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СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫХ ДОКТРИН В ПОСТСОВЕТСКОЙ
ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ

Аннотация

Цель статьи – выявить способы переосмысления советского литературного канона при легитимации национальных доктрин Казахстана и Узбекистана в 1991-2016 годах. Рассматриваются роман-эпопея Мухтара Ауэзова «Путь Абая» и роман Айбека «Навои», сохранившие культурный авторитет после обретения независимости. Методология основана на качественном сравнительном анализе литературного материала и обобщении исследований национализма, культурной памяти и советских культурных институтов. Конструктивистский подход позволяет сопоставить литературные образы, официальные исторические нарративы и институциональные условия канонизации. Более поздние научные работы используются для переосмысления исследуемого периода, а не для распространения выводов на современную политическую ситуацию. Результаты показывают, что сохранение авторитета канонических произведений сочеталось с изменением их идеологического прочтения. Казахская ориентация на относительно инклюзивное национальное строительство и преемственность, а также более выраженное обращение Узбекистана к досоветскому наследию рассматриваются как сравнительные тенденции культурной политики. Они не составляют исчерпывающей классификации и не выражают неизменные свойства национальных культур. Разграничиваются художественные тексты, их исторические герои и образовательные либо мемориальные институты, распространяющие соответствующие интерпретации. Научная новизна заключается в сопоставлении институциональной преемственности и избирательного идеологического переосмысления как взаимосвязанных механизмов использования литературного наследия. Исследование не устанавливает измеренного воздействия произведений на идентичность читателей. Практическая значимость состоит в возможности применения предложенного подхода при анализе культурной политики, образовательных представлений о литературном наследии и официальных практик памяти. Он помогает отделить политическое использование культурного авторитета от неподтвержденных утверждений о восприятии произведений обществом.

Ключевые слова: национальное строительство, литературный канон, культурная легитимация, конструктивизм, культурная память, советское наследие.

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ПОСТКЕҢЕСТІК ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯДАҒЫ ҰЛТТЫҚ ДОКТРИНАЛАРДЫ САЛЫСТЫРМАЛЫ ТАЛДАУ

Аңдатпа

Мақаланың мақсаты – кеңестік әдеби канонның Қазақстан мен Өзбекстандағы ұлттық доктриналарды легитимациялау барысында қалай қайта түсіндірілгенін анықтау. Зерттеу 1991-2016 жылдарды қамтиды. Мұхтар Әуезовтің «Абай жолы» роман-эпопеясы мен Айбектің «Навои» романы тәуелсіздік кезеңінде мәдени беделін сақтаған әдеби мұра ретінде қарастырылады. Зерттеу әдіснамасы әдеби мәтіндерді сапалық салыстырмалы талдауға және ұлт қалыптастыру, мәдени жад пен кеңестік мәдени институттар туралы ғылыми әдебиетті жинақтап пайымдауға негізделеді. Конструктивистік тәсіл көркем туындылардағы бейнелерді, ресми тарихи баяндауларды және шығармаларды канон ретінде орнықтыратын институттарды өзара салыстыруға мүмкіндік береді. Кейінгі ғылыми еңбектер зерттелетін тарихи кезеңді қайта пайымдау үшін қолданылады; мақала қорытындылары қазіргі саяси жағдайға тікелей көшірілмейді. Нәтижелер канондық шығармалардың беделін сақтау олардың идеологиялық түсіндірмесін өзгертумен қатар жүргенін көрсетеді. Қазақстандағы сабақтастық пен салыстырмалы инклюзивтілікке ұмтылыс, сондай-ақ Өзбекстандағы кеңеске дейінгі мұраны жаңғыртуға басымдық беру мәдени саясаттың салыстырмалы бағыттары ретінде сипатталады. Бұл айырмашылықтар ұлттық мәдениеттердің өзгермейтін қасиеттері немесе барлық жағдайды қамтитын жіктеу ретінде ұсынылмайды. Әдеби мәтін, оның тарихи кейіпкері және шығарманың мағынасын тарататын білім беру мен еске алу институттары ажыратылады. Ғылыми жаңалығы - институционалдық сабақтастық пен идеологиялық тұрғыдан іріктеп қайта түсіндіруді әдеби мұраны пайдаланудың өзара байланысты тетіктері ретінде салыстыру. Зерттеу шығармалардың оқырман бірегейлігіне өлшенген ықпалын анықтауды көздемейді. Практикалық маңызы ұсынылған тәсілді мәдени саясатты, оқу бағдарламаларындағы әдеби мұраның түсіндірмесін және ресми тарихи жад тәжірибелерін талдауда қолдану мүмкіндігімен байланысты.

Түйін сөздер: ұлт қалыптастыру, әдеби канон, мәдени легитимация, конструктивизм, мәдени жад, кеңестік мұра.

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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL DOCTRINES IN POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA

Abstract

Purpose: This article examines how Soviet-era literary canons were reinterpreted in the legitimation of national doctrines in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan during 1991-2016. It focuses on Mukhtar Auevov's The Way of Abai and Oybek's Navoi as inherited cultural resources whose political meanings changed after independence. Design/methodology/approach: The study uses a qualitative comparative synthesis of literary material and published research on nationalism, cultural memory, and Soviet cultural institutions. A constructivist framework guides comparison of literary representations, official narratives, and the institutional settings of canonization. Recent scholarship is used to reconsider the historical period, rather than to extend the comparison to contemporary political developments.

Findings: Both cases indicate that the authority acquired by canonical works under Soviet cultural policy could be retained while their ideological interpretation changed. Kazakhstan's comparatively inclusive and continuity-oriented discourse and Uzbekistan's stronger emphasis on recovery of pre-Soviet heritage represent relative policy orientations, not exhaustive categories or fixed national characteristics. The analysis distinguishes the novels from their historical protagonists and from educational and commemorative institutions that circulate their meanings. It identifies institutional continuity and selective ideological reinterpretation as complementary mechanisms; it does not establish measured effects on audience identification. **Originality:** The contribution is a comparison of how inherited literary authority and cultural institutions supported divergent interpretations of national history without requiring wholesale replacement of the Soviet canon. The framework can inform research on cultural policy and educational representations of literary heritage, while keeping claims about political legitimation separate from evidence of reception.

Keywords: nation-building, literary canon, cultural legitimation, constructivism, cultural memory, Soviet legacy.

Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union required the newly independent Central Asian states to explain sovereignty through histories and cultural symbols that remained credible to their populations. Sovereignty changed in 1991, while many cultural resources through which national belonging had been taught remained inherited from the Soviet period. Soviet schools, publishing houses and commemorative practices had already established recognizable national writers and historical heroes. Independence therefore raised a specific question: how could a state distance itself from Soviet ideology while continuing to rely on cultural authorities whose public standing had developed within Soviet institutions?

This article addresses that question through Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Both republics inherited national literary canons shaped by Soviet nationality policy, but their governments placed different emphases on the relationship between independence and the Soviet past. Here, national doctrine denotes recurring official accounts of national belonging and historical legitimacy, rather than a single formal policy document. Kazakhstan generally combined the promotion of Kazakh historical heritage with a language of civic unity. Uzbekistan under Islam Karimov gave greater prominence to the recovery of pre-Soviet statehood and cultural sovereignty. These orientations provide a useful comparison, although neither country followed a uniform or unchanging doctrine. They describe relative emphases within official nation-building rather than the views of every citizen or writer.

Mukhtar Auezov's *The Way of Abai* and Oybek's *Navoi* make this problem particularly visible. Written and canonized during the Soviet period, the novels depict historical figures who could subsequently represent national moral authority. The first centers on Abai's intellectual formation and the conflicts of nineteenth-century Kazakh society. The second presents Alisher Navoi within the political and literary world of the Timurid period. Their characters, settings and narrative priorities differ, but both works supplied recognizable accounts of cultural achievement that could outlast the political order in which the novels acquired canonical status (Auezov, 1997, 2006; Oybek, 1976).

The aim is to explain how these inherited literary resources were reinterpreted within post-Soviet national doctrines, with particular attention to the Nazarbayev and Karimov periods. Three questions guide the comparison. Which elements of the novels' authority remained usable after independence? How did the relationship between the Soviet past and national sovereignty shape their interpretation? Through which institutions were these interpretations sustained? The central proposition is that political reinterpretation can coexist with continuity in the institutions that reproduce a literary canon.

The contribution lies in distinguishing the historical figure, the literary representation and the institutional use of that representation. Public reverence for Abai or Navoi does not by itself establish the influence of a particular novel. Research on Abai's contemporary reception and Uzbek literary nationalism nevertheless shows why these levels need to be examined together (Kaumen & Mukan, 2026; Kudaibergenova, 2018). The comparison identifies their relationship without assuming that

official symbolism produces uniform audience responses. It also brings recent scholarship into dialogue with the earlier nation-building literature, allowing the continuity and rupture distinction to be treated as an analytical starting point whose limits require examination.

Literature Review

Constructivist approaches explain national identity through social processes that establish shared categories, authoritative histories and institutional routines. Berger and Luckmann (1991) describe how social knowledge becomes taken for granted, while Wendt (1999) emphasizes the social production of identities and interests. Brubaker (2004) warns against treating categories of collective identification as internally homogeneous groups. Applied here, these approaches direct attention to the actors and practices that make a literary work appear representative of a nation. They also discourage reading a novel's political use as evidence of an enduring national essence.

Bourdieu's (1991) account of symbolic power helps explain the authority of a canon: schools, cultural institutions and public recognition make some representations legitimate and widely available. Critical approaches to discourse similarly examine how selection, emphasis and exclusion organize political meaning (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak et al., 2009). These perspectives support a distinction between a text's narrative possibilities and the narrower interpretation promoted by an institution. They do not establish that readers necessarily accept the promoted interpretation.

Historical scholarship places the Central Asian literary canon within Soviet nation-making. Hirsch (2005), Haugen (2003) and Ubiria (2016) show how the formation of national republics and the organization of cultural difference shaped modern national categories. Clark (1981) explains the conventions through which the Soviet novel represented historical development and exemplary conduct. These works make it difficult to describe post-Soviet national cultures as simple recoveries of an untouched pre-Soviet past. The cultural authorities available in 1991 had already been selected, edited and institutionalized over several decades.

Studies of Kazakhstan connect literary interpretation to education, language and commemoration. Asanova (2007) analyzes the relationship between literature textbooks and nation-building, and Fierman (1998) traces competing formulations of language and identity in policy documents. Kudaibergenova (2018) shows that Abai's canonical prominence can coexist with difficulties in understanding his works. Caffee (2018) examines the circulation of Russian literature within the life and legend of Abai. Together, these studies support an interpretation of the Kazakh canon as a field of mediation and disagreement, rather than a transparent expression of a single official identity.

For Uzbekistan, Adams (2010) examines how cultural performance reproduces national identity through institutions inherited from the Soviet period. Laruelle (2017) analyzes the political narration of the nation, while Maerz (2018) questions whether *ma'naviyat*, usually translated as spirituality, represents a clear ideological departure from the Soviet past. Paskaleva (2015) demonstrates the importance of reconstructed Timurid architecture to official historical representation. The nationalization of the past also needs historical caution: Kurzman (1999) challenges accounts that project a modern Uzbek nation directly into earlier periods. Landau (2010) places alphabet reform within the wider symbolic reorganization of post-Soviet Muslim republics, while Fazendeiro (2017) relates Karimov's foreign policy to defensive self-reliance.

Recent research complicates accounts of a straightforward transition from Soviet identity to national sovereignty. Kirmse (2022) shows that internationalist and national agendas could develop together among Soviet youth. Erdman (2023) examines how vernacular periodicals helped organize language-based national publics, and Kaganovitch (2023) identifies the changing linguistic frameworks through which minority children were educated in Uzbekistan. Hamzaoglu (2026) places Jadid educational and political reform within the formation of Uzbek national identity. These studies establish multiple historical sources of national representation and prevent Soviet institutions from being treated as either its sole origin or a purely external interruption.

For Kazakhstan, Burkhanov and Sharipova (2024) identify new narratives alongside older symbolic structures in history textbooks. Boman and Mussakhanova (2024) describe overlapping educational trajectories rather than one consistent ideological direction. Kossyn's (2024) rereading of Abai questions

the stability of his mythologized image, while Mustoyapova and Abdigapbarova (2026) examine *Akbilek*, a banned Soviet-era novel, as a bearer of historical memory. The latter is a useful boundary case: a canon of officially authorized works captures only part of the literary resources later available for national interpretation.

The present article builds on these debates through a paired comparison of the institutional uses of two Soviet-era novels. The Uzbek literary argument has a direct precedent in Kaumen and Mukan (2026), whose analysis places *Navoi* within a broader group of historical novels. The present comparison examines how that argument relates to Kazakhstan and specifies which similarities concern cultural infrastructure and which differences concern political interpretation. Its contribution is to establish the comparative significance of the Uzbek case in relation to Kazakhstan's use of inherited literary authority.

Research Methodology

The study uses a qualitative comparative synthesis of literary material and published research on national identity, language policy, education and cultural memory. Its literary focus comprises the first three books of Auezov's *Abai zholy* in the 1997 Zheti Zhargy edition, the fourth book in the 2006 Zhazushy edition, and Oybek's *Navoiy* in volume six of the 1976 collected works (Auezov, 1997, 2006; Oybek, 1976). The different publication dates identify the editions used as reference points; they do not indicate that the novels originated after independence. Published studies of canon formation supply the institutional context in which the works acquired and retained authority.

The design follows comparative historical analysis in using common questions to organize two historically related cases (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003). Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are appropriate for comparison because both inherited Soviet republic-level institutions, national literary hierarchies and state-supported cultural production. Their demographic and linguistic circumstances, historical narratives and approaches to sovereignty nevertheless differed. These differences help examine why an inherited cultural form could remain authoritative while receiving a different political interpretation. The design does not isolate variables experimentally or identify the independent causal effect of either novel.

The principal historical scope is the period from independence in 1991 to the end of Karimov's presidency in 2016. This common interval makes the comparison more coherent than an unrestricted contrast between contemporary Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Nazarbayev's presidency continued beyond 2016, but later developments are used as context rather than treated as equivalent observations within the paired period. Research published through 2026 is included where it retrospectively examines nation-building or helps identify the limits of the earlier explanatory framework. Publication date and the historical period described by a source are therefore kept separate.

Four analytical dimensions organize the reading. The first concerns temporal legitimacy: how a narrative connects pre-Soviet cultural achievement, Soviet canonization and independent statehood. The second concerns the exemplary historical figure: which moral qualities and forms of cultural authority are emphasized. The third concerns language: how Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek and earlier literary languages enter accounts of progress and sovereignty. The fourth concerns institutional reproduction: how education, commemorative practices and cultural patronage make particular interpretations available. These dimensions allow the two cases to be compared without assuming that their narrative content is identical.

The analysis distinguishes three evidential levels. The novels establish the literary representation of historical figures. Studies of textbooks, cultural policy and commemoration establish documented forms of institutional interpretation. Scholarship on reception and everyday identity identifies possible differences between official representation and public understanding. The levels are related but cannot substitute for one another. A monument bearing Navoi's name is evidence of public commemoration; it is not sufficient evidence that visitors have read Oybek. Similarly, assigning Auezov in education establishes canonical access but does not measure its contribution to a student's political identity.

Constructivism provides the interpretive framework, and critical discourse scholarship supplies sensitivity to selection and exclusion (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Fairclough, 1995; Wodak et al., 2009). The study is presented as an interpretive synthesis rather than a formally sampled corpus study. It does not report a standardized coding instrument, an exhaustive inventory of curricula or a quantified comparison of official references to the novels. Claims about policy are therefore tied to published analyses, and claims about literary meaning remain interpretations of the specified works and their documented reception.

The central proposition is assessed by looking for the coexistence of changed national interpretations and inherited channels of canon reproduction. Evidence of continued literary authority alongside reinterpretation supports the proposition. Evidence of contested reception, non-state memory or differences between policy domains limits its scope. This approach avoids treating every instance of cultural continuity as confirmation: the persistence of a writer's reputation may have literary, linguistic and educational explanations as well as political ones.

Several limitations follow. The cases cannot represent Central Asia as a whole. The selected novels do not exhaust either country's literary canon, and different works could reveal alternative relationships between identity and state power. Published institutional analyses offer uneven coverage across the two countries. Most importantly, the comparison concerns available representations and documented cultural practices; it cannot establish uniform acceptance, reader motivation or the magnitude of literature's political influence. These limits qualify the results while preserving the value of examining how political reinterpretation depends on inherited cultural authority.

Results

Literary authority across political change

The first result is that independence did not make the Soviet origin of a literary canon incompatible with its national use. Both novels represented pre-Soviet cultural achievement through works that had acquired authority in Soviet publishing and education. Their post-Soviet usefulness arose partly from this layered history. Auezov's representation of Abai offered a recognizable account of moral reflection and intellectual development; Oybek's representation of Navoi offered an established narrative of linguistic achievement and cultural patronage. Reinterpretation could emphasize those attributes while reducing the prominence of the socialist framework through which the works had previously been taught (Adams, 2010; Asanova, 2007; Kaumen & Mukan, 2026).

This result concerns the reuse of authority rather than the uninterrupted survival of one interpretation. Soviet canonization made national historical figures widely recognizable, but the meanings attached to recognition remained open to change. Ubiria's (2016) comparison of Kazakh and Uzbek nation-making helps explain the common institutional foundation. The post-Soviet state could draw on an already organized cultural field rather than begin the production of national literary prestige anew. The novels' authority also exceeded the state: established literary reputations and language traditions gave these works meanings that official policy could select but could not fully control.

Abai as an authority for moral and intellectual development

In *The Way of Abai*, the protagonist's authority develops through conflicts involving education, social obligation and the exercise of power. The portrayal allows Abai to appear as a critic within Kazakh society while remaining a recognizable bearer of its culture (Auezov, 1997, 2006). This combination gives later interpreters a resource for presenting cultural continuity together with reform. The novel's Kazakh setting does not require every inherited practice to be defended, and its account of intellectual exchange does not require national identity to disappear into an external culture.

The place of Russian literature is particularly significant. Caffee (2018) shows how the reception of Russian literary works became part of Abai's public legend. That relationship makes simplistic readings of cultural separation difficult. In a post-Soviet setting, the same association could support arguments for education and intercultural communication without retaining the Soviet claim that national development culminates in socialism. Fierman's (1998) analysis of language policy establishes the wider

institutional setting in which Kazakh cultural promotion coexisted with the continuing public role of Russian.

Educational canonization creates opportunities for this interpretation, but its effect should be specified carefully. Asanova (2007) documents how literature textbooks participate in nation-building; Kudaibergenova (2018) demonstrates that prominence within the canon does not ensure a shared understanding of Abai. The comparison therefore identifies a capacity for moral and intellectual legitimation, not a measured transformation of readers. Abai can be invoked as an emblem of learning, ethical responsibility and cultural belonging, while the novel remains open to interpretations that exceed official uses.

Recent textbook research supports the interpretation of continuity as selective. Burkhanov and Sharipova (2024) find that changes in national narrative coexist with inherited myths. Dukeyev's (2023) study of famine representation across textbook editions from 1992 to 2021 reveals ambivalence about responsibility and historical classification; his later analysis of Jeltoqsan likewise identifies tensions within educational memory (Dukeyev, 2026). These studies do not directly measure the reception of Auezov's novel. They establish that the educational channel through which literary authority circulates is itself a site of selective interpretation rather than a uniform transmitter of state doctrine.

The language context also remains negotiated. Ten (2024) examines disputes over the public value of Kazakh and Russian, while Tlepbergen et al. (2023) describe initiatives that approach language policy from below. These later analyses qualify the idea of a stable bilingual settlement. They indicate that the cultural mediation associated with Abai should be understood as an available interpretive resource within continuing language debates, not as evidence that those debates have been resolved.

Navoi as an authority for cultural sovereignty

Oybek's *Navoi* situates cultural authority within the courtly and literary environment of the Timurid period. Its protagonist connects ethical conduct with patronage, learning and the literary possibilities of Turkic expression (Oybek, 1976). In later national interpretation, these elements make the novel usable as a narrative of cultural achievement preceding Soviet rule. They also support a claim that a national literary tradition has its own authoritative history. This interpretation does not require the modern Uzbek nation or language to be projected unchanged into Navoi's historical world.

The distinction between Chagatai literary heritage and modern Uzbek identity is important. National canonization establishes an institutional relationship between them, but it does not eliminate historical multilingualism or the interaction of Turkic and Persian traditions. Kurzman (1999) warns against presenting modern nationhood as a continuous, self-evident category across earlier history. Oybek's narrative can consequently be studied as a contribution to the making of a national genealogy without treating that genealogy as an exact description of medieval collective identification.

Under Karimov, emphasis on sovereignty and the recovery of national history made pre-Soviet cultural authorities especially useful. Laruelle (2017) places this selection within the official narration of the Uzbek nation, while Paskaleva (2015) shows how Timurid references entered material and architectural representation. Maerz (2018) identifies ideological continuity within the language of spirituality. Read together, these studies indicate that the recovery of an earlier cultural past could coexist with institutions and political habits inherited from Soviet governance. Fazendeiro's (2017) account of defensive self-reliance provides context for this sovereignty-centered orientation, although foreign policy cannot by itself establish the interpretation of a literary work.

Alimdjanov and Zamonov (2025) provide particularly relevant retrospective evidence. Their analysis of the elevation of the Timurids and the marginalization of the Shibanids traces inherited historical frameworks into the Karimov period. The preference for a prestigious pre-Soviet dynasty thus involved the reuse of earlier conceptual structures. This finding strengthens the distinction between recovering a historical subject and replacing the institutions or assumptions through which history is organized.

Research on heritage offers a parallel institutional mechanism. Haydaraliyeva (2023) examines the manufacture of national identity through conservation practices in Samarkand and Shakhrisabz. Höftberger (2023) analyzes tensions between conservation and development in Khiva. These studies

concern material heritage rather than Oybek's readership, and the latter supplies later contextual evidence. They show why naming, restoration and commemoration need to be examined as specific practices. Their coexistence with literary canonization supports a broader account of cultural legitimation, but does not establish a direct causal chain from a novel to a monument or urban policy.

Comparison of institutional continuity and narrative emphasis

The paired analysis identifies a common relationship between inherited prestige and selective interpretation. Kazakhstan's relative emphasis on continuity and civic coexistence made Abai's moral authority and cultural mediation usable within national representation. Uzbekistan's relative emphasis on recovered sovereignty made Navoi's pre-Soviet cultural standing and linguistic achievement usable within a different historical genealogy. The contrast concerns the prioritization of themes. Both countries promoted titular national culture, and both retained important Soviet institutional practices.

Table 1

Comparison of the institutional uses of literary authority

Dimension	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan
Literary focus	Auezov's <i>The Way of Abai</i>	Oybek's <i>Navoi</i>
Historical authority	Abai as a moral and intellectual participant in nineteenth-century Kazakh society	Navoi as a literary and cultural authority in a Timurid courtly setting
Relative narrative emphasis	Cultural continuity, education and civic coexistence	Recovery of pre-Soviet achievement and cultural sovereignty
Language interpretation	Kazakh cultural authority alongside historically mediated engagement with Russian literature	Turkic literary achievement linked to a later Uzbek national genealogy
Shared mechanism	Inherited canonical prestige reproduced through education and cultural institutions	Inherited canonical prestige reproduced through education and cultural institutions
Evidential limit	Canonical recognition does not establish uniform readership or civic identification	Commemoration of Navoi does not establish the political effect of Oybek's novel

Note. Author's comparative synthesis of Auezov (1997, 2006), Oybek (1976), Adams (2010), Asanova (2007), Kudaibergenova (2018), and Maerz (2018). The national orientations refer to the paired historical period and are relative emphases.

The results support the central proposition at the level of documented cultural representation. A change in political meaning did not require the replacement of every cultural authority or institution. They do not establish that the novels independently produced either doctrine, or that all citizens accepted the interpretations described. The two cases instead show how literary authority can make a new political account familiar by connecting it to figures and narratives already recognized as legitimate.

Discussion

The limits of continuity and rupture

The continuity and rupture distinction explains differences in official emphasis, but it becomes misleading if treated as a complete description of either country. Kazakhstan also privileged selected pre-Soviet histories and reconsidered the legitimacy of Soviet narratives. Uzbekistan's presentation of national recovery depended on writers, educational routines and cultural administration formed within the Soviet system. The comparison therefore reveals continuity in some institutional practices alongside

reinterpretation, exclusion or recovery within particular narratives. Historical period, policy domain and the actor making the claim must remain visible.

Studies of Kazakhstan's sacred geography and Golden Horde narratives demonstrate selective national reorganization beyond the literary field (Kurmanov et al., 2025; Tsyrempilov et al., 2022). They concern later projects and changing configurations of memory actors, so their findings should not be retroactively treated as observations of the whole 1991-2016 period. Their value here is analytical: they show that civic language can accompany a privileged national genealogy and that historians contribute to the production of official historical meaning. In Uzbekistan, Alimdjano and Zamonov (2025) demonstrate how a narrative apparently centered on pre-Soviet statehood can retain Soviet explanatory assumptions. The relevant contrast is therefore between selected uses of the past, rather than between total remembrance and total rejection.

This qualification also affects the relationship between literature and political causation. A state may select a canonical figure because its authority is already widely recognized. Later circulation can reinforce that selection, but the direction and strength of influence cannot be inferred from institutional prominence alone. Bourdieu's (1991) account of legitimate cultural authority explains why a canon is politically useful, while Brubaker's (2004) caution about group categories explains why its circulation cannot be translated directly into a homogeneous national consciousness. A convincing explanation needs to identify the mediating institution and the kind of evidence through which its influence is assessed.

Literary representation and the politics of memory

The novels connect an exemplary individual to a wider historical world. This feature allows political interpretation to retain the moral authority of a hero while changing the historical lesson attached to that hero. In the Kazakh case, Abai's intellectual exchanges can support education and intercultural communication; his criticism of established authority can also support reconsideration of national history. In the Uzbek case, Navoi's cultural patronage can support a genealogy of independent achievement, while his humanism remains compatible with interpretations formed before independence. Neither work has a single political meaning permanently fixed by its original publication context.

Dukeyev's (2025) work on the Alash movement identifies competition between official and nonofficial historical narratives. Yusupova and Pfoer (2023) similarly show how urban tourism and cultural intermediaries reproduce alternative memories in Almaty. These findings help specify the political limits of a canon: institutional prominence does not eliminate rival narratives or guarantee a common historical lesson. The historical worlds represented in literature may be used to support official unity, but the meanings attached to them can also circulate through actors whose priorities differ from those of the state.

Everyday cultural practices provide another qualification. Zhao's (2024) ethnographic study of clothing and aesthetic citizenship in Tashkent identifies continued Soviet elements within contemporary nation-building. His review of masculinities and migration relates national discourse to changing social responsibilities (Zhao, 2022). These are later contextual studies, not evidence of Oybek's political effect during the paired period. They nevertheless demonstrate why a doctrine must be examined across different domains of practice before cultural rupture can be described as comprehensive.

The evidence also calls for caution about the distinction between nomadic and sedentary cultural worlds. The novels depict different social settings, but those settings do not demonstrate that contemporary Kazakh society is inherently open or that Uzbek society is inherently hierarchical. Such a claim would move from literary representation to an unsupported national psychology. The more defensible comparison concerns the historical location and institutional interpretation of the exemplary figure: Abai as a participant in a society undergoing contested intellectual change, and Navoi as a cultural authority situated within a courtly political order. Their later uses depend on selection, rather than on an automatic transmission of those settings into modern collective behavior.

Reception and the scope of cultural legitimation

Recent scholarship makes the question of reception especially important. Public commemoration, textbook inclusion and official discourse establish what institutions make available. They do not establish how citizens read, ignore, adapt or challenge those representations. The gap identified in research on Abai is therefore analytically significant rather than an incidental weakness of implementation (Kudaibergenova, 2018). It shows that a canon can be institutionally secure while its meanings remain unevenly understood.

Survey research distinguishes public perceptions of state projects from the identities through which respondents understand themselves. Sadvokassova et al. (2025) examine civic and ethnic belonging in Kazakhstan, and Sadvokassova et al. (2026) focus on ethnic minorities' perceptions and attitudes. Their later evidence cannot be used to infer the reception of *The Way of Abai* in the 1990s. It does establish why approval of a nation-building project, civic identification and literary understanding should be investigated as separate outcomes.

Bram's (2025) retrospective study of Jewish-Muslim relations in the late Soviet Ferghana Valley identifies local belonging and everyday interaction within Uzbekistan. This finding qualifies any account that treats Soviet social life or later national identity as uniformly organized around one cultural boundary. Together with research on language and education, it strengthens the need to compare institutional claims with the social settings in which people encounter them. The present synthesis establishes the interpretive mechanisms that such a comparison would need to test.

For further research, the principal task is to link institutional representation to specific acts of interpretation. A historically matched set of textbook editions could establish how narrative emphasis changed over time. Official speeches could be compared with those editions rather than treated as interchangeable evidence. Reader interviews and classroom observation could then examine reception, with suitable sampling and ethical procedures. Such research would test whether the mechanisms proposed here explain actual uses of the novels and whether alternative texts produce different relationships between cultural authority and national belonging.

The practical implication is to make the historical layers of a canon visible in education and cultural policy. Teaching the same work as a literary narrative, a Soviet cultural artifact and a post-Soviet national reference allows students to distinguish a text from its successive political interpretations. This approach supports historical literacy without requiring inherited works to be either celebrated without qualification or discarded because of their institutional origins. It also provides a basis for comparing national cultural projects without presenting their populations as uniform bearers of a fixed tradition.

Conclusion

The comparison of *The Way of Abai* and *Navoi* indicates that post-Soviet national doctrines drew on literary authorities established during the Soviet period. Their usefulness depended on a layered relationship between pre-Soviet historical figures, Soviet literary representation and post-Soviet institutional interpretation. Independence changed the political purposes attached to the canon without necessarily removing the channels through which its authority was reproduced.

Kazakhstan's relative emphasis on continuity and civic coexistence made Abai's moral reflection, education and cultural mediation usable within national representation. Uzbekistan's relative emphasis on recovered sovereignty gave particular value to Navoi's linguistic achievement and the cultural prestige of the Timurid past. These orientations describe selected political narratives during the paired historical period. They neither exhaust the cultural politics of the two countries nor establish uniform public acceptance.

The article's contribution is to distinguish changes in narrative emphasis from continuity in cultural infrastructure, and to separate the historical hero, the novel and the institution using its authority. The findings support an interpretive explanation of cultural legitimation rather than a causal estimate of literary influence. Future research should compare matched institutional materials and examine reader reception directly. For education and cultural policy, the central recommendation is to explain how canonical meanings developed across political periods, allowing inherited literature to be studied with attention to its historical context and its continuing interpretive openness.

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TREND OF SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES OF GAMBLING ADDICTION: BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS