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# Literary text and historical discourse: A questionnaire study

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## **Abstract**

This article explores historical discourse in a literary text from a fresh perspective through an experiment. We compiled the experiment's questions in a Google Form, drawing inspiration from Askar Altai's "The Hunchbak." The main emphasis in formulating the questions was placed on the category of historical figures in historical discourse. 23 students of Karaganda Buketov University, aged 19-22, voluntarily took part in our experiment. We chose a descriptive method for data analysis in the study. Using this method, three levels of reader perception (simple, medium, and high) are fully analyzed. As a result of the research, it was found that the vast majority of the survey participants fully understood the text of the literary work, thought about the subtext (indirect meaning) in it, analyzed the text from the point of view of their own knowledge, analyzed the author's position, and tried to express their thoughts. This indicates that the reader's perceived level of comprehension is moderate. At the same time, the study showed that in the minds of the youth of the postcolonial country there are still some manifestations of 'colonialism'; it is concluded that for the full recovery of a postcolonial country from 'colonial diseases', the full revival of historical consciousness, school programs and textbooks should be revised in Kazakhstan, and colleges and universities should have a systematic, fundamental state program for a long period (25 years).

Keywords: Discourse analysis, Discourse, Historical discourse, Interpretation, Literary discourse, Postcolonialism, Reader's perception.

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**Transparency:** The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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## 1. Introduction

Researchers have been studying the topic of historical discourse in world literature for the past twenty-thirty years. This not only expands the space of the concept of discourse, but also gives rise to new findings in linguistics and literary studies. It also includes historical, synchronic, and diachronic studies of the time and space categories of language and

literature. The connection of the historical discourse with the text, including social linguistics, pragmatics, political linguistics, history, and theory, complicates its meaning and increases scientific interest.

The main purpose of this study is to perceive the historical context of the reader in a postcolonial country (Kazakhstan) and to demonstrate the peculiarities of its interpretation. In recent years, in the vast majority of studies, not only in the field of language, but also in any field, the concept of "text" has been studied in a broad sense.

One text can present a comprehensive picture of the world. It will concatenate psychological, cultural, historical, social, physiological, emotional, and other values. And the text's perception is determined by the direct consciousness of the addressee (recipient). Because the recipient first perceives any text from his own point of view (knowledge). This means that receiving, understanding, and interpreting a text is a complex process. People occasionally use these concepts as synonyms, despite their specificity. However, in contrast to the next two concepts, the issue of "perception" primarily precedes it. Most of the researchers evaluate the impact of various (age, social level, psycho-physiological, etc.) conditions on the addressee's reception of the text.

For example, Lotman [1] emphasizes the peculiarities in the reception of the literary text and the scientific text. Also, the lexical connection in the text plays an important role in the reader's perception [2]. Readers without special literary knowledge or linguistic training react differently when they read a work of fiction [3] and the effect of crime and violence on their perception is also a significant factor. [4] the fact that the majority of readers do not want to change their first self-interpretation when reading a literary work [5]. Reader empathy [6] and features of the work's visual perception [7] are important consideration. The reader's emotional response to the graphic narrative [8] and psychological projection in relation to emotion and discourse [9]. Moderation of readers and online reading [10] of text and reader factors Critical studies such as, empathic experience in complex communication [11] have shown a number of features of perception and understanding of the text of a literary work.

In addition to the above, the reception of the text is characterized by the recipient's: emotions, imagination, and understanding the content and art.

Scientists proposed four levels of the reader's perception of a literary work: at the first level, the reader perceives the literary work as simply true; at the second level, the reader perceives the features of the work of art according to the author's position and thinks about them after reading the work; at the third level, the reader fully understands the author's idea in the work of fiction; At the fourth level of perception of a literary work, the reader considers and perceives the work of fiction in a historical-literary context, as a whole, in connection with modern culture and tradition. The conclusion from this is that the reader can go through several stages of text perception: physical perception; superficial understanding of the text (literally); understanding its connection with the context; deep understanding of the meaning of the text; understanding the text with its own knowledge base; intellectual and emotional perception of the text, and understanding the concept of its meaning and basis.

Nikiforova offers three forms of influence of fiction on a person from a psychological point of view: 1) the dominant majority form (where the majority of people have an overlap of emotional-volitional impulses due to having read different books and attribute all of those reasons to the effect of fiction, but cannot say exactly how each book affected them); 2) A book read at a certain stage of an individual's development may not have an effect at that time or may not correspond to his life experience, however, the understanding formed after reading the work interacts with that person's personal or life at titude as a spiritual force at a certain level; 3) Another rare type of influence of fiction is the influence of the character of the work on the formation of the ideal and basic personal views of the reader [12].

Taking into account the above findings, we present a scale for understanding the meaning of a work of art when receiving it and the effect of the text of a work of art upon the reader's acceptance or comprehension (Table 1). You can see the ratio of the meaning of the text to levels of understanding and the effect of fiction on a person in the table:

rable 1.			
The level	of reader	perce	ption.

Reader's perception	Understanding/Perception/Influence of the reader on the text of a work of fiction	
Simple	Reads and perceives the text of a work of art, but does not think about the essence of the work of art, the influence of consciousness is weak (Even the reader's thought remains unchanged).	
Medium	Fully understands the text of a literary work, reflects on the parable (Indirect meaning) in it, summarizes the text from the point of view of his own knowledge and views, differentiates the position of the author.	
High	Understands the text of the work with a high intellectual level, pays attention to the connection of the literary text with public, social, high culture, historical conditions, further substantiates the previously formed point of view by reading the text of the literary work or forms a radically new point of view, interprets the author's concept according to the impact of the literary work on his mind.	

In a work of fiction, when the author creates a text to convey a certain idea, the reader perceives this idea through the generated text. That is, the author: idea --> text --> interpretation; the reader: text --> reception --> -- understanding> idea --> interpretation studies in stages at different times.

Therefore, our main goal will be to study and justify the above conclusions about the reception, understanding, and impact of this artistic text in connection with the category of historical discourse.

According to Minyar-Belorucheva, historical discourse can be classified into two types: primary historical discourse and secondary historical discourse [13]. All the sources that make up the original historical discourse will be flexible in their detailed disassembly. The second historical discourse consists of the fact that texts (scientific-historical and artistic

works) are created through the components of the primary discourse, in which the initial data are not only traced and implicitly evaluated.

Historical discourse is a concept associated with modern politics that, by its typological characteristics, is heterogeneous, multidimensional, multifunctional, changeable, and determines the interpretation of past events. It includes: historical artifacts, various documents, stories about historical figures and politicians, various cultural monuments, etc. Among them, we consider only a historical person. We analyze the answers to the questions related to historical personality, built on the basis of a literary text. The main attention is paid to the simple, medium, and high level of perception of the text.

### 2. Literature Review

Today, scientists are comprehensively considering the category of historical discourse. With historical linguistics, methodological perspective [14] discourse of new history in secondary schools [15] cultural concepts [16] narrative [17], scientific community texts [18] discursive-historical approach [19] historical text and discourse [20] internet connection [21] humanism of a particular country [22] religion [23] and religious poetry [24] historical discourses in international politics, linguistic, philosophical, and psychological aspects of historical discourse [25] civilization [26], oral history [27] art and filmmaking [28] literary writing [29] other issues are being investigated.

One area of science does not limit historical discourse. The category of historical discourse in fiction covers all humanities, such as literary studies, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, ideology, political science, sociology, cultural studies, history, etc. The basis of historical discourse is text (historical relics, chronicles, and legends, historical data and documents, paintings and symbols, etc.). The initiator of historical discourse is the reader, one of its interpretative recipients. Historical documents and historical data are critical to historical discourse. However, the transmission of these data about historical events in a work of fiction not only increases the interest of readers, but also their interpretation in comparison with historical documents, which to some extent affects historical consciousness. As a result, our research is specific to the study of historical discourse through a survey. One of the characteristics of historical discourse in a literary text is the presence of historical figures.

We study the reader's perception of the text about historical figures in a work of fiction, its influence on consciousness in terms of psycholinguistic, socio-psychological, political, historical, and cultural continuity.

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1. Participants

23 participants (6 men, 17 women) answered the questions of the research work. All students enrolled in the 2-3-4 courses of the Karaganda University are named after academician E. A. Buketov. The average age of the participants is 20 years (min. – 19; max. – 22). All participants were native speakers of the Kazakh language and reported normal conditions.

## 3.2. Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Helsinki Declaration of the World Medical Association and the Association of Psychologists of the Republic of Kazakhstan. All participants agreed to take part voluntarily. All research procedures were approved by the Ethical Council of the Karaganda University named after academician E. A. Buketov (No. 4, 12/29/2022).

## 3.3. Materials and Ouestions

We have formulated several questions in accordance with the purpose of our research. All the answers to these questions a re the main materials of the research work.

Questions:

- 1. How old are you? (please write in numbers) [Jasyńyz neshede?].
- 2. Ha ve you read this work of Askar Alta y before? [Alta y Askardyń bul shy garmasyn buryn oqydyńyz ba?].
- 1) yes [ia] 2) no [jok].
- 3. Do you allow the answers to the following questions to be used in a scientific article? [Tömendeg1 sūraqtarğa ber1lgen jauaptaryñyzdy gylymi maqalada paidalanuğa rūqsatyñyzdy beres1z be?].
  - 1) yes [ia] 2) no [jok].
- 4. Who is Aksak Temir in the work? Have you heard of him before? [Şyğarmadağy Aqsaq Temır kım? Olja ily būryn estıdıñız be?].
- 5. What do you understand from the following lines in the literary text? What association does this concept have for you? [Körkem mätindegi mynajoldardan ne tüsinesiz? Sız üşin būl ūğym qandai assosasia beredi?].
- "All three are descendants of one Turk... Only it upsets, said Baisary. Couldn't recognize the enemies... Didn't recognize them. [Üşeui de biraq bir türiktiñ ūrpağy... Tek sol arasy ğana janğa batady, ded i Baisary. Dūşpandaryn tani almağan... Tanymağan].

"Didn't recognize? Did not show? – Bukir (The hunchback) a sked a counter question and answered it himself. – As for me, Amir Temir Padishah did not know and did not show enemies... Both Tokhtamys Khan and Bayazit Sultan were hostile. "[Tanymağan ba? Tanytpağan ba? – Bükır qarsy saual ta stap, oğan özı jauap berdi. – Menim şe, Ämir Temir padişah tanymağan, än düşpandary tanytpağan... Toqtamys han da, Baiazit sültan da jaulyq jasasam dep, jer jastanğan "].

- 6. Your attitude to the idea that "- Amir Temir is not a proud hero of the Turks, but an anti-hero who made the Turks kneel before their worst enemies..." [Bıle bılgen adamğa Ämır Temir türkılerdıñ maqtanatyn qaharmany emes, türkılerdı qas düşpandarynyñ a ldynda jyğyp, jer tızerletip bergen antiqaharman..."degen oi tura ly Sızdıñ közqarasyñyz?].
  - 7. How do you rate Amir Temir? [Ämır Temirdi Sız qalai bağalaisyz?].
  - 1) The Hero [Qaharman] 2) Killer [Qanışer].
- 8. After reading this work, have you changed your mind about the image of Amir Temir, a historical figure? [Osy şyğa rmany oqyğannan keim tarihi tūlğa Ämır Temırdıñ beinesıne qatysty oiyñyzözgerdı me?].

#### 3.4. Procedure

We asked 24 students to read "The Hunchback" by Altaya week before the start of the experiment. A week later, students voluntarily participated in a free experiment. One participant was unable to participate due to health issues. 23 participants felt good during the experiment, and no one made any complaints about their health. The experiment was conducted in the computer room of building No.8 of Karaganda Buketov University. The instructor (A. Zh.) familiarized the students with the purpose of the research work and the progress of the research. The students compiled the research questions using Google Forms. There were no problems with the research questions in the questionnaire. All questions related to historical events and personalities are based on the text of the story.

## 3.5 Research Instrument

The research instrument is a Google Forms survey. Google Forms is an online tool that allows you to create forms for data collection, online testing, and voting. Most often, people use the forms to survey their clients or administer tests to students and schoolchildren. Unlike most online survey designers, Google Forms provides access to all features without any restrictions; it is enough to register a shared account for all Google services. Among other things, Google Forms have a simple and concise design. We have compiled a research survey here. A survey is one of the ways to collect primary data, which includes a survey of a group of people and their opinions on a topic. We choose a survey in our study to ascertain the reader's perception level.

### 3.6. Data Analysis

A descriptive method was chosen to analyze the collected data in this study. The starting point for the deployment of the descriptive method is the formation of the primary subject of description – signs, parameters, and characteristics of the object, marked as significant and essential and constituting the main analytical focus of observation and description (operations carried out within the boundaries of this procedure are predominantly analytical in nature). This method elucidates the reader's understanding of the work.

# 4. Results and Discussion

## 4.1. Image of Amir Temir

The Hunchbank by Askar Altai is a work of art written in the third decade of independence of Kazakhstan, freed from three centuries of colonialism. Its main character is Amanbol. This name was also nottaken by the writer alone. Because in the Kazakh people there is some kind of cunning, some kind of evil person who tells him, "Be healthy, whoever you are." Each person has his own point of view and his own opinion. Whether it's growing up in a colonial country or living in an independent country.

As the cartilage of the main character became convex and lumpy, people called him "humpback," looking at the external statue. The heroine built a historical canvas, having studied the history of the world, from the Greek mythotarikh to the history of Russia, the Kazakhs, China, and Kalmyk. At the very end, we stopped at the world-famous ruler, Amir Temir. The painting depicts the famous Emir, who, with two long spears, pierces two enemies with a horse. One of the two enemies escaped three times and took refuge in the Ak Horde, which itself was enthroned by the khan of the Golden Horde Toktamys, the other was the great Ottoman king Ildrim Bayazit Sultan (1389-1402). In the artwork, there are disagreements between the hunchback (whose real name is Amanbol) and his friend Baysar, who is related to Amir Temir. This discussion did not occur in a single day, but rather within a single piece of art. In other words, it is a long-studied concept that has reached the public sphere.

Amir Temir is a historical figure known in Central Asia as "lame Temir," in the Iranian region as Timurleng, and to Europeans as Tamerlane. A talented commander and a noble politician known in world history as Alexander Macedonian, Genghis Khan, and Batu Khan. The campaigns started at an early age, with piracyrising to the level of the "conqueror of the world," subjugating 27 states, and forming the Temir dynasty [30].

Scholars hold differing opinions regarding Amir Temir's personality. One of them says that he is a cruel, tyrant, murderous, and extremely evil commander who destroys cities, while the other says that he is a hero, just, visionary, benevolent, brave, an architect, and has a special commanding ability. The complexity further complicates Aksak Temir's personality.

Every empire wants to appear dominant and stay on top of history. There are also those, who before them, despised and disguised khans, rulers, emirs, and sultans. The goal is to show that only his power can create a great state without making mistakes, pushing the famous from the stage of history. It was especially colonial; it was experienced in colonial countries without any resistance. We can say that this also applies to the image of Amir Temir. So that:

- Lame Temir has been limping since birth.
- Twenty thousand people were thrown alive between a brick and a stone.

• When he captured Isfahan in 1387, he (Amir Temir) commanded his soldiers to behead 70 thousand civilians and build pyramids out of their heads.

In India in 1398, by his (Amir Temir) order, 100 thousand prisoners were killed, and countless records were absorbed into the consciousness of generations [31]. It is necessary to study valuable historical information about Amir Temir, whether it is Ibn Arabshah or Clavijo's "diary," and compare it with Amir Temir's book "Amir Temir Amanaty" or works closest to that era. This is due to the fact that historical discourse is described by a historian (writer, chronicler, etc.) From the point of view of his own perception, even if he heard or saw, as the researchers warn, any situation on paper or orally. We do not exclude the possibility that this is also due to the mental state of the historian at that moment. Therefore, any information contained in Amir Temir Khan requires comparison. Scholars continue to investigate this pivotal figure in global history. The work "Amir Temir garb adiblari nigohida" ("Amir Temir through the eyes of Western writers"), compiled by Akmal Saidov for 20 years, contains the opinions, and statements of modern and former European researchers and writers. Sergei Borodin's epic novel "Stars over Samarkand" consisted of two books. The first is Lame Timur; the second is Campfires. In this epic novel, the historical image of Amir Temir appears as a conqueror, the founder of the Temir dynasty. And in "Tamerlan" by Jean-Paul Roux, of course, the reader will be able to see not only the cruelty and evil of the Lame Temir, but also his gentle and kind image. While the author describes the bloodshed of Temir, who destroyed some cities (which gave the reader logically consistent conclusions to understand why this happened), he also notes that in other cities, on the contrary, hostages were released and given land, gold, and food to all residents. He also highly appreciates his interest in science, art, and construction [32].

Despite the fact that historians and literary critics have expressed different views on historical information about the historical personality Amir Temir and about the image of the Lame Temir in a literary work, for ordinary readers, this name is still characterized by complexity, and mystery. Therefore, only limited studies have been conducted related to the perception of the image of Amir Temir, a historical personality, by not only professional readers, but also ordinary readers (students; historical and literary education at a certain level has not yet been formed; has no special linguistic training; was freed from the colonial yoke a quarter of a century ago; and the postcolonial youth of the country).

### 4.2. Historical Figure and a Reader

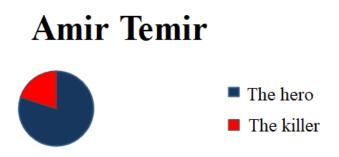
There are contradictions in Amir Temir's opinions between the two heroes in the story "The Hunchback." Two different views on the same historical figure in the work will undoubtedly affect many reader's mind. The results of the study show the level of influence on the reader's perception in the postcolonial Kazakh society of the text about Amir Temir.

To ascertain the respondents' fundamental understanding of Amir Temir, we posed two primary questions:

- 1) Who is AksakTemir in this work? Have you heard of him before?
- 2) How do you rate Amir Temir?
- 1) The hero 2) A killer.

According to the research participants' responses to the first question, they previously had information about Amir Temir. Commander, hero, cruel, and connected with the construction of the mausoleum "Khoja Ahmed Yasawi,"the overwhelming majority of respondents have a positive attitude towards the historical image. The next question sought to elicit Amir Temir's specific thought.

When asked how you rate Amir Temir, 3 respondents called him "a killer,"12 respondents indicated a "hero,"and the rest of the participants expressed their opinion: "Thanks to his bloodlust, he became a hero; in the era when Amir Temir lived, the path to heroism seemed murderous; both a hero and a killer."



**Figure 1.** Reader's thought (According to the initial data).

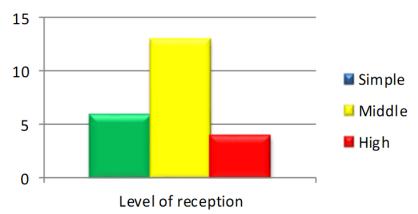
Figure 1 shows the response rate of readers associated with Amir Timur.

In connection with the image of a historical figure in a literary work, the following questions were compiled and presented to the attention of readers:

- 1) What do you understand from these lines in the literary text? What association gives you this concept? The text: "— All three are descendants of one Turk... Only it upsets, said Baisary. Couldn't recognize the enemies... Didn't recognize them.
- Didn't recognize? Did not show?
  Bukir (The hunchback) asked a counter question and answered it himself.
  As for me, Amir Temir Padishah did not know and did not show enemies...
  Both Tokhtamys Khan and Bayazit Sultan were hostile.

- 2) "-Your attitude to the idea that "-Amir Temir is not a proud hero of the Turks, but an anti-hero who made the Turks kneel before their worst enemies...»
- 3) After reading this article, have you changed your opinion about the image of the historical personality of Amir Temir?

Here, first of all, we tried to determine the reader's perception of the text. And we marked a simple reception in green, an average reception in yellow and a high level of reception in red.



**Figure 2.** The first survey.

Figure 2 shows the level at which readers' perceive historical figures in the first question. Here we see that the respondents' opinions are divided in two. For example, the overwhelming majority of opinions emphasize that "the conflict between the leaders of related peoples is illegal, another states that "each state fought for land and power and fought for itself," and one group associates it with "foreign countries creating discord among the Turkic people."

The second survey, that is, from the reader's point of view, is about the opinion of one of the characters in the story "The Hunchback" that Amir Temir is an «antihero»:

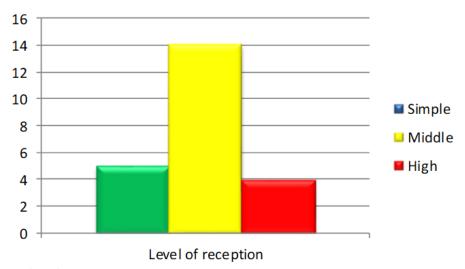


Figure 3. The second survey.

Figure 3 shows an indicator of the level of readers' perception of Amir Temir's understanding as an «antihero».14 respondents to this question rated him as "not an antihero." 5 participants believe that information about Amir Temir may be falsified. And the rest of the studentsexpressed their opinion: "extreme cruelty causes a negative opinion," "a leader with a strong strategy who does not spare the enemy is needed to govern the country," "everyone has their own opinion." 'I cannot say that I support or do not support," "views on the historical personality will not change."

After reading the artwork, to the 3rd question created to find out the readers' opinion about the historical personality Amir Temir: 16 respondents said that their opinion about Amir Temir has not changed, and 6 respondents said that their opinion about the historical personality has changed, 2 respondents were in agreement.

After analyzing the answers of 23 respondents to the above surveys, we offer an indicator of the level of perception of the text by the reader:

Simple (Green color) – 5. Average (Yellow color) – 14. High (Red) – 4.



**Figure 4.** Reader's perception.

Figure 4 shows the indicators of the reader's perception level. That is, we see that the vast majority of the survey participants fully understood the text of the work of fiction, thought about the subtext (indirect meaning) in it, analyzed the text from the point of view of their knowledge, analyzed the author's position, and tried to express their thoughts.

Also, having understood and accepted a literary text and digested it at a certain level, the reader will undoubtedly have an emotional impression of the work of fiction. There are psychologically different conditions, the knowledge base, age characteristics, imagination, etc., have their influence. However, based on the answers of the above respondents to the questions, we conclude that the literary work had an impact on the reader. For example, the reader had basic knowledge about the historical personality Amir Temir, and the overwhelming majority (12 respondents) indicated that he was considered a "hero."At the same time, a friend of the main character, the second character of Baysara, calls the historical figure an "antihero,"14 respondents are not an "antihero,"and 5 participants express the opinion that the story may be distorted. "After reading this work, have you changed your opinion about the image of the historical personality of Amir Temir?" What we noticed in the survey results became the basis for further formation of a positive attitude towards Amir Temir among readers. The reason is that Bukir, the main character of the work, also considers Amir Temir a hero. That is, the answer of 16 respondents that their opinion about Amir Temir has not changed after the artwork means that they do not want to part with their previously formed knowledge, but maintain a positive attitude. And we can estimate that 6 respondents changed their opinion about the historical personality, and 2 respondents remained in their thoughts because of the impact of the story on their consciousness.

When the addressee sends a literary text to addressee, the author tries to explain a certain meaning. A work of fiction aims to convey the main idea to the reader through the text. Acceptance and understanding by the reader leadto the assimilation of thought in the mind. It is clear that the analyzed thoughts in the mind have an impact on the spiritual state of a person, his personal attitude in later life. So, the results of an open survey clarified and showed that even the few pieces of information about Amir Temir, a historical figure in "Bukir" by Altai, have an effect.

### 5. Conclusion

The answers to this open survey allow us to draw the following conclusions: 1) The level of reading comprehension of the vast majority of readers is "average"; 2) The overwhelming majority of readers do not want to break away from their previously formed initial views, as well as from the bias of their knowledge about a historical person (this is also a "complex" that exists in a nation that was a colony); 3) There is an opinion that historical information can be distorted (th is is also a very common situation in colonized countries, because a colonized country has no history, because of the study that makes people look at their own history with disgust); 4) Taking into account the fact that most of the knowledge of students about historical figures is formed at school, in order to educate a free-thinking generation free from the colonial yoke in Kazakhstan, school curricula and textbooks have been revised from the state point of view and systematically, fundamental public education for colleges and universities for a long period (25 years) should be implemented according to the program. Such conclusions were drawn after analyzing the results of the study. The "colonial disease" in Kazakh society continues to hinder the complete revival of historical consciousness. However, the appearance of anti-views on information in the last century shows that the process of revival in this consciousness has gradually begun.

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