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THE ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION OF THE FATHER CONCEPT IN KAZAKH LITERARY PROSE

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ABSTRACT

The image of father in Mukhtar Auezov's prose reflects traditional underpinnings of Kazakh literature. The main objective of the research article was to examine the cognitive aspects of the father concept in prose works of two Kazakh writers, Mukhtar Auezov and Aigul Kemelbayeva, and identify the content features on the theme of fatherhood in Kazakh literature. Till date, the works of Mukhtar Auezov and Aigul Kemelbayeva have not been analyzed in terms of the theme of fatherhood, although research has been carried out in terms of artistic prose and features of linguistic structure of their prose works. This study employs a qualitative methodology based on literary analysis. The methods include a careful reading of the texts The Path of Abai, Kokkiya and Arkheolog, a thematic analysis of motives related to fatherhood, power, morality and tradition, a linguistic and cultural analysis of the image of the father as a bearer of traditions and moral law, as well as a comparative analysis with Kazakh oral literature, Islamic ethical values and patriarchal images in world literature. The findings of the study comprise the main ideological content of Mukhtar Auezov's and Aigul Kemelbayeva's father's prose, and the understanding the cognitive nature of the concept of father in their works. These findings contribute to understanding the specifics of the concept of fatherhood in Kazakh literature. The scientific conclusions derived from the study serve as the basis for identifying artistic cognitive features in Mukhtar Auezov's Aigul Kemelbayeva's prose works fate of an individual.

KEYWORDS: Concept of Father, Kazakh Literature, Theme of Father, National Value, Family.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognized that a work of art carries the fate of an individual, and the representation of life's reality of life through personal destiny is a characteristic feature of writers who prior to the second half of the twentieth century. Specifically speaking, a writer's main goal in creating an image of a hero is not just to describe in words. Through the hero image, the writer encourages deep immersion in a person's inner world. Readers learn from the fate on which the work is based, and from the interrelationships between people. In particular, the representation of the father as a hero becomes a symbol of the national spiritual support, the keeper of historical memory and the embodiment of continuity between generations. The image of the father is seen not only as the leader of the family structure, but also as an example of wisdom and prudence (Zhubanov, 2012).

The concept of the father in global humanities is regarded as a symbol of authority, order, moral-ethical guidance, and intergenerational continuity. The revival of patriarchal norms in contemporary societies is also being actively discussed in the Central Asian context, where such trends as the "rise of public religiosity" and the "return to traditional gender roles" are described. These tendencies help to explain the social foundations for encoding paternal authority and moral order in literary texts (Aripova, 2022). The father image in Mukhtar Auezov's prose reflects traditional understandings of Kazakh literature on a new artistic level. The concept of the father in Auezov's works serves as an artistic channel for deeply comprehending the spiritual-cultural worldview, historical destiny, and national values of the Kazakh people.

In Auezov's prose, the image of the father embodies not only personal and family authority, but also broader symbolic, cultural and ideological functions. The paternal images in Auezov's prose embody authority, tradition, and moral responsibility. The typology outlined by Bozhkova *et al.* (2021) offers a comparative approach to understanding characters like Kunanbai, whose role as both a moral authority and distant patriarch illustrates the complexity of fatherhood as a cultural and artistic construct.

The relevance of the current study is connected with the fact that contemporary anthropological, literary, and cultural studies place particular emphasis on issues of gender roles and generational continuity. Broadly, the study situates the father's representation as one of the central issues in literary criticism: the artistic embodiment of human

experience. The study examines a key problem in literary studies, that of considering how a character's image is embodied in a work of art and how to study behavioral characteristics. The study also explores how the reality of life is reflected through the image of a person in prose writings.

For this purpose, the study selected prose works M. Auezov and Aigul Kemelbayeva two of the greatest prose writers of Kazakh literature. M. Auezov (1897-1961) was a Kazakh writer, a social activist and an academician, who produced a large literary corpus comprising poems, short stories, prose, and essays. Aigul Kemelbayeva (born 1965) is known for her narrative prose and literary criticism, having made a great impact during the post-independence era. The current study sampled Auezov's *The Path of Abai*, an epic work published in 1942, and Aigul Kemelbayeva's two representative works *Kokkiya* and *Arkheolog*. The main objective of this study was to examine the artistic dimensions of the concept of the father in the prose works of M. Auezov and Aigul Kemelbayeva.

The study conducted a thematic analysis of the motives related to fatherhood, for instance, power, morality and tradition in the sampled works of two writers. The objective was to highlight the ideological content in the prose works of Mukhtar Auezov and Aigul Kemelbayeva, in terms of the image of father, and understand the artistic cognitive features of the concept of father in their works. It also examined the linguistic and cultural perspectives embedded in the image of the father as a bearer of traditions and moral law, and how it represents Islamic ethical values and patriarchal images in world literature.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Modern Kazakh literary studies mark the development of prose literature (Kirabayev, 2007). In recent years, research in Kazakhstan has focused on teaching Kazakh literature through modern methodologies, exploring issues of cultural-linguistic identity and the comprehension of literary values. Within this framework, literary texts (including classics) are viewed as channels for transmitting the "national code." Innovative approaches to teaching literature are shown to enhance the cultural sensitivity of younger generations and strengthen their value orientations. Therefore, it is important to differentiate its true character in mastering life's realities, identify the features of creating complex human images, and determine its contribution to artistic thought as a whole.

The representation of the father is a widely explored concept in world literature. Among the

personal images in literature, the concept of the father occupies a special place. It represents one of the fundamental values in the national worldview (Zhubanov, 2012). For example, Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons* (1979), the conflict between Bazarov and his father, reflects the spiritual condition of Russian society. In Shakespeare's works (1993), the father figure serves as a discourse through which contradictions between power and morality are resolved. Maskalan (2016) offers a comprehensive discussion of the historical, symbolic, and socio-political aspects of fatherhood, tracing its development from the patriarchal model of power to modern reinterpretations shaped by discussions about gender equality. The study shows that fatherhood has always been closely linked to masculinity and political power, and traditional determinants such as aggressiveness, rationality, and emotional detachment have hindered the formation of a benevolent relationship between father and child. Drawing on psychoanalytic, feminist, and sociological approaches.

Maskalan (2016) emphasizes the preservation of hegemonic masculinity and cultural scenarios that limit men's parental roles, as well as the emergence of "equal parental partnership" as a model rethinking both paternal functions and male identity. He also emphasizes the relationship of fatherhood with power, law, and social order. Bozhkova et al. (2021) explore the socio-psychological representations of fatherhood in modern children's and adolescent prose, identifying three dominant types: father-youngster, father-judge, and father-friend. Their analysis shows that although absence and emotional distance remain common features, literary texts increasingly portray fathers as supportive and nurturing figures, reflecting broader shifts in family structures and cultural values. The authors argue that fiction serves as a form of "literary pedagogy", shaping the collective perception of fatherhood through artistic representations. Furthermore, multidisciplinary social study published by Dang et al. (2025) conceptualizes paternal involvement through intersecting categories of authority and effect, positioning fathers at once within regimes of normativity and domains of care. Fatherhood is thereby articulated as a dual function: disciplinary, in its enforcement of social order, and effective, in its capacity for emotional agent.

In literary studies, the notion of concept is understood as a culturally mediated cognitive and semiotic construct that encodes ideological structures and symbolic meaning within the worldview and cultural memory of a community (Kubryakova,

2009). Specifically, the concept of the father is a cultural semiotic structure that unites familial, social, and moral values (Challab, 2022). In Kazakh society, the notion of the father is formed not only as a biological parent but also as a spiritual mentor, a transmitter of cultural traditions, and a guardian of national identity (Bekzhanova et.al, 2025). In Kazakh literature, the image of the father—from ancient folklore to contemporary prose—has been established as a reflection of the upbringing of generations, family unity, and moral-ethical principles (Akhan & Daribayev, 2025). Building on this tradition, Mukhtar Auezov (1989) and Aigul Kemelbayeva combine the traditional model with modern artistic strategies, investing the figure of the father with philosophical and aesthetic dimension. Issayeva. and Aitimbetova (2024) examine the role of Auezov's legacy in shaping linguistic personality and in determining the pragmatic impact of his artistic language. Their findings provide an empirical foundation for understanding how the father figure is perceived and internalized as a cultural-social norm.

For example, in Auezov's epic novel *The Path of Abai* (1989), is the description of the nomadic life of the Kazakh people, depicting the hard environment and challenging living conditions in which Abai grows up. It is a true record of the traditions, customs, and rituals of the Kazakh people. The novel narrates the story of Kunanbai, a father who serves as a bearer of tradition. Furthermore, the strictness and demand for justice in Kunanbai's character reveal the nature of patriarchal power in Kazakh society (Kazhybai, 2023). Kunanbai is thus portrayed not only as responsible for the future of his family but also for that of the entire clan (Gamarnik et al., 2020). In exploring Abai's relationship with Kunanbai, the narrative intertwines spiritual continuity and contradiction (Auezov, 1989). Through this artistic device, the writer illustrates the dialectical connection between father and son (Bekzhanova et al, 2025). Thus, while the father is positioned as a mentor, his strictness and loyalty to tradition sometimes conflict with spiritual freedom (Kirabayev, 2007). Auezov's literary images of the father, such as Kunanbai, serve as an aesthetic mediator between public authority, cultural values, and moral contradictions. Thus, the theoretical concept of fatherhood as a social and symbolic construct provides a valuable tool for interpreting artistic configurations of paternal images in Kazakh literature.

This framework makes it possible to interpret the "law/order" metaphors in Auezov's prose and the role of the character Kunanbai as a representative of

“the name-of-the-father/community law”.

The concept of father in Aigul Kemelbayeva's work is especially evident in genealogical prose. In the genealogical discourse in literature, the writer's stories clearly show the intergenerational kinship, such as genealogy, ancestors, and seven ancestors. For example, the image of Tarbak (Abdihamit), who is depicted as the head of the family of the Naz descendants at that time, is revealed with great perfection, thoughtfulness, and intelligence. The revelation of the image of father through Tarbak, who brings all family members together and works on issues such as comfort, peace, and unity in the family, is a reflection of the process of individualization given by the typification method in Kazakh literature. Aigul Kemelbayeva's prose is distinguished by its psychological depth in modern Kazakh literature. One of the main constant concepts in the writer's works is the concept of father. This concept is reflected not only as a biographical image, but also as a broad spiritual and cultural code, an artistic model of historical memory and internal integrity.

Kirabayev (2007) analyzes the ideological and artistic qualities of M. Auezov's work, focusing on the Abai epic. He attributes the shortcomings of the writer's early works to the historical upheavals of 1917. This upheaval marked the beginning of M. Auezov's creative path. This perspective, as Kirabayev (2007) notes, allows for a deeply understanding of the significance of the father figure in national literature and its role in Kazakh society. Bibekov et al. (2025) analyze the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive mechanisms structuring the representation of characters in Auezov's texts, demonstrating how semantic patterns are formed. This approach provides a methodological basis for identifying the stable frames of the “father” concept (authority/tradition/law) at the textual level. Born and Vasbo (2025) show that modern fatherhood combines normative authority with caring and emotional engagement. This dual perspective provides a productive perspective on father Auezov's triad of being strict, fair, and caring within the broader cross-cultural discussion about fatherhood.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study is based on a qualitative methodology, with the main approach being literary analysis. The research is exploratory and interpretative in design, aiming to uncover the aesthetic, cultural, and philosophical dimensions of the father concept

within the artistic system of M. Auezov's and A. Kemelbayeva's prose works. The concept of Father in their prose works holds profound artistic and cultural significance. In a writer's works, the father figure is not limited to the role of a biological parent but emerges as a symbol of authority, tradition, morality, and the continuity of cultural memory. For instance, in the epic *The Path of Abai*, the image of Kunanbai is portrayed as a stern patriarch embodying piety, communal leadership, and moral order. This artistic foundation reflects the notion of the father in Kazakh traditions, establishing him as a manifestation of national spirit, patriarchal hierarchy, and intergenerational continuity. The image of the father in the story *Kokkiya* is the basis for the writer's artistic and philosophical analysis of the problems of man and space, the continuity of generations, and the formation of personality. A. Kemelbayeva's story *Arkheolog* from a genre point of view takes the form of a genealogical story. In this work, the concept of father is intertwined with microconcepts such as rubasy, otagasy, ata, aga.

The qualitative approach adopted in this study enable to identify the thematic codes, and understand the aesthetic value of the father's image through narrative techniques: dialogue, inner monologue, artistic description, and symbolic representation. Through these devices, the writer highlights both the conflictual and harmonizing dimensions of the father's role in shaping personal and social being.

3.2. Data Collection

The primary research data was the work of Mukhtar Auezov, *The Path of Abai*, a four-volume novel and Aigul Kemelbayeva's *Kokkiya* and *Arkheolog*. These sources were chosen as the main material due to their significant role in reflecting the cultural, linguistic and literary aspects of Kazakh society. The analysis is based entirely on this text, which provides a comprehensive framework for solving research problems.

3.3. Data Analysis

The analysis was carried out through several interrelated stages: Close reading and coding, identifying key passages where the father figure appears; defining the father's role in the narrative: teacher, ruler, religious leader, moral model. Textual analysis, of *The Path of Abai*, *Kokkiya* and *Aekhelog*, to understand authority, law, tradition, morality, family honor and trace variations across different works. Cultural-contextual interpretation, connecting artistic images to Kazakh cultural

traditions, patriarchal system, and Islamic upbringing. Thematic analysis coding recurring motifs related to fatherhood, authority, morality, and tradition; Linguistic and cultural analysis, identifying culturally significant meanings associated with the image of the father as a bearer of traditions, authority and moral law; Comparative analysis, examining Auezov's father figure alongside Kazakh oral literature, Islamic moral values, and patriarchal images in world literature. Through this multilayered analysis, the study reveals the function of the father figure in Auezov's prose as an artistic, cultural, and ideological construct.

4. RESULTS

In Auezov's famous epic *The path of Abai*, the image of Kunanbai is one of the most unusual personal father images in Kazakh literature. Through this character, Mukhtar Auezov not only relies on historical data, but also artistically reveals the complex relationships of society, religion and power, father and son. Auezov portrays him not as a one-sided negative character, but as a complex and contradictory personality, who resisted the social changes of his time and tried to preserve old traditions. He had a great influence on the formation of Abai's views, and their spiritual struggle becomes an important theme in the work. Although Kunanbai is traditionally perceived as a negative character, Auezov presents him not as a one-dimensional antagonist but as a complex figure shaped by the ideological tensions of his time. His image reflects the resistance of the old tribal-feudal order to the emergence of new social forces in Kazakh steppe. Unlike conventional portrayals of antagonist, which emphasize only destructive or immoral traits, Auezov's artistic solution resists simplification, avoiding schematic negativity. As a result, Kunanbai emerges multifaceted character, whose authority and contradictions embody the cultural and historical conflicts of era.

The most realistic artist spent not one (black), but several (white, blue, yellow) paints in his rich palette on characterization and sculpting, accumulation and personalization of this image, in a colorful natural image, first as a person, with all the sun-shadow in a comprehensive, complete, holistic personification (Mukhtarova et al., 2025). The author neither idealizes nor demonizes the deformed character, but imbues him with a complex inner nature. Kunanbai emerges not as a folkloric type, but as an intelligent and multi-layered individual: strong, reserved, and insightful. His severity is balanced by foresight, creating an image of indomitable courage.

Animalistic metaphors—a lion's mane, a tiger's heart, invincible claws—emphasize his uncompromising nature, complemented by cunning and strategic calculation. Ultimately, Auezov creates not a villain, but a multifaceted figure embodying the cultural and ideological contradictions of the era.

The analysis of M. Auezov's epic novel *The Path of Abai* demonstrates that the literary construction of Kunanbai's personality is of exceptional artistic skill, rarely paralleled in world literature. An analysis of this novel revealed that the artistic embodiment of the concept of the father is built in several key directions: as a figure of power, a guardian of tradition, a source of conflict, and a symbolic mentor.

4.1. The Father as the Bearer of Authority and Law

Kunanbai is Abai's father, a wealthy and influential bi. Although he is strict and fair in his governance, sometimes his severity and excessive adherence to religion are manifested. He is consistently presented as the embodiment of patriarchal authority, whose word is equivalent to law. In court scenes, Kunanbai acts as a judge whose decisions are unquestionable: "Akesining arbir aйтканы-auyl ushin zan. Kunanbaidyng sozine karsy kelu-bukil rudy karsy koyumen ten (Kunanbai's word was law for the village, and no one dared to challenge it) (translated by the author)" (Auezov, 1989). **The nominative field "Father as Power" is exemplified in the following excerpt from the novel**

After the meal, when Abai and his companion Yerbol were about to leave, Kunanbai also stepped outside. As soon as he emerged, he called Abai over and sat down with him on a nearby rocky hillock. Father and son were alone. it was their first face-to-face encounter in a long time. **Kunanbai looked at him with a cold, reproachful gaze**

—You have studied, you have gained knowledge, you have had teachers, while we grew up in ignorance. But why has that knowledge not taught you to honor your father before others? What goal do you pursue when, in the presence of many, you challenge and bring your father to falter?

The father realized that he had been defeated. His stern expression faded, his tall figure seemed diminished, almost shrunken. Like a child, he reproached and complained. Indeed, before an elder, youth owes respect, and before a father, the son owes filial reverence—both are forms of propriety and honor (translated by the author) (Auezov, 1989).

At this point, the father's ability to serve as a moral exemplar for the son becomes particularly evident. In the cultural worldview of the Kazakh

people, the “father” is regarded as a pillar of the family, its provider, and a figure of high status. Across nearly all Turkic peoples, the father occupies a significant social and public role. The concept of “father” extends beyond the purely biological meaning, encompassing such dimensions as spiritual guide, figure of authority, and source of upbringing. These associations reflect the importance of the “father” concept in the national worldview. Through the novel-epic *The Path of Abai*, the motif and nominative field of the “father” concept are revealed as notions revered for centuries, bearing profound philosophical significance within Kazakh society.

4.2. *The Father as the Guardian of Tradition and Morality*

An important layer of the literary text is connected to Kunanbai’s instructions to his son and the young. Here, the image of the father combines the functions of legislator and moral arbiter, reflecting the traditional model of 19th-century Kazakh society. His speeches about honor and justice become a form of communication of cultural values: “Ata-babahyng zholynan aynyma, balam. Zan da, salt ta-solar da (Do not deviate from the path of your ancestors, my son. Both law and custom are in their covenants) (translated by the author)” (Auezov, 1989). These instructions reinforce the father’s role as a cultural guardian and purveyor of moral norms. Kunanbai serves as the starting point of moral upbringing and a guiding figure for his son. In this sense, his criticism of Abai in the text functions as a means of instruction and as a demonstration of his own example. **This is particularly evident in the following excerpt**

“On all three of these points, Father, I must disagree. I insist that my position is the right one. First, you compared me to shallow water. But rather than being a deep well whose benefit reaches only a few who possess the proper tools, I would prefer to be like shallow water that serves all—young and old, equipped or unequipped alike. Second, you spoke of the methods of ruling the people, of the character of those who govern. From I know, the people were once like sheep. A single shepherd could lead the whole flock: with a word they would rise, with a word they would rest. Later, the people became more like camels, if a stone was thrown in front of them and one said “kneel”, they would hesitate and only then turn aside. Now, however, the people are awaking from their former blindness and meekness. They are opening their eyes. Today, the people are more like horses. In frost and blizzard, in rain and storm, only a herdsman who endures what herd endures—sleeping on snow, resting on ice, making his

cloak a bed and his sleeve a pillow—can truly lead them. Only one who has compassion and brings genuine benefit can be their shepherd. Third, you mentioned the Russians. For both the people and for myself, the highest treasure in the world is knowledge and learning. And that knowledge lies with the Russians. If I am to obtain from them what I could not find elsewhere, can such a source be considered alien? To turn away from it, to keep my distance, would be ignorance, not virtue” (translated by the author) (Auezov, 1989).

In this passage, Kunanbai is portrayed as a guardian of tradition and morality, guiding his son through criticism and testing, consistent with the patriarchal model of parenting. However, in Abai’s response, an inner conflict becomes apparent: while showing respect for his father, he simultaneously defends alternative values—social utility, the mutability of society, and knowledge as a source of progress. His metaphors (“zhaydaq su”, “koy”, “tuye”, “zhylqy”) emphasize the dynamism of popular life, which demands a new type of leadership. While for Kunanbai, authority rests on the immutability of tradition, for Abai it is linked to enlightenment and service to the people. Thus, the confrontation with his father becomes not only a test for the hero but also a step toward developing his own model of fatherhood—one that is more universal, uniting national and universal values.

4.3. *The Father as a Source of Internal Conflict.*

One of the central plot points of the novel is the confrontation between Abai and Kunanbai. Abai combines respect for his father’s strength and wisdom with a critical attitude toward his harshness: “Abai akesin syslaidy. Birak akenin kataldygyn adilet lep kabyldai slmsidy (Abai respected his father, but he could not recognize his harshness as justice) (translated by the author) (Auezov, 1989). This conflict reflects not only the family drama but **also a broader process of shifting worldviews** from traditional to humanistic.

“Sening basynnan ush turli min koremin. ... Yen aueli, arzan men kymbattyng parkyn aiyrmaisyng... . Yekinshi, dos pen kasty saraptamaisyng... . Ushinshi, orysshyl dysyng (I discern three kinds of faults in you. ...First, you do not distinguish between that is cheap and what is valuable. Second, you do not differentiate between friend and foe. Third, you are inclined toward the Russians,)” (translated by the author) (Auezov, 1989).

This line is a direct reproach from the father to his son. It embodies the sources of internal conflict: the accusation of a departing from tradition, the

suspicion of the “foreignness” of Abai’s interests (education, a new culture). For the character, this is a blow to his identity: respect for his father conflicts with his thirst for knowledge and moral reflection.

4.4. The Symbolic Function of Fatherhood

In the novel, the fatherly function extends beyond biological parenthood. The lexeme *aksakal* is frequently used, denoting an elder who is addressed as the father of the clan: “*Auyldyng aksaly-bukil yelding akesi. Onyng sozi-talim, onyng batasy-zan* (The elder of the village was a father to all the people: his word was an instruction, his blessing was a law)” (translated by the author) (Auezov, 1989). Thus, the concept of father expands to a symbol of social and spiritual support.

In examining the image of Kunanbai within the framework of the “father” concept, we can delineate the nominative filed of “father as status”. In the first part of the novel, in the episode of Abai’s meeting with his father upon returning from his studies, **the following moment is presented**

“...Among the many people, the first person the son was his mother, and he immediately started walking toward her. However, standing at home distance, his mother said:

– My dear child, first of all, your father is standing over there... Greet him!” she said. Only then did Abai turn quickly and notice him. At some distance, outside the guesthouse, stood his father Kunanbai, accompanied by two or three elder men. Embarrassed and contrained, the boy suddenly

grasped....” (translated by the author) (Auezov, 1989).

In the given excerpt, we observe the elevated status of the father. Such detail in a literary work functions as an implicit means of conveying the father’s high standing. Attitudes toward the “father” in the national worldview are shaped on the basis of social norms and values. The intergenerational connection and consolidation of values, as defined by the theory of ‘cultural transmission,’ highlight the national significance of cultural and social values, as well as the cultural context associated with the father. The traditional saying, “From the father-counsel, from the mother-virtue”, reflects our people’s view of the father’s position within the family. Accordingly, the ‘cultural context’ relating to the father in national culture is formed on the foundation of the national worldview and social values.

4.5. The Evolution of the Father Image in Abai

Of particular significance is the emergence of Abai himself as the future father of his people. His actions and speeches reveal a different type of fatherhood—a humanistic one, combining tradition and openness to the new: Abai *ulynyng akesi gana yemes, bar kazaktyng kamkorshysy boludy ansady* (Abai strove to be not only the father of his children, but also the protector of the entire Kazakh people) (translated by the author) (Auezov, 1989). Here, Auezov demonstrates the transformation of the concept: from father-legislator to father-mentor and spiritual leader.

Table 1: Conceptual Systematization of the Father Concept in the Path of Abai.

No	Category	Character	Chapter title	Description	Symbolic meaning	Literary function	Page
1	The Father as the Bearer of Authority and Law	Kunanbai	Kaitkanda	Kunanbai’s strict decisions reveal his rule in establishing and enforcing authority	The father as a symbol of severity and power	Demonstrates that social order is maintained through paternal firmness	Vol. 1, pp. 13, 43-49
2	The Father as the Guardian of Tradition and Morality	Kunanbai	Okapta	Kunanbai’s act of giving a negative blessing to two young people who violate the seven generations rule	The father as the spiritual custodian of national customs	Upholds communal morality and ethical norms	Vol. 2, pp. 178-183
3	The Father as a Source of Internal Conflict	Kunanbai	Kiyada	The struggle between tradition and innovation embodied in the conflict between Kunanbai and Abai	The father as a symbolic representation of the era and nation	Highlights intergenerational spiritual continuity and divergence	Vol. 1, pp. 442-444
4	The Symbolic Function of Fatherhood	Kunanbai	Taigakta	Kunanbai’s departure for pilgrimage reflects his deep religious commitment	Embodies national religious identity	The father as a pillar within social, religious and political structures	Vol. 2, pp. 8-9
5	The Evolution of the Father Image in Abai	Abai	Zhutta	Abai’s transformation into a spiritual mentor for his students	The transformation of the father figure into spiritual archetype	Represents the emergence of the national moral-intellectual ideal	Vol. 4, pp. 337-339, 368-370

"After Yerbol had finished praising Abai without reserve (emphasizing his esteem among the people), Kunanbai remarked: "... I myself gave birth to Abai, surpassing myself. And if your Abai is truly strong, let him in turn give birth to a son who will surpass him..." " (translated by the author) (Auezov, 1989). This passage demonstrates that society (and even Kunanbai himself) acknowledges Abai's exceptional qualities. It signals that Abai is no longer merely a son but already a figure whose influence and authority extend beyond the family. This moment foreshadows his transformation into a mentor and

moral-intellectual guide for the community. Within the broader narrative arc, it marks a crucial step toward Abai's assumption of the "fatherly" function in a wider cultural and ethical sense.

At this stage of our research, when systematizing the conceptual facets of the father concept, we first outline the general information. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 2 presents the frequency with which these categories of the father concept are manifested in the *The path of Abai* novel.

Table 2: Conceptual Categories of the Father and Their Frequency.

No	Category	Occurrence frequency	Overall share (%)	Description
1	The Father as the Bearer of Authority and Law	17	30%	Demonstrates how social order is maintained through Kunanbai's strictness and uncompromising authority
2	The Father as the Guardian of Tradition and Morality	15	24%	His strictness adherence to the seven generations rule in matters concerning future lineage shows his role as a protector of tradition
3	The Father as a Source of Internal Conflict	11	19%	Refers to the spiritual and ideological tensions between Kunanbai and Abai
4	The Symbolic Function of Fatherhood	10	15%	Highlights the symbolic power of the father figure as an embodiment of national unity and spiritual integrity
5	The Evolution of the Father Image in Abai	7	12%	Captures Abai's gradual transformation into a spiritual father for his students

Thus, in the novel *The path of Abai*, the most frequent manifestation of the father concept is Kunanbai's strictness and authority, that is, a symbol of power and law (30%). This determines his role as the primary guardian of social order. As the protector of tradition and morality (24%), Kunanbai demonstrates his adherence to national customs. The category of the father as a source of internal conflict (19%) reflects the ideological tension between Kunanbai and Abai, illustrating the broader clash between tradition and emerging worldview. The symbolic function of fatherhood (15%) positions the father figure as a religious and cultural pillar within national memory. The evolution of the father image in Abai (12%) indicated his transformation into a spiritual father and the emergence of a new paternal model. In conclusion, the category of the "bearer of authority and law" emerges as the central conceptual dimension.

In the prose works of Aigul Kemelbayeva, the concept of father is elevated to the level of a metaphysical force, as in the story *Kokkiya*, that directs the fate of a person, not a living character. In the story, the father is not widely depicted as a directly acting character; his image is often concentrated in the memories, internal monologues

and perceptions of the character, kneaded like dough. For the narrator, the father is perceived as: a guide to life, a bearer of family order and moral norms, a person who influenced the formation of character. In episodes related to the father, the writer often uses such details as silence, simple actions, and gentle gestures. This approach reveals the tradition of the father raising not with words, but with actions (Kemelbayeva, 2015). The very title of the story, *Kokkiya*, points to a natural landscape. The author employs space not merely as a geographical setting but as an ontological category. Within this space, the father figure becomes intertwined with nature and emerges as an integral component of the national worldview.

In addition, the father instills in the child-almost as an unwritten law-the scent of the homeland, the breath of the wide steppe, and the harmony between human beings and nature. In this respect, the concept of father converges with the idea of ethno-ecological consciousness. The space of *Kokkiya* serves as a symbolic projection of the father's spirit and his outlook on life. Each time the character remembers his father, he becomes more deeply connected to the natural landscape of his homeland. Thus, the paternal image forms a triadic link between Mother

Earth, the human being, and lineage. In Aigul Kemelbayeva's works, the theme of lineage occupies a central position. In Kokkiya, the father functions as the bearer of genealogical memory. Through the narrator's engagement with family history and reflection on his father's principles, the author emphasizes the continuity of generational transmission. Through the paternal figure, the child's spiritual and ethical code is shaped, character traits are formed, and a worldview orientation is established. In the story, the father emerges as a bridge between past and present—a personal-level manifestation of the broader cultural-historical continuum.

Turning to the author's second story, Arkheolog, the father figure appears as an educator, protector, and guide. In this narrative, the image of Kaken's father, Zhumagul Molla, exemplifies the ideal father type in traditional Kazakh society. His legacy to his descendants consists of knowledge, labor, spiritual values, and historical consciousness. From the age of seven, Zhumagul Molla teaches his son to become a genealogist –introducing him to the history of the people, clan and land records, the Kuran, and Arabic literacy. He instills in his son not merely information but the ability to feel history and to retain genealogical knowledge. Thanks to his father, Kaken acquires not only education but also historical consciousness and cultural tradition. "His father taught Kaken to become a genealogist from the age of seven." (Kemelbayeva, 2015).

The knowledge imparted to the child makes him not only a custodian of historical information but also a person who values spiritual heritage and national culture. Zhumagul Molla teaches his son to live in

harmony with nature, livestock, and land. He instructs him in restoring ancestral landmarks, protecting water sources and springs, and caring for animals. These lessons cultivate Kaken's deep love for nature, livestock, and the history of his people. The father's guidance shapes him into a responsible individual equipped not only with professional knowledge but also with practical life skills. He teaches his son the culture of legends, genealogies, and reverence for ancestral spirits. He explains to him the link between sky and earth, the interplay of nature and spirit, and foundational life values. This enriches Kaken's spiritual world and instills in him cultural traditions and ancestral history. Zhumagul Molla also teaches his son to be just and to uphold values.

He conveys practical life lessons such as burying objects in ash, protecting livestock and land, and safeguarding what has been entrusted. Additionally, he trains his son to harmonize scholarly and historical inquiry with spiritual orientation.

Zhumagul Molla thus appears as the "ideal father" figure in traditional Kazakh society. He serves as: (i) a transmitter of knowledge and cultural heritage; (ii) a model of diligence and respect for land; (iii) a spiritual mentor who teaches reverence for ancestral spirits; (iv) an advocate of justice and responsibility toward entrusted values; (v) a guide who imparts life experience and practical skills. These qualities had a decisive impact on Kaken's personal development, shaping his spiritual and cultural formation. The image of Zhumagul Molla stands as a vivid example of the traditional Kazakh father who passes on knowledge, upbringing, and moral-ethical values to the next generation.

Table 3: Content Categories and Functional Characteristics of Father Figures in *Kökqiya* and *Arkheolog*.

Content category	Description / Function	Examples from <i>Kokkiya</i>	Examples from <i>Arkheolog</i>	Interpretive Conclusion
Role / Position	Spiritual guide	The father is absent as a living character but transmits moral direction and an ethical code	A living character who instructs his son through knowledge and experience	The father functions as a guide and bearer of cultural and moral codes
Educational Method	Justice, morality	Spiritual instruction through silence, gesture, and spatial symbolism	Practical lessons: care for livestock, protection of land, oral traditions and genealogies	Upbringing occurs through both word and action, providing life orientation
Knowledge / Cultural Heritage	History, tradition	Embedding national worldview through landscape and nature	Teaching the Qur'an, Arabic script, genealogies, and local histories	The father serves as the transmitter of knowledge and cultural memory, shaping historical consciousness
Connection to Nature	Ecological awareness, harmony	Harmony between nature and the steppe; emotional bond with homeland	Protecting livestock and water sources; nomadic ecological practices	The father cultivates ecological awareness and harmony with the natural world
Justice / Responsibility	Reverence for ancestors, cosmology	Symbolic meaning conveyed through spatial imagery linked to the father	Legends, genealogies, reverence for ancestors	The father becomes a symbol transmitting spiritual codes and existential principles
Life Experience	Preservation of values	Ethical orientation and moral code	Teaching fairness, responsibility for land and animals	The father instills life principles and a sense of responsibility
Role / Position	Practical knowledge	Sensitivity to natural laws; embodied connection to place	Nomadic skills, land restoration, animal husbandry, household management	The father prepares the child for life by imparting practical competencies

Ultimately, the representation of the father in literature emerges at multiple levels: at times as a living character, and at other times as a spiritual or metaphysical force that guides subsequent generations. In Aigul Kemelbayeva's stories *Kokkiya* and *Arkheolog*, the father figure integrates both of these dimensions. Table 3 presents content categories and functional characteristics of father figures in *Kökqiya* and *Arkheolog*.

In literature, the image of the father is not merely that of an individual responsible for raising a child; it also functions as a symbolic figure that transmits moral, spiritual, and cultural codes across generations. It also acts as a means of representing the upbringing of the younger generation and the transmission of national values. The father figures depicted in *Kokkiya*, *Arkheolog*, and *The Path of Abai* serve as reflections of individuals who guide their descendants on spiritual, cultural, and social levels. The father figure appears through different narrative strategies, yet in all cases it operates as a guide and bearer of cultural and spiritual heritage.

In *Kokkiya*, the father does not appear as a living character; instead, he is represented on a metaphysical and spiritual level, emerging through memory and the narrator's internal perception. Although the father does not act directly as a living character, he shapes the child's worldview, moral orientation, and ethical code within the child's consciousness. The author employs space as a symbolic category, and becomes a bridge between the past and the present, embodying the cultural practice of reverence for ancestors and transmitting a spiritual-ethical code to future generations. For the

narrator, the father embodies moral orientation, ethical norms, and formative influences on character. Through the father figure, the text conveys a national worldview grounded in spatial and ecological belonging—particularly the emotional connection to homeland and nature. The father thus becomes a personal manifestation of the cultural-historical continuum.

In *Arkheolog*, the father is depicted as an active, living presence. Zhumagul Molla educates his son Kaken from the age of seven to become a genealogist, teaching him to care for livestock, land, and natural resources, and instilling respect for legends, genealogies, and ancestral memory. This figure exemplifies the ideal father in traditional Kazakh society: a transmitter of knowledge and cultural heritage, a model of diligence and respect for land, a spiritual mentor, an upholder of justice and responsibility, and a teacher of practical life skills. In *The Path of Abai*, the image of Kunanbai represents a broader and more complex form of the traditional father figure.

He prepares his son not only spiritually and culturally but also socially and politically. Kunanbai is both a familial and communal authority, a decision-maker who emphasizes the preservation of tradition and law. His methods are often strict yet principled, shaping Abai's character and moral foundations. Moreover, Kunanbai embodies the symbolic authority of fatherhood in Kazakh society, representing the weight of parental responsibility and the moral obligations of lineage. Table 4 presents a conceptual comparison of paternal attributes in Kazakh literary works.

Table 4: Conceptual Comparison of Paternal Attributes in Kazakh Literary Works.

Attribute / Function	Father in <i>Kokkiya</i> / <i>Arkheolog</i>	Kunanbai in <i>The Path of Abai</i>	Comparative Interpretation
Role / Position	Spiritual guide; transmitter of moral codes	Head of family; social and legal educator	Both figures provide generational guidance, but Kunanbai adds explicit authority and social responsibility
Educational Method	Instruction through silence, space, and symbolic action	Strict yet fair, based on concrete actions and decisions	The <i>Kokkiya</i> model is softer and metaphysical, while Kunanbai educates through direct, authoritative practice
Knowledge / Cultural Heritage	Genealogy, oral tradition, reverence for nature	Religious, literary, historical, and social knowledge	Both transmit cultural-historical consciousness, though Kunanbai incorporates social and legal instruction
Connection to Nature	Spiritual harmony with landscape; ecological attunement	Limited, mostly practical	<i>Kokkiya</i> emphasizes spiritual unity with nature; Kunanbai focuses on functional, practice-based relations
Justice / Responsibility	Moral code, ethical orientation	Legal order; responsibility toward family and community	Both embody justice and responsibility, but Kunanbai operates within a concrete social and institutional context
Life Experience	Attunement to natural laws; practical lessons	Political, social, and economic experience	The <i>Kokkiya</i> father offers spiritual-practical guidance, while Kunanbai provides a full spectrum of societal experience

In addition, through complex internal contradictions, the crisis and renewal of the values of the Kazakh society of that time are characterized. Through the characters in the work, the contradictions in the views of the father and son are shown, and their search for mutual understanding between generations is described. The decision made by the father in the work in the extreme moments reveals his spiritual strength, his wise appearance in life. The analysis shows that Auezov seeks to convey the essence of national existence through the depth of individual characters. Even in his reflections on life itself, the author reveals fundamental truths through personal images, allowing the personality to embody the spirit of the era. Thus, the deep truth of life, which is central to a work of art, is inseparable from the human figure, since it is the personality that embodies and expresses this truth.

These research results show that by depicting the realities of life, the writer consistently highlights the national worldview and values through the father-son relationship as a key means of moral communication and the transmission of cultural values. This dynamic serves several functions: it ensures generational continuity, in which the father is portrayed as the moral guide, and the son as the successor to his legacy; it serves as an instrument of upbringing, passing on spiritual and ethical values and it reveals the inherent tension of these relationships, reflecting the deep meaning of the national identity. This model finds its most vivid artistic expression in Auezov's novel *The Path of Abai*, where Kunanbai embodies power, tradition and law, while Abai inherits, challenges and transforms this heritage. Through this dialectic of father and son, the continuity, educational role and contradictions of Kazakh cultural identity receive a powerful literary expression.

5. DISCUSSION

In recent years, the Kazakh writers have developed the aspect of characterization and image formation in their works, leaving a rich legacy to the Golden fund of the Kazakh national literature. One of the images that occupies a special place in the works of the Kazakh writers, who created a variety of characters, is the personality of the father. In traditional Kazakh society, the father is the spiritual support not only of the family, but also of the whole country and community. The advice and life experience of the father not only make the family sleepy, but also have a direct impact on the upbringing of the offspring. Clear examples of this role in Kazakh prose began to appear from the

beginning of the twentieth century. This study has revealed that the Kazakh prose often reflects the contradictions between father and son that arise under the influence of social status, generational change and historical changes. These images highlight the broader conflict between the old and new worldviews, using the dynamics of the father-son relationship as a prism to depict the realities of the era (Karagulova et al., 2025). In this context, the father's image embodies not only family, but also social responsibility, serving as a means of articulating the moral and social norms underlying national unity.

M. Auezov's *The Path of Abai* is the most vivid artistic embodiment of this father-son dynamics. Kunanbai is presented as a figure embodying the tradition, power and law of the steppe, while Abai acts simultaneously as the heir and critic of this heritage.

Their relationship dramatizes the contradiction between succession and transformation, reflecting a larger social conflict between entrenched tribal and feudal structures and the search for new cultural values.

Within these dynamics, the father figure embodies symbolic complexity, acting simultaneously as an educator, moral arbiter and antagonist, thereby illustrating the multifaceted role of paternal authority in the Kazakh cultural consciousness and its ability to balance continuity and change. The moral and ideological weight of Kunanbai's words and actions, as well as how they shape Abai's reaction, show how the personal sphere of father-son interaction reflects national dilemmas of identity and progress.

Mukhtar Auezov's prose masterfully reflects the spiritual appearance and family values of Kazakh society through the concept of Father. Specifically, in Auezov's works, the concept of father is of particular importance as a reflection of the national worldview and traditional family values. The author describes the image of the father not only biologically, but also as a spiritual, educational, and moral person. The Father in the image of Kunanbai is a spiritual support, not only as a father, but also as a guide, a person who guides and determines the path of the younger generation. He acts as the accumulated appearance of the father as a holder of power, teacher and public figure. Kunanbai's character is complex, sometimes harsh, but his main goal is to guide the great Abai on the path of justice and knowledge within the country. Likewise, the relationship between father and son is the link of the continuity of generations, moral and spiritual heritage. This is the link between loyalty to tradition and innovation.

Moreover, the conflicts between the characters in Auezov's prose reflect the deep cultural tension between tradition and modernity, power and individual consciousness. Auezov effectively uses various artistic techniques, such as description, dialogue, internal monologue, in revealing the concept of Father. The word of the father is a symbol of wisdom and teaching.

The exploration of the concept of fatherhood in Mukhtar Auezov's prose is not merely a literary exercise, but an engagement with one of the deepest cultural, moral, and philosophical layers of Kazakh identity. In his works particularly in *The Path of Abai* Auezov presents the figure of the father as a multidimensional symbol that encompasses power, morality, tradition, and cultural continuity. The father in Auezov's narrative world cannot be reduced to the biological role of parenthood; rather, he embodies the essence of social authority, the interpreter of tradition, the guardian of moral codes, and the transmitter of cultural memory from one generation to the next. The image of Kunanbai is portrayed as an educator who provides social and practical guidance. He instructs his son in the legal and moral norms of society and promotes diligence and justice. Kunanbai's pedagogical approach nurtures in the younger generation a sense of social responsibility, patriotism, and the ability to interpret life experience appropriately.

This artistic construction of the father figure emerges as a literary archetype that bridges the personal and the collective, the intimate and the social, the emotional and the institutional. The father, in Auezov's depiction, is a complex entity who guides, disciplines, and sometimes oppresses, but always stands as a crucial mediator between individual growth and societal order. In Auezov's prose, the father functions as a cultural archetype deeply rooted in the Kazakh worldview. This archetype resonates with the traditional nomadic structures of authority where the patriarch is not only a household head but also a moral leader and representative of the clan's honor. Auezov demonstrates how fatherhood is linked to responsibility, justice, and leadership. For example, in the character of Kunanbai in *The Path of Abai*, fatherhood is tied to religious devotion, communal decision-making, and the enforcement of strict moral codes.

The artistic background of fatherhood in Auezov's works cannot be separated from the theme of authority. The father is not merely a private figure but a representative of social order. Through figures such as Kunanbai, Auezov portrays the tension

between paternal authority and individual freedom. On one hand, the father provides moral guidance and a sense of belonging; on the other, he imposes restrictions and embodies the rigidity of tradition. This dual role allows Auezov to question the legitimacy and limits of authority. Abai's conflicts with his father reflect a broader cultural dilemma: how to reconcile traditional forms of paternal authority with the emerging values of humanism, education, and individual conscience. Auezov masterfully transforms the private struggle between father and son into a symbol of societal transformation, capturing the dialectic between tradition and progress. One of the most profound contributions of Auezov is the way he ties the concept of fatherhood to cultural memory and historical continuity. Fathers in his prose are not only characters in the present but custodians of the past. They embody the accumulated wisdom of generations and serve as the transmitters of oral traditions, ethical codes, and cultural practices.

In this sense, the father functions as a living archive of the nation's memory. This becomes particularly important in the context of colonization and modernization, when traditional forms of knowledge risk being erased or devalued. By embedding fatherhood into the cultural narrative, Auezov safeguards a sense of historical rootedness and national identity. Auezov's fathers are often portrayed as moral arbiters whose decisions affect not only their families but entire communities. The father embodies the principle of moral responsibility, teaching younger generations to distinguish right from wrong, justice from injustice. Even when paternal authority becomes oppressive, it still serves as a moral compass, forcing characters to define their own values in response. Abai's moral and intellectual awakening is deeply shaped by his relationship with his father. The tension between Kunanbai's strictness and Abai's humanistic vision reflects the dialectic of moral growth, where the younger generation must critically engage with paternal models in order to forge a more just and compassionate path.

The artistic background of fatherhood in Auezov's prose also acquires a broader postcolonial dimension. In the context of Kazakh history, the father figure symbolizes the struggle for cultural survival under colonial pressures. Paternal authority embodies the resilience of traditional institutions, while the younger generation embodies the quest for renewal and adaptation. Auezov's depiction of fatherhood thus transcends the personal sphere and becomes a metaphor for the nation itself. The father represents the anchoring traditions of Kazakh

culture, while the son (Abai) represents the future, negotiating with colonial modernity and envisioning a more universal humanism. In this way, the father-son conflict is not only a family drama but a national allegory, where paternal authority stands for cultural continuity and filial rebellion stands for transformation and reform.

The achievement of Auezov's narrative lies in the psychological depth of these images: Kunanbai is not reduced to a schematic antagonist, and Abai is not reduced to a passive student. On the contrary, their relationship embodies the contradictions of time, showing how family authority can simultaneously serve as a source of discipline, continuity, and conflict. Thus, in Auezov's prose, the relationship between father and son is elevated to the rank of a central artistic problem, a means of exploring morality, national identity, and the aesthetic synthesis of human life in its historical context.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the artistic background of the concept of father in M. Auezov's prose reveals a profound interplay between personal identity, cultural heritage, moral responsibility, and historical transformation. The father is not simply a character but a cultural symbol, an artistic archetype that embodies authority, tradition, memory, and the moral dilemmas of Kazakh society. This concludes that the image of the father in the Kazakh prose has grown in value over the years. Therefore, the image of Kunanbai in M. Auezov's epic novel *The Path of Abai* is played not only as a father, but also as a guide, a person who guides and determines the path of the younger generation. In addition, through complex internal contradictions, the crisis and renewal of the values of the Kazakh society of that time are characterized. Through this figure, Auezov addresses some of the most fundamental questions of human existence such as (i) How does one reconcile tradition with change? (ii) What is the role of authority in shaping individual freedom? (iii) How can cultural memory be preserved in times of upheaval? (iv) What responsibilities do fathers—and by extension, all leaders—bear for the moral and cultural growth of their communities?

By exploring these questions through the artistic figure of the father, Auezov not only enriches Kazakh

literature but also contributes to the global conversation on the human condition. His portrayal of fatherhood becomes a mirror of national destiny and a universal meditation on authority, morality, and continuity. Ultimately, the father in Auezov's prose is a paradoxical figure: both revered and contested, both a symbol of continuity and a catalyst for change. It is in this paradox that Auezov captures the essence of cultural transformation, making the father figure one of the most enduring and profound symbols in Kazakh and world literature.

The number of works of new content written in different genres has increased, and new methods of artistic expression of the realities of life have appeared. The image of the father in Kazakh prose, written during this period, for instance, is a mirror of national spirituality, a symbol of spiritual connection between generations. At the same time, the image of the father has been portrayed as complex and multifaceted, becoming an artistic expression of socio-political changes in society. The wisdom, responsibility and strength of faith of the father—as the main values of national existence were reflected in literary works. This topic of fatherhood with its multiple dimensions still needs in-depth study from the point of view of literary criticism. The implications of this study would provide future research directions in the broadest context.

A common feature of all three works is the father's role as a guide for the next generation and as a transmitter of moral and cultural codes. However, their methods differ: *Kokkiya* presents the father on a spiritual and metaphysical level; *Arkheolog* integrates practical and spiritual lessons; whereas the image of Kunanbai operates through social and experiential instruction. In all cases, the father serves as a fundamental pillar in the child's personal formation and in their spiritual and cultural development.

In conclusion, the father figures in *Kokkiya*, *Arkheolog*, and *The Path of Abai* constitute a key means in Kazakh literature for providing life guidance to the next generation, preserving spiritual and cultural heritage, and transmitting moral values. Although the image of the father is adapted to the stylistic and narrative features of each work, it collectively contributes to the representation of the ideal paternal role in national tradition.

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