sphere were identified as the principal instruments for the reinterpretation of traditional values. As a result of these processes, a hybrid model of national identity emerges, combining historical continuity with the demands of contemporary social reality.

In addition, the study is limited by its focus on textual and symbolic materials from Kazakhstan and does not include ethnographic interviews or quantitative sociological surveys. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as an analytical-conceptual model rather than a universally generalized explanation of Post-Soviet cultural transformation.

The principal theoretical contribution of this study lies in the development of an integrative conceptual model that combines Cultural Memory and Value Transformation theories. This model offers a new analytical approach to understanding cultural change in Post-Soviet societies and provides a comprehensive explanation of the mechanisms underlying the construction of national identity.

From a practical perspective, the findings contribute to the development of national cultural policy, educational programs, and strategies aimed at strengthening cultural sustainability. The effective reinterpretation of traditional values within contemporary contexts can contribute to social cohesion and the preservation of national identity.

The limitations of the study are related to its qualitative design and the restricted scope of the source corpus. Future research should expand this topic through quantitative approaches and comparative analyses involving other Central Asian countries. Furthermore, a deeper examination of the influence of digital media and globalization on cultural memory would provide a more comprehensive understanding of Post-Soviet cultural transformation.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding authors.

Author contributions

RZ: Conceptualization, Data curation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. GD: Formal analysis, Resources, Writing – review & editing. KB: Conceptualization, Investigation, Resources, Writing – review & editing. SE: Methodology, Resources, Writing – review & editing. SA: Conceptualization, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing.

Funding

The author(s) declared that financial support was not received for this work and/or its publication.

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