



## New Hero as a Political Project: Raising the Patriotism (Results of a Focus Group Study)

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Received date: March 19, 2016; Accepted date: March 29, 2016; Published date: April 06, 2016

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### Abstract

In present article we analyzed film characters of the modern commercially successful Kazakhstani films. Those images created by the film directors, which find a response from the viewers and which are coherent with the domestic policy agenda, develop the identity through the propaganda of new values and aims. Analysis and interpretation of the discourses raised in the films would help analyzing the process of development and legitimation of Kazakh identity. The focus group method, as a form of group interview, allows revealing interests, values, conscious and subconscious affirmations of the society. Using focus groups in studying the identity development process allows disclosing various opinions during the film discussion in group dynamics.

**Keywords:** Film character; Values; Tradition; Identity

### Introduction

Being the most modern, mobile and popular form of art, the cinema reflects the processes, which happen in the society, and actively contributes to the development of moral values, behavior stereotypes, cultural and national identity of the country citizens. National identity represents not only in the historical films, but also in the films about the present and future, because they also appeal to the ethnic and cultural values of a nation. While creating the images of his characters, a film director chooses the reality fragments, wraps them into his representations, fantasies and ideas, thus giving them a shape by cinematic and social stereotypes. A character in the Kazakhstani cinema is male in most of the cases. For Kazakhstan, as for a young country, the process of identity development through multiplying the image of a strong character becomes one of the main leverages of influencing the mass conscience. A film character is an independent, noble, self-confident and lonely man, who builds his life in accordance with the honor code and who is ready and capable to protect the weak character. He opposes the injustice of the social system by himself or with devoted friends. His life is an Odyssey full of adventures, danger, fight and victories. A

woman is connected to this man through romantic relationships; she is excluded from his world as a partner [1].

The state and the society as a whole need such heroes, who are able to be a support and who can become the examples of true masculine strong qualities.

Which messages do the characters bring to their spectators? Which values and ideas do they provoke in the minds and hearts of the Kazakhstani people?

Analysis of the film images will be conducted among the most commercially successful films of the 2000s. The choice of this film-making timeframe is explained by the fact that after gaining the independence modern Kazakhstani film industry had to make the way of a rebirth, which mainly happened with the support from the state. "Kazakhfilm" corporation produced approximately 100 films of various genres since the moment of gaining independence. Films "Racketeer", "The Old man" and "Myn bala", which were selected for the analysis, were produced with the participation of the "Kazakhfilm" studio, as well as independently by a private cinema company "Satai film". The image of a protagonist in the three films may be attributed to three age groups: young homeland defender Sartay, Sayan, who departed from the law, and a relatively old-aged man Kasym.

### Methods

We conducted focus groups for each of the proposed films. We would like to point out the specific characteristics of each focus group, which were deliberately selected during the preparation of the material for the analysis. First of all, two focus groups were conducted in Astana and one in Almaty.

### Focus group on the "Racketeer" film

Selection of the focus groups participants was defined by three main characteristics: age, place of residence and language of communication. Participants of the focus groups on the "Racketeer" film were 9 people (3 females, 6 males). There were 25 to 30 years old, socially active and financially independent residents of the capital, and therefore, they were the carriers and the receivers of the most up-to-date and popular ideas and products. The majority of Kazakhstani films are released in Russian language and the percentage of

Russian-speaking citizens is still significant. According to the data of the population census in 2009, the most common language in Kazakhstan is Russian: 94.4% of the country population stated that they understand spoken Russian, 84.4% are able to read and write in Russian and 3.4% can only read [2]. Moreover, we would like to note that the film was released in 2007. "Racketeer" by Akhan Sataev became the first commercially successful and paid off film in the modern Kazakhstani cinema [3]. It is a biography of a young man Sayan Bekkarimov, who comments the events from the first person perspective throughout the whole film. The film describes the activity of people on the other side of the law and the rakish ways of getting money in the 90s. The "Racketeer" presents interest to us in many ways for sociologic analysis of the cinematic representation of masculinity. Firstly, the main characters here are men, who are set in the conventionally-typical masculine situations related to violence, overcoming obstacles, conquering sexuality, achievements and fight for the leadership. Secondly, the action develops in strictly shaped and easily recognized space- and time-frames, which allows analyzing the masculinity image in certain social contexts. And thirdly, the film is rich in dominant masculine stereotypes, which allows classifying its image as certain symbolic messages, aimed at the examples, which are established in the mass conscience.

### Focus group on the "Myn bala" film

Participants of the focus group on the "Myn bala" film were 17 to 20 years old (3 females, 6 males). They grew up in the years of independence and were the capital residents; therefore, they were the carriers and the receivers of the most up-to-date and popular ideas and products. The majority of Kazakhstani films are released in Russian language and the percentage of Russian-speaking citizens is still significant. However, the Akhan Sataev's film "Myn bala" was the first film, which ran primarily in the Kazakh language [4]. Moreover, the plot of the film revolves around a group of young people, whose age is approximately correspondent with the age of the focus group participants. The main segments of 12-17 and 18-24 years old cover approximately 70% of the cinema viewers flow, i.e. the representatives of the youth are the main clients of Kazakhstani cinemas [5]. In the patriotic context of the youth mentoring the current most successful Kazakhstani film is Akhan Sataev's "Myn bala". "Myn bala" film by Akhan Sataev tells about historic events, which took place three centuries ago. Despite the fact that the events, described in the "Myn bala" film, took place in the Kazakhstan history and the film culmination, "the battle of Akrahan", is a historic fact, it is obvious that the goal of the film is not a thorough description of a historic fact, but rather a raise of interest towards the history of Kazakh nation, national culture and rituals. Such essence is common for the films of epic genre, when the plot includes mythologizing history. As a part of the modern culture, cinema reflects the significant challenges of the time period. Hence, the "Myn bala" film, by telling about the past, raises the questions of the present. By addressing the "constant" problems of fathers and sons, friendship and envy,

love and betrayal, the film touches upon a significant question about the unification of Kazakh nation in the face of danger.

In this case the cinema is one of the most efficient tools for translating the nationwide ideas. It a social-cultural phenomenon of sorts that sets the models, according to which the social reality is built in the XX-XXI centuries. The spectator is inspired by the films plots and motives, learns the behavior patterns, translated from the screens and reacts to the political agenda developed by the cinema [6].

### Focus group on "The Old man" film

Modern culture interacts with the antiquity. Through films we can observe our attitude towards the ancient world and our thoughts about the ancient world as such [7]. Participants of the focus group on "The Old man" film were 6 young people 25 to 35 years old (2 females, 4 males). As the residents of Almaty, they certainly had to have the opportunity to express their opinion on one of the main films of Kazakhstani cinema. Almaty still has a separate place on the cultural map of the country. Presentation of this film was set in the cinema club of Oleg Boretskiy; he called the film "the reference point and the beginning of reflectiveness: who are we and where do we come from" [8]. The choice of Ermek Tursunov's "The Old man" film is defined by its major recognition; on the XIII festival "Choice of the year" in Almaty in 2012, "The Old man" was called "The film of the year", and the next year it was awarded the grand-prix of the Kinoshok film festival. In 2014 the film made the long-list of the Academy awards in the "Best foreign language film" nomination (E-center.asia). It became the "national film"; the director combined the story of the relationships of two generations, intertwining of a man and the nature, village resident and city resident. The image of an old man moves the plot of this film. Based on the E. Hemingway's novel "The Old Man and the Sea", Ermek Tursunov directed his own version of this story. This image is very well-written and created by all rules of stage art. It has a goal and obstacles, which he overcomes on the way to that goal. A wrinkled old man, whose spirit is so strong that you begin to forget his age.

## Results

### The "Racketeer" film, 2007

The protagonist of the film is a young man, and the name of the picture itself is his characteristic, because it contains multiple connotations with the social paradigm of masculinity. In the 90s racket had its own implicit honor code and implied certain behavior models, which controlled the whole life (social circle, type of occupation, relationships with women, appearance, etc.).

The beginning of the film describes the childhood of a common Soviet boy, who grew up in a family of intelligent and ordinary people. Growing up and searching for a place in the social world happens on the background of the Soviet Union dissolution. And at this moment the main storyline begins, "the gangster theme".

Social world changes with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Values, aims and social structure change, which is shown in the film. The young protagonist is no longer satisfied by being a decent student, a good athlete and a diligent son. By the laws of the genre, love enters his life – a girl, who he can get only by breaking the law and betraying the old principles (honest work, good education, modesty, good behavior with the parents). We see how the film director builds the situations; he presents Sayan with a choice. In order to gain the love it is necessary to be successful and rich. Moreover, the protagonist wants it all, and he wants it fast and in large quantity.

Apart from showing the reality of the crisis years of post-Soviet period, the film reflects the process of traditionalism popularization. One of the significant moments is the death of a child, the news of whose birth could have reconciled the character with his parents. However, according to the plot, Sayan is deprived of the joy of parenthood. Can we talk about retribution in this case? It is more of a caution for the spectator: continuation of the generation is impossible for a criminal authority. Family, as a value, is posed higher than Sayan's moral appearance. His relationship with Asel is not traditional for Kazakhs; they live together, expect their child but are not legally married. Therefore, the authors define the key values of the society: family, parents and children.

Patriotic message is represented in addressing the various plots: we can see that, apart from the criminal path, there is another one, more lawful but longer way to success. Sayan's classmates become bankers and talk enthusiastically about their education, lifestyle and work. This scene shows how the access to social lift changes in Kazakhstan; however, these transformations are still not appealing to Sayan and, it seems, are already unavailable. Criminal world absorbed him completely; he has almost no communication with his parents. The character spends all of his time in the company of a friend and a head of the criminal group Ruslan. Even the romantic relationships develop due to the girl's choice to move in with him. This moment, like many other things in Sayan's life is an external influence. The character does not control his future; he just reacts to the challenges of the present. Such model appears as a response to the dissolution of the Soviet order, when the country changed in a moment.

However, the protagonist's problem is in the lack of reflectiveness. By mechanically executed whatever he is told to do, he rarely thinks about the reasons and the consequences of his actions. Despite Sayan's criminal image, he does not provoke negative feeling in the spectators, but rather the contrary. In spite of everything, the participants of the focus group note the qualities in the protagonist's personality, which are necessary in the times of change: devotion, friendship, commitment to the words and principles, responsibility for his words and actions. However, apart from the positive categories in the protagonist's characteristic, the participants

also noted the negative ones- the connection to the criminal world (Table 1).

**Table 1:** The protagonist's characteristics.

Character	Category	Evaluation	Number of mentions
Sayan	Devotion	P	4
	Reliability	P	1
	Personality	P	1
	Sense of purpose	P	1
	Racketeer	N	1
	Gangster	N	1
	Positive person	P	1
	Person, who keeps his word	P	1
	Murders	N	1
	Attitude towards the parents	N	1

P: Positive Evaluation; N: Negative Evaluation

Consumption becomes the main unifying quality of all film characters. In the opinion of all focus group participants, such quality might represent "swag". A wish to demonstrate one's own material well-being; it is also the motivation for the protagonist's actions.

In the film the role of the main carrier of "truth" goes to Sayan's "bro" Aman, who served a sentence for murder. This character ends up in the situation, where he has to "go until the end"; in the understanding of Aman and his friends it implies defending one's own positions, which might be a reason for murder.

Through Aman's monologue in the final part of the film the character comes to thinking about his actions and the actions of his friends. Remorse does not reach him; he merely acted as he saw necessary. However, after this encounter between Sayan and Aman, and also being affected by the death of his mentor and friend Ruslan, the protagonist thinks about his future life. Revenge for Ruslan's murder becomes his main goal, but after catching the main person, responsible for the death of his friend, Sayan leaves him alive. He makes this decision after some consideration; he has thoughts that Ruslan the example of masculinity and the concentration of all main qualities, for which Sayan strived could be wrong, that he could not completely understand all of the specifics of leading the business. This revelation gives the protagonist a chance to become somebody else, to change his lifestyle and act more rationally.

Therefore, the film authors lead the plot to the new stage in the history of Kazakhstan. The chaos is changed to the market, where, despite the murder of Ruslan, new rules of the game are established. The agreement may be cancelled if it is better for the business. However, "his goblet is already full", and in the last scene of the film he remains to lie with knife stabs,

ready to meet his death, as well as the responsibility for all his actions.

### The “Myn bala” film, 2012

“Myn bala” is an example of creating an epic image in the national cinema. The film significantly expanded the audience by raising the top threshold from 24 to 50 years. The linguistic structure of the film release, in case of “Myn bala”, changes in favor of the Kazakh language. The film premiered at the same time as the Hollywood blockbuster “The avengers” and exceeded it in the release [9]. Like many Hollywood films, the Akhan Sataev’s film protagonist is a young man called Sartay. Like the characters of Hollywood films (“Battle of Titans” with the protagonist Perseus, the Percy Jackson franchise and films about Harry Potter), he is a young man, who, for some reasons, does not completely understand how he should build his identity. In case of Sartay the inner struggle happens between the positions of the national rescuer and a regular warrior. All of them are on that stage of adolescent development of a mature personality, which addresses a young man - the target audience of the films. Considering that currently young men think of ways to find their place in the social world, these images might act as the examples to follow. These films show how young men fight during the settlement of personality and, even more importantly, they give the spectators an example of how to fight their problems on their own during a period of social changes [7]. Despite the fact that frequently our attitude towards the epic genre films is characterized as an attitude towards entertainment, in reality, films like “Myn bala” help young generation building a system of values, awaken the interest towards the past and experience the respect towards the history of their country.

In this context Akhan Sataev’s film about three friends completely reached the aim. The focus group analysis presented below will help understanding how successful was the image of Sartay and two of his friends and how it affected the audience of very young spectators in Kazakhstan. All of the studied characters are at that stage of adolescent development of a mature identity, which addresses young men the key audience of the films.

This analysis will also continue to unravel the subject of masculinity in Kazakstani cinema through the description of the protagonists. Akhan Sataev’s film, which is based on a story of young people’s life destinies settlement, owes its success mainly to the high-quality actors performance and thorough choice of each image: the protagonist is a young man called Sartay, who has the inner struggle between the positions of the national rescuer and a regular warrior.

During the film discussion in the focus group, the questions of selfishness and a wish to be a sole leader were raised (Table 2). It was difficult for the focus group participants to separate one main character, because in the film the destinies of three friends- Sartay, Taymas and Korlan – are tightly linked. Despite the fact that, according to the plot, the role of national rescuer goes to Sartay, the focus group participants saw this character as too ideal, while Taymas, the second leader of the people’s

army of adolescents against Dzhungar, seemed more interesting.

**Table 2:** The protagonists’ characteristics.

Character	Category	Evaluation	Number of mentions
Taymas	Real character	P	2
	Courage	P	1
	Valor	P	1
	Attached to his family	P	1
	Shot Sartay	N	1
	Envy	N	3
	Cool	P	1
	Put-on	N	1
	Selfishness	P	2
	Betrayal	N	1
Sartay	Too ideal	N	1
	Selfishness	N	1
Korlan	Strong	P	1
	Courage	P	1
	Bravery	P	1
	Was equal to men	P	1
Three friends	Hero	P	1
	Support each other in any situation	P	1
	Be devoted	P	1
	Persistence	P	1

P – positive evaluation; N – negative evaluation

We would like to note that, despite the fact that the main goal of the film was to raise the patriotism, during the focus group we revealed that, apart from the feeling of pride for their country, the spectators saw importance in the truth of the story. Preference of the less significant and heroic, but more realistic Taymas shows that the spectators are interested in the image of a character, which is not ideal, but which can be judged, understood, accepted, forgiven and praised during the film. The selfishness of the protagonists, which was discussed during the focus group, is not a negative quality for the generation of the Kazakhstan independence peers. On the contrary, to some extent it is even a positive personality trait. And here we encounter the influence of globalization, of endless information flow, which appeared with the expansion of Internet and which became an everyday practice for the young citizens of the country. The postmodern society is a society of consumption and a society of hedonists. It is society, in which personal comfort becomes the main value. Let us note that the personality of such human is distorted: the depth and the inner content are lost. After that comes a

mentality crisis, loss of the sense of citizenship, individualism, egocentricity and indifference towards the common gain, concern solely about one's own private interests [10]. It is obvious that such affirmations are not widely common; however, the unanimous agreement with the loyal interpretation of selfishness is quite curious. It becomes more intriguing as it occurs during the discussion of a film, which has fostering the selfless love towards the Homeland as one of its main goals. The protagonist dies, having set the flag of his people.

One of the main tasks of the film was propaganda of Kazakh values among the youth. Identity development is not only the integration by a single goal, but also the acceptance of common values, views and affirmations. The table presented below lists the Kazakh values, which were noted by the focus group participants during the discussion of the "Myn bala" film (Table 3).

**Table 3:** The Kazakh values.

The Kazakh values
People
Respect to the senior
Respect to the guests
Gender equality
Nauryz, the fest really unified
Young woman's attitude towards her loved one
Kazakh's spiritual richness
Sartay forgave Tayma's betrayal
Kazakhs were able to unify
Kazakhs kept their traditions

As the table demonstrates, apart from the values tradition for Kazakhs, "gender equality" was also noted. In the film it was shown on the example of the heroic image of Korlan-lady-warrior, who is equal to the men in courage and battle craft.

### "The Old man" film, 2012

The protagonist, old man Kasym, lives in a small village surrounded by the endless prairie. He lives with his daughter-in-law (supposedly, his son's wife) and his grandson, who he kindly calls Shaytanbek (Little devil). In the beginning of the film the image of the protagonist completely lacks masculinity. An old man, already beat by the life, a little unserious and grumpy, does not evoke admiration or even respect. From the first scene E. Tursunov shows that the name of the film is not random. The protagonist is the representation of the word "Shal" (Old man), which sounds not as respectable and major as, for example, Aksakal (Elder) or Ata (Grandfather).

It is important to note that in the first part of the film the author also demonstrates the arrival of hunters, who make an impression of real men, who drive an expensive car, have

weapons and neglect the protagonist because, in their opinion, he leads a modest lifestyle.

The old man goes to the prairie to lead the sheep and suddenly becomes caught in the fog and then the snowstorm. Despite the grandson's efforts to send the neighbors to help the old man Kasym, nobody responds to the boy's requests. From this moment the challenges start; and Kasym, regardless of his old age, passes them with dignity and without losing faith. The old man demonstrates the willpower, which is much stronger than the fog and the wolves, which follow him. He is stronger and more enduring than the hunters, who, despite having weapons, cars and machinery, could not survive in the prairie. Only one of them is left alive because of the help from the old man Kasym.

One of the key moments of the film is the contradiction of the protagonist and the hunter, as contradiction of two different generations of Kazakhs, which was shown in the scene in the debris of the space ship. Under the symbol of the Soviet Union and its former power- a space object, we understand the difference between the old man Kasym and the hunter. The generation of people, who, like the hunter, came to the age over forty years old in the new millennium, experienced the change of values and morals. They had to adapt to the new conditions, however, in the chase after the material gain they lost their moral image. The tragedy of this generation is that they already haven't been "Soviet citizens" and their youth happened during the period of liberation and dissolution of the USSR. The sociology calls this generation "the generation X". In the 70-90s the young generation rejected the values of their parents but they could not acquire their own because the crisis of integrity happened. The essence of life, as the youth of that time was told by the Western liberal model, is gaining personal success and well-being. Difficult life conditions taught the kids to be uncharacteristically cynical for their age. Somebody grew past it, while somebody was left with it [11].

According to many cultural scientists, one of the main cultural values is respect to the senior, admiration of the ancestors, love and respect to the domestic cattle [12]. During the discussion of "The Old man" film the focus group participants noted not only the traditional values of the Kazakh people, which were stated above. The modern society has new values, which initially have universalistic meaning; however, at present they become a part of the cultural code of Kazakh people. In the opinion of all focus group participants, such quality is an urge to demonstrate one's material well-being ("swagger") (Table 4).

**Table 4:** The Kazakh values.

The Kazakh Values
Sheep, meat
The connection between the elderly and the youth
Cattle
To show the way to a traveler, respect, to come out and act

Diploma is several sheep
A "who cares" attitude, which is common for us
The men all sit on that winter hut, women pour tea.
Succession of generations
A tree with ropes
It is prohibited to swear in the mazar
Caring attitude towards his horse Orlik
To fry the bread each Friday
Swag, people take credits to drive the jeeps and demonstrate how cool they are

Attitude towards the animals, especially towards the horse, is a significant part of Kazakh traditions: "...a horse played an important part in the mass people migration, which became the basis for its idolization; the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy became related to the shepherd activities and nomadism. Because of the nomadism the mass intrusions of Indo-Europeans began at the end of the third millennium B.C. in Europe, at the beginning of the second millennium B.C. – in Iran and India and at its end – in China. A horse gained even more independent sacral significance. From its solar and chthonic, triumphal and funeral essence it transfer to the sacral sense, idolization, which, however, is accompanied with its diabolical sense, by the laws of dialectics" [13]. Respect to the older generation also has a sacral meaning to the Kazakhs. Kazakh people consider their debt to know all of their ancestors seven generation back. This tradition comes from Tengrism. According to the ancient beliefs, a human has a soul, which does not need physical food; its food is rather the spirit of the ancestors Aruakh. If a person commits a bad action, betrays the honest name of his ancestors, by this offends the Aruakh spirits, and therefore, Tengri. Because of this the person had a strong understanding that his actions would reflect on his seven future generations. And if a person lived a respectful life, the spirits would be kind to his successors (Web-site on the rituals and traditions of the Kazakh people <http://www.bilu.kz/obychay.php>).

## Discussion

### The "Racketeer" film, interpretation of trauma

Certainly, the first commercial Kazakh film is a rich field for the analysis of the ideas and symbols of the modern society. Identity, as an essential value, is reflected in the unity of the opinions of the focus group participants in their evaluation of the plot, the separation of good and bad, their understanding of the traits common for all of the characters.

By tracing the discussion we can say that the image of the new hero, on the example of the "Racketeer" film, is a person, who demonstrates positive qualities, as well as the negative ones. Certainly, it is necessary to account for the context of the film and the time, during which the protagonist lives. From the beginning of the 90s Kazakhstan entered the stage of social

disintegration, dissolution of the former social structure, destruction of the core of the intra-strata connections and loss of individuals' social self-identification. Because of this the amplified sense of loyalty and responsibility for his actions became Sayan's specific traits. During the time of global changes and unstable environment it is important to remain true to one's own principles and to have one's own "anchor". The positive traits include: ability to keep the given promise, devotion to friendship, ability to be responsible for one's own actions and the ability to go "until the end".

The film was produced in 2007, when Kazakhstan has already overcome the difficulties of the 90s of the last century. On the wave of economic stabilization there is an opportunity to look back and remember the time at the dawn of independence. Moreover, there is a need for analysis of the past events. Dissolution of the Soviet Union definitely has become a traumatic event for all of the former USSR nations. In the opinion of P. Sztomka, a social change, related to traumatic events, has four characteristics: 1. It has a time characteristic of being sudden and fast. 2. It has certain content and scale – radical, deep, integrated and reaching the bases. 3. It has sources – it is perceived as external, coming from the outside, as something that we ourselves did not affect, or if we did affect it, then it was subconscious (we "suffer" from traumas, traumas "happen to us", we "encounter" traumas). 4. It is perceived in a certain cognitive context – as something unexpected, unpredictable, surprising, shocking and repulsive [14].

Depending on the quantity and quality of the social capital, social groups have different levels of sensitivity towards cultural trauma and the ability to make their perception all-accepted and all-significant. Because of the cinema cultural trauma is actualized and the perception of its consequences might be reflected in the cinematic images. Akhan Sataev's film gained a response of the audience because of the precise representation of the period of traumatic changes in the society and the opportunity to look back and remember the times of the significant processes in the country.

Well-thought plot of the film, thoroughly selected character types, attention to details, vividness and familiar surroundings of the events on the screen attract the spectator to the film and tell a story of a young man, who got caught up in the whirlpool of a new life and who tried to stay on his feet in the storm of the changes that happened in the country. Through the events of the film we return to the post-Soviet past, and in this sense the film, produced in 2007, is definitely not a belated nostalgic message, but rather a well-timed analysis of the events.

### The "Myn bala" film, a political project of a heroic past

The film by Akhan Sataev tells a story of Sartay, who took responsibility for his homeland. This message has to be understood and accepted. Cinema is the reflection of ideas, which are not only the products of ideology, but also a reflection of really happening social processes.

Through the plot of the film history mythologizing happens. The film, produced upon the request from the Ministry of Culture and Information of Republic of Kazakhstan, the first minutes of which quote the words of the country's president, is a product of ideology, but not of a historic narrative about the past events of the Kazakh nation. However, creative approach of the film director Arkhan Sartaev and his understanding of the Kazakhstani cinema audience and its expectations brought a significant profit to the film creators, while also fulfilling the main task set by the government – increase of patriotism and interest towards history [9].

Despite the fact that the “Myn bala” film is perceived by the Kazakhstani cinema audience as solely national product, which tells about a historic event that became the beginning of the liberation struggle of the Kazakh people, the techniques, used in the film, are common for the global cinema production market. Moreover, we often see the epic genre films as entertainment, while in reality films, like “Myn bala”, help the young generation to build a system of values, raise the interest towards the past and feel respect towards the history of their country.

One of the main goals of the film was creating new myths and actualization of memory narratives about the Kazakh nation as ancient and having rich and heroic past. Social unity finds certain ancestors in history and selects historic events and periods, which are fundamentally significant for the group's identification. A special place among these events and periods goes to the “sources” and the image of the generation of the social-cultural unity. Changing the depth of reaching into history can change the images of ancestors, significant events or periods, as well as the ideas about the sources. Currently the government uses the cinema and film characters as images, which shape the collective past by establishing the lines of succession [15].

Changing the level of the historic past's remoteness, with which the group relates its identity, might mean the change of the identity itself. Upon gaining the independence, the state had to find support in the pre-Soviet past; the nomadic image of the migrating nation with all its romantic attributes appeared on the screens, stages and pictures.

Films like “Myn bala” create a cinematic base, with regard to which the acquisition of the unified past images occurs. Through the epos the community gains the feeling of sacred, which affects the society and supports people's feeling of solidarity and common identity.

### **“The Old man”, nomadic past and Tengri as a new national idea**

Ernek Tursunov's film “The Old man” took a special place in the cinema of the past 10 years. Ernek Tursunov took the text of Hemingway's novel “The Old Man and the Sea” as a basis and was able to subtly integrate it in the ethnic and cultural context of the Kazakh prairie.

As a cinematic creation, “The Old man” is an example of Kazakh stoicism. Based on the Tengrian ground (mystics of the

earth), it can become, or already has, a moral code and cypher of the nation. The fog becomes one of the main characters of the film. It is both a background and a metaphor of the present time, when the society has difficulties in seeing the directions. Despite all of trouble, which the protagonist faces, he remains human and stays true to his principles.

The film shows how strong the connection between people, earth, sky and everything living is. “My God is the prairie,” – says Kasym. This prairie has mazar and the sacred tree, and also a lot of useless garbage like the junk of industrial civilization, which leads away from the aim and the essence. But the star-filled sky of Tengri is over the head and the moral law of Aruakh is inside.

Development of a group's cultural memory is built in coherence with the principles of historic succession and continuity. To achieve this various narrative strategies might be used. It may use the references to the unchanging places, spaces, material objects, monuments and relics, the connection to which is pronounced natural, unbreakable and in need of constant maintaining and restoration (in case of a threat of being broken) for this group. The history of a country will be put together in such way that there will be no “breaks in the consistency” and that it will be “the same country”, “the same nation on the different historic stages” [16].

Reference to Tengrism in the film makes in well-balanced, close and clear for the spectator. The protagonist cannot exist outside the time context. Prairie is his God and nature is his mother. The film certainly provides all that is necessary for defining the national pride. It is the pride for one's nature, one's elders and children. The film also refers to the Soviet past- debris of the space ships are a metaphor. Technological breakthrough of the Soviet Union turned into a pile of garbage. The author raises the topic of westernization; the symbols of the influence of the West in the hands of little Shaytanbek, Western car and a mobile phone of the hunters, at first glance, show how the old man has fallen behind, how comic and vulnerable he is. However, during the true combat wins only the one who remains true to himself and Tengri. The film is thinking not only about where are we from, but also about where are we going. Because of this, the role of the boy, who finds the old man despite his selfishness and detachment from the traditional beliefs, is also significant. Therefore, not everything is bad, and the life lessons have been learnt [17-20].

## **Conclusions**

With the increase of social freedom the cinema, which possesses the magic power to destroy various taboos, might be the most efficient in helping the “liberation” and recreation of the society, its cleanse from the past nightmares and phantoms. As a certain social institution, cinema shapes the spectator and influences the society by promoting the expansion of conscience; in turn, the society, raised by the cinema, becomes more experienced in this field and requires new achievements, technical as well as creative, from the cinema. In other words, there is a constant and parity

ambivalent connection between the society and the cinema, created by it. The cinema becomes even more social, as its protagonist frequently becomes a separate individual, independent human personality, whose balanced life is the insurance of health of the society as a whole.

A film-maker expresses an opinion, a world-view, and an ideology, which, in turn, exists in a certain social context. At the same time, it is difficult to deny that, if the cinema is a governmental corporation and stays in the government's control, openly or not, it shapes the ideology of the state and society, which it strives to represent.

In the Kazakhstani cinema any ideological connection between the government and the cinema can be traced through the propaganda of masculine images of the new heroes. The films analyzed in present study, which found success among the Kazakhstani audience, are the symbols of the gained independence, through the plots of which the state gets, invents and creates new values, analyzes the past and strengthens the faith in the future.

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