

BORN TO BE SOVIET: AMANGELDY IMANOV'S LIFE AFTER DEATH THROUGH THE  
PRISM OF THE SOVIET NATIONALITIES POLICY

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Eurasian Studies

at

NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY –

SCHOOL OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

2023

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## Acknowledgments

I express gratitude to my advisors Mikhail Akulov, Aminat Chokobaeva and Danielle Ross for the time, attention, effort, and guidance. I am grateful to my advisors for the attention to details, their contribution, commitment, and the wholehearted involvement in this project.

I thank my dear parents and brother for the support and encouragement.

I thank my husband, Danat Issa, for being there for me emotionally and for the care.

I am grateful to my family for the unconditional love and their belief in my abilities.

I express my appreciation to the Nazarbayev University, and the Eurasian Studies program for the opportunity to pursue this project.

I am grateful to the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Central Scientific Library, the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Abilkhan Kasteev State Museum of Arts for the opportunity to work with invaluable information.

I would like to thank Danat Issa, and Yernar Nadyrbayev for the help with the translation from Kazakh into English, and the outlining of the synopsis, of the book *Amankeldi İmanov* written by S. Brainin. I sincerely thank each one for volunteering to help me with this endeavor.

## Introduction

My interest in Amangeldy Imanov stems from reading the edited volume on *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916* and attending history classes during my Master of Arts in Eurasian Studies program.<sup>1</sup> I was particularly drawn to the topic of national heroes, specifically what makes them “national” (*natsional’nyi*) and/or “people’s” (*narodnyi/khalyq*). The figure of Amangeldy Imanov drew my attention because Amangeldy was both a leader of the uprising of 1916 in the Turgay Steppe and a celebrated national hero in Soviet and later post-Soviet Kazakhstan. The people’s *batyr*, organizer of the national liberation uprising of the Kazakh people in 1916 against tsarism, the legendary hero of the Kazakh people, and an active participant in the establishment of Soviet power in Kazakhstan are all descriptions of the same person. How does one retain the status of a hero in three different historical periods was the question I asked myself.

While searching for more information to better understand who the real Amangeldy was, I came across an article, written for the news portal Abai.kz by the Kazakhstani scholar Sultan-Han Akkuly, titled “The truth about Amangeldy Imanov, who perceived the word “Bolshevik” as “Kypshak”.”<sup>2</sup> Akkuly argues that the notion of Amangeldy as a Bolshevik was constructed by the “Soviet ideologists and historians-mythmakers”, and that real Amangeldy bore little similarity to the “the fictional character” created by the Soviet ideologues.<sup>3</sup> Akkuly shows that it was Alibi Dzhangildin, a Kazakh revolutionary and the future Chairman of the TsIK (Central Executive Committee) of Soviet Kazakhstan, who initiated the “molding” of the image of “Amangeldy Imanov as a national hero, revolutionary, Bolshevik, internationalist, atheist, and a ‘red

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Morrison, Cloé Drieu, and Aminat Chokobaeva, eds., *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution* (Manchester University Press, 2019), [https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/300/edited\\_volume/book/68114](https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/300/edited_volume/book/68114).

<sup>2</sup> Sultan Akkuly, “Pravda ob Amangel’dy Imanove, vosprinimavshim slovo «bol’shevik» kak «kipchak»,” 2020, <https://abai.kz/post/105156>.

<sup>3</sup> Akkuly.

commissar’.”<sup>4</sup> In 1930s, the “mythmakers from Moscow” S. Brainin and Sh. Shapiro, took over “the initiative to peddle Amangeldy’s “heroic image” ”.<sup>5</sup> Akkuly concludes that Kazakh-Soviet propaganda created a tenacious narrative about Amangeldy as a “people’s hero”, and “a symbol of the national liberation uprising of 1916,” which is celebrated in independent Kazakhstan.<sup>6</sup> However, “the idol of an independent country [Kazakhstan] is a fictional character”.<sup>7</sup>

In her dissertation “Kazakh literature as a part of the "multinational Soviet literature" project in the 1930s” Yuliya Kozitskaya similarly argues that Soviet historians began compiling a biography of Amangeldy with a focus on his role in the 1916 uprising in the mid-1930s.<sup>8</sup> In many ways, the Kazakh literature of the early Stalinist era was a part of the Soviet literary project, which aimed to create Soviet multinational literature.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the first Kazakh sound film *Amangeldy*, released in 1938, represents “the final triumph of the Soviet project to transform the culture of the national republic”.<sup>10</sup>

Reading Akkuly and Kozitskaya made me understand that the image of Amangeldy Imanov I was taught in school was carefully crafted by Soviet historians, directors, and writers. The question that I asked then was why and how his portrayal progressed from that of the leader of the anti-colonial struggle to the revolutionary fighter and a natural Bolshevik to the national hero inspiring Kazakh soldiers to fight the Wehrmacht. What events and processes underpinned the changing narrative of Amangeldy Imanov?

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<sup>4</sup> Akkuly.

<sup>5</sup> Akkuly.

<sup>6</sup> Akkuly.

<sup>7</sup> Akkuly.

<sup>8</sup> Yuliya Kozitskaya, “Kazakhskaya literatura kak chast’ proyekta «mnogonatsional’noy sovetskoy literatury» v 1930-ye gody” (HSE University, 2021), 172, <https://www.hse.ru/sci/diss/489138241>.

<sup>9</sup> Yuliya Kozitskaya, 3; Yuliya Kozitskaya, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Yuliya Kozitskaya, “Kazakhskaya literatura kak chast’ proyekta «mnogonatsional’noy sovetskoy literatury» v 1930-ye gody,” 171.

In the section dedicated to the analysis of the role of “the first Kazakh sound film *Amangeldy*”, released in 1938, Kozitskaya writes that “cultural processes in the Soviet territory were conditioned by political ones”.<sup>11</sup> That fluctuating Soviet narrative about Amangeldy fluctuated reflected political, social, cultural events, and ideological shifts. Furthermore, in the context of Soviet Kazakhstan, the image of Amangeldy Imanov was closely tied to the Soviet nationalities policy and reflected its dynamics. I argue that the transformation of Amangeldy Imanov from a local rebel into a national hero both represented the changing Soviet ideas of what constituted a desirable Soviet Kazakh and suggests that the figure of Amangeldy Imanov was employed to facilitate the development of Soviet-Kazakh identity. I aim to show that the figure of Amangeldy Imanov was at the center of the Soviet efforts at building a new identity for Kazakhs that would be “national in form and socialist in content”.

This study contextualizes the hero-making process of using the historical figure of Amangeldy Imanov within the matrix of the changing Soviet nationalities policies. My goal is to examine the transformation of a local rebel into a national hero in the Soviet Union from the 1920s till the end of the Great Patriotic War in 1945. I argue that the evolution of the Soviet narrative about Amangeldy Imanov included several stages, which did not occur in isolation, but in the context of changes in nationalities policy.

It is important to mention that by stages I mean periods where certain aspects of the constructed image of Amangeldy Imanov were put forward, accentuated, highlighted more vividly than some other aspects. The transition from one stage into another did not cancel the previously established status. For example, the transformation of Amangeldy Imanov into a national hero did not cancel the fact that he was a local rebel, or that the Soviet power considered

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<sup>11</sup> Yuliya Kozitskaya, 172.

Amangeldy Imanov a convenient figure for ascribing the status of a class hero. The intriguing part about the figure of Amangeldy Imanov is that it is malleable and easy to instrumentalize in accordance with political objectives. The early death in 1919 before the establishment of the Soviet Union, and the fact that little is known about Amangeldy's life before the uprising of 1916 made the figure of Amangeldy elastic and accommodating of the Soviet government's changing political, and nation-building goals.

In addition to that, Amangeldy's participation in the uprising of 1916 and the Civil War provided Soviet historians with an opportunity to construct continuity between the local events and the events in central Russia under the banner of the importance of the Bolshevik revolutionary movement. The gradual transformation of Amangeldy Imanov into a personification of the uprising of 1916 gave way to the establishment of a narrative that the revolt was a "national liberation uprising". The new status of the revolt provided means for the establishment of the revolutionary continuity between the pre-revolutionary local events and the October Revolution, and a room for the construction of the Soviet national origin myth of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. During the Great Patriotic War, Amangeldy Imanov was once again an accommodating historical figure to rely on – the Soviet propaganda used Amangeldy's credentials as a leader of a rebel army, of a 'national liberation struggle' to encourage Kazakhs to join the Red Army, and as an inspirational image to persuade Kazakh soldiers to continue the fight against the Wehrmacht as 'the heirs of the fighting traditions passed down by Amangeldy Imanov'.

During the Soviet Union, Amangeldy Imanov was transformed from a local rebel into a national hero, with such aspects as his class identity, loyalty to the Soviet power, and his bravery being put more and more on display. I believe that in today's context the figure of Amangeldy

continues to be a capacious figure that can encompass many meanings ascribed by the political power and society in Kazakhstan. However, the investigation of how the image of Amangeldy Imanov is used in independent Kazakhstan is a topic for another project. For now, I am interested in how the changes in what was accentuated in the narrative about Amangeldy Imanov correspondent with the changes in the Soviet Union's nationalities policy. I argue that the construction of the Soviet narrative about Amangeldy Imanov and the selective accentuation of various aspects in that narrative included several concordant stages (phases/millstones), which corresponded to the changes in the Soviet nationalities policy.

The first stage, dating to the 1920s during the *Korenizatsiia*, involved the search and incorporation of local history into broader history of the Soviet Union. The figure of Amangeldy Imanov first emerged in the context of the Central Asian Uprising of 1916, which was used by Soviet historians of the 1920s as a link between the pre-revolutionary upheaval in Turkestan and the Kazakh Steppe and the October Revolution in Russia.

The second stage unfolded in the 1930s during the ideological shift towards the rehabilitation and elevation of the role of Russians and Russo-centric traditions through the Friendship of the Peoples policy.<sup>12</sup> It resulted in the accentuation of the class identity of Amangeldy Imanov through political literature and film, culminating with Imanov becoming both the personification of the 1916 uprising and a Bolshevik. The third stage coincides with the war. It was the lionization of Imanov into a timeless epitome of courage and bravery, a representation of the "fighting traditions" of the Kazakh population and a "bright example of

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<sup>12</sup> David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956*, Russian Research Center Studies 93 (Cambridge, MA ; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2002), 2.



heroism” that inspired Kazakh soldiers for stalwart service at the front and instilled loyalty to the Soviet Union through the means of wartime propaganda.

I draw on the sources that were compiled and published in the Soviet Union between the 1920s and 1940s that mention Amangeldy Imanov, such as propaganda articles, history textbooks, interviews with the people who supposedly knew Imanov, the first Kazakh feature film *Amangeldy* produced by the Lenfilm studio, portraits of Amangeldy by Abilkhan Kasteev, wartime newspaper articles and reports of Amangeldy-inspired heroism, as well as reports from the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. I have also conducted archival research in the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and analysis of wartime newspapers stored in the Central Scientific Library and the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as visual analysis and interpretation of artworks dedicated to Amangeldy Imanov located in the Abilkhan Kasteev State Museum of Arts.

In terms of the theoretical framework, this thesis explores the instrumentalization of the image of Amangeldy Imanov by means of the Socialist Realism doctrine. Socialist Realism could be defined as a highly selective presentation of reality – the presentation of desirable trends and the suppression of undesirable ones. Katherina Clark dates the introduction of Socialist Realism “as a mandatory method for all branches of the arts” (visual arts, literature, music, and cinematography) to 1932, when the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union abolished independent cultural organizations to establish a creative union of all professional Soviet writers.<sup>13</sup> As a mandatory art form, Socialist Realism emerged during the Soviet leadership’s shift from the policy of *korenizatsiia* towards greater centralization of the

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<sup>13</sup> Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome* (Harvard University Press, 2011), 95, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt24hjm6>.

state and a growing perception of the center as Russian and the periphery as non-Russian.<sup>14</sup> This shift was reflected in the changing historiography of the uprising of 1916 and Amangeldy Imanov as the “fighter for the oppressed” and a class hero.

Indeed, the literary and visual portrayals of Amangeldy Imanov that emerge in the period between the 1930s and 1950s fully conform to the Socialist Realism canon.<sup>15</sup> Aliya Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen conceptualizes Socialist Realism in art as a projection of officially accepted vision of history, nationality, ethnicity and identity communicated through easily reproducible, readable and distributive medium such as oil painting.<sup>16</sup> Abilkhan Kasteev (1904-1973), a prominent Soviet-Kazakh painter and a recipient of the title of National Artist of the Kazakh SSR, who painted three portraits of Amangeldy Imanov in 1940, 1950, and 1970, was a member of state-controlled institutions such as the Union of Artists, and an active participant in All-Union exhibitions, museums, national schools of paintings, and art studios.<sup>17</sup> The establishment of Soviet museums in the capital cities of the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek SSRs entailed a process of careful screening of oil paintings based on the accurateness of a political message portrayed on the canvas.<sup>18</sup> Abilkhan Kasteev created a canonical image of Amangeldy Imanov.

The Orientalist practices were part of the Soviet Union. Defining the European colonial period as a potential origin of Orientalism, Edward Said argues that the world continues to be artificially divided by the concept of us and them, ours and theirs, west and east, the occident and the orient.<sup>19</sup> This division is fueled by the written and spoken communications proceeding from

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<sup>14</sup> Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, The Wilder House Series in Politics, History, and Culture (Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome*, 5. Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome*.

<sup>16</sup> Aliya Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen, *Central Asia in Art: From Soviet Orientalism to the New Republics* (London New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 115; Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen, 175.

<sup>17</sup> Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen, *Central Asia in Art*, 54; Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen, 85.

<sup>18</sup> Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen, *Central Asia in Art*, 103.

<sup>19</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

politics, ideologies, literature, arts, media, imagination, coercion and hasty generalizations, which create stereotypes about the people and cultures in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Far East.<sup>20</sup> The Orientalist practices involve the division between inner West and inner East, the center and the periphery, the civilized and the backward, which is supported by discourses that present the difference in terms that mystify it, render it fantastic, and inferior.

Soviet orientalism was a key part of the Socialist Realist doctrine. Aliya Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen argues that one of the many aims of Socialist Realism was to teach Central Asian artists how to represent their nationality, ethnic traits and identity through the prism of Russian Orientalism, where the Russian big brother is always there to educate, direct, and industrialize the lands of the little Other. The artistic exchange between Russia and Central Asia was one-sided because traditional art (such as carpet weaving, ceramics, felt craft) was deemed by the Soviet art apparatus as archaic, outdated, and inferior to the elevated sophistication of oil painting.<sup>21</sup> The native artists who learned painting in the Socialist Realist style avoided addressing tensions, divisions, or hardship that people of Soviet Central Asian republics had to go through during Stalin's leadership.<sup>22</sup> Abilkhan Kasteev was a native artist who was taught the ways of Socialist Realism. Thus, even the depiction of Amangeldy Imanov was controlled by the center, Moscow. The native artists were taught to accentuate ethnic differences through the prism of Russian Orientalism and highlight outward representation of nationality through the portrayal of a costume, empty steppe as the background etc., to depict Central Asia as a monolithic entity.<sup>23</sup> Despite the shift towards the class rhetoric in the 1930s, the portrayals of Amangeldy Imanov in official history, fiction, and film did not lose a distinctly national

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<sup>20</sup> Said.

<sup>21</sup> Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen, *Central Asia in Art*.

<sup>22</sup> Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen, 161, 221.

<sup>23</sup> Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen, 90.

dimension. The external representation of nationality through clothes and the utilization of the image of the vast steppe as the background are elements present in all three of Kasteev's paintings of Amangeldy Imanov.

Amangeldy Imanov was not allowed to overshadow Russian heroes either in visual art or in Soviet literature. The Soviet power provided a platform, means and tools but dictated the terms on which Amangeldy Imanov evolved into a national hero. Right after the end of the Great Patriotic War, Kazakh propagandists, historians, writers, and artists were criticized by the center under the threat of being fired from their positions for the incorrect ideological messages, which involved a focus on the pre-revolutionary history, an elevation the national history of Kazakhs instead of acknowledging the economic and cultural seniority of the vanguard nation, Russians, for any element that crossed the boundaries on what Amangedly Imanov, and other Kazakh historical figures can and cannot be remebered and praised for.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Upravleniye propagandy TSK VKP(b), "Dokladnaya zapiska Upravleniya propagandy TSK VKP(b) sekretaryu TSK VKP(b) G.M. Malenkovu o rezul'tatakh proverki ideologicheskoy i propagandistskoy raboty partiynoy organizatsii Kazakhstana. [Raneye 24 oktyabrya 1945 g.]," 1945, Fond 17, Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoy istorii (RGASPI), <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/124128#mode/inspect/page/1/zoom/4>; K Nefedov, "Zapiska redaktora gazety «Kazakhstanskaya pravda» K. Nefedova sekretaryu TSK VKP(b) G.M. Malenkovu ob oshibkakh v ideologicheskoy rabote partiynoy organizatsii Kazakhstana. 22 iyunya 1945 g.," 1945, Fond 17, Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoy istorii (RGASPI), <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/124117-zapiska-redaktora-gazety-kazahstanskaya-pravda-k-nefedova-sekretaryu-tsk-vkp-b-g-m-malenkovu-ob-oshibkah-v-ideologicheskoy-rabote-partiynoy-organizatsii-kazahstana-22-iyunya-1945-g#mode/inspect/page/1/zoom/4>.

## Chapter 1.

### The Central Asian Revolt of 1916 and Amangeldy Imanov: the transformation of Amangeldy Imanov into a personification of the national liberation uprising of Kazakhs in 1916.

The information about Amangeldy Imanov comes mostly from the Soviet sources that accentuate the image of Amangeldy Imanov as a class hero. The production of songs memorializing the uprising of 1916 was overtaken by Soviet historians at the end of the 1920s and manipulated to meet the nation-building goals of the regime, which led to the creation of various collections of songs about the revolt of 1916 that mention Amangeldy Imanov. Next, Soviet historians relied on personal reminiscences of people who supposedly knew, fought alongside, or encountered Amangeldy Imanov, and the interrogation documents of the rebels that were captured by the Soviet power. The personal reminiscences were usually collected during the commemorations of the uprising, and the anniversaries of the birth of Amangeldy Imanov. The production of history books relied on the scarcity of actual information about the pre-revolutionary activities of Amangeldy Imanov, official documents compiled during and after the uprising (reports, orders, letters) that mentioned Amangeldy Imanov, personal reminiscences and Soviet academic literature published on the uprising and Amangeldy Imanov.

In 1973, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan adopted a resolution "On the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Amangeldy Imanov." In accordance with that resolution the Institute of Party History under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan began preparing a collection of articles, documents, and

materials about Amangeldy Imanov in the form of a book, which was published in 1974. The book is called “Amangeldy Imanov (articles, documents, materials)”.<sup>25</sup>

H. G. Aidarov, one of the participants in that project, claimed that Amangeldy Imanov was born in 1873 in the Turgay district of the Kaydaul *volost'* (parish).<sup>26</sup> The family of four, Amangeldy's father, Uderbay Imanov, mother, Kalampyr, older brother Bektepbbergen, and Amangeldy moved to Baikonur, due to the lack of livestock for a nomadic lifestyle.<sup>27</sup> In Baikonur, Uderbay Imanov was engaged in agriculture, hunting, and fishing.<sup>28</sup> Amangeldy lost his father when he was 8 years old.<sup>29</sup> In accordance with local customs, Kalampyr married an immediate relative of her deceased husband, Balky.<sup>30</sup> From 1881 till 1884, Amangeldy learned literacy from the *aul* mullah.<sup>31</sup> Afterwards, he attended the medrese of the Dulygal Imam Abdrakhman for four years.<sup>32</sup> In 1887, Amangeldy began working as *batrak* (a hired worker) for the *bais*.<sup>33</sup> In his 20s, Amangeldy stopped working as a hired shepherd and helped Bektepbbergen at a forge.<sup>34</sup>

The authors of the collection claim that on May 27, 1908, at the fair in the city of Turgay Amangeldy Imanov acted as a leader in an armed clash between a group of Kazakhs the Imperial soldiers.<sup>35</sup> The reason of the conflict was Amangeldy's desire to protect a fellow Kazakh from the beating enacted by one of the soldiers of the local guard team:

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<sup>25</sup> M Kozybaev and P Pakhmurny, *Amangel'dy Imanov: Stat'i, dokumenty, materialy*, ed. S. Beysembayev (Almaty: Kazakhstan, 1974), <http://bibliotekar.kz/chitat-onlain-amangeldy-imanov-m-k-kozyb?ysclid=lifs8n58en881674916>.

<sup>26</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>27</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>28</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>29</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>30</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>31</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>32</sup> R Zakarya, “Amangel'dy Imanov - Institut istorii i etnologii imeni Ch. Ch. Valikhanova,” April 6, 2023, <https://iie.kz/?p=25623&lang=ru>.

<sup>33</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny, *Amangel'dy Imanov: Stat'i, dokumenty, materialy*.

<sup>34</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>35</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

“Under his command, *jigits* seized the timber warehouse of the merchant Shishkov, beat the guard team, and ignored the police authorities. 40 people were arrested, including Amangeldy Imanov.”<sup>36</sup>

In 1913, Amangeldy met Alibi Dzhangildin.

The spark that set off uprisings in many areas of Central Asia was an Imperial decree (*ukaz*) of 25 June 1916 that ordered a draft of male *inorodtsy* (“aliens”) into labor battalions. In the context of Central Asia, *inorodtsy* meant local Muslim population.<sup>37</sup> According to Tomohiko Uyama, before the promulgation of the decree, Amangeldy Imanov prepared for an armed struggle with local *bais*.<sup>38</sup> After the decree was announced, Amangeldy “changed his course to anti-Tsarist rebellion”.<sup>39</sup> In the Turgay *uezd*, the revolt was dominated by the Kypchak lineages.<sup>40</sup> Rebels belonging to the Kypchak tribe elected Abdigapar Zhanbosynov as their *khan*.<sup>41</sup> Amangeldy Imanov was from a Kypchak lineage and in preparation for the uprising was busy implementing a commanding structure among the Kypchak rebels. The uprising in Turgay ended in 1917 after the February revolution.

In the beginning of 1918, the Soviet power was established in Turgay *uezd*.<sup>42</sup> In March, Imanov traveled to Orenburg as a delegate from the workers of the Turgay *uezd* to participate in the First Turgay Regional Congress of Soviets of Workers, Soldiers, Peasants, and Kazakh

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<sup>36</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>37</sup> Morrison, Drieu, and Chokobaeva, *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916*, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Tomohiko Uyama, “Two Attempts at Building a Qazaq State: The Revolt of 1916 and the Alash Movement,” in *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia: Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Stéphane A. Dudoignon and Hisao Komatsu (Kegan Paul, 2001), 84.

<sup>39</sup> Uyama, 84.

<sup>40</sup> Xavier Hallez and Isabelle Ohayon, “Making Political Rebellion ‘Primitive’: The 1916 Rebellion in the Kazakh Steppe in Long-Term Perspective (c. 1840–1930),” in *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*, ed. Alexander Morrison, Cloé Drieu, and Aminat Chokobaeva (Manchester University Press, 2019), 267, <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526129437.00020>.

<sup>41</sup> Hallez and Ohayon, 267.

<sup>42</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny, *Amangel'dy Imanov: Stat'i, dokumenty, materialy*.

Deputies.<sup>43</sup> In the collection of documents edited by M. K. Kozybayev and P. M. Pakhmurny the authors assert that when a counter-revolutionary coup took place in Turgay in May, Amangeldy Imanov organized a partisan movement against Mirzhakyp Dulatov's detachment. Mirzhakyp Dulatov was one of the leaders of the Alash autonomy, which fought against the Bolsheviks:

“In December, detachments under the command of A. Dzhangildin, A. Imanov and I. Kiselev liberated Turgay and restored Soviet authority. A. Imanov was appointed military commissar of Turgay district. In the second half of December, a Bolshevik party organization was established in Turgay. A. Imanov joined the ranks of the RCP (b).”<sup>44</sup>

On April 18, 1919, Amangeldy received an order from the Turgay Provincial Executive Committee and the Provincial Military Commissar to join, with his detachment, the Soviet troops in Aktobe.<sup>45</sup> On April 20, 1919, the Soviet power was overthrown in Turgay by the anti-Soviet rebellion of the Alash Orda.<sup>46</sup> Amangeldy Imanov was imprisoned by the Alash Orda representatives and died in May of 1919. Ramazan Amangeldiev, Amangeldy Imanov's son, became a Soviet submachine gunner and died at the front in 1941.<sup>47</sup>

A commander of some of the Kazakh rebels in the Turgay Steppe in 1916, Amangeldy Imanov was, by all records, a capable military leader. Yet his Soviet fame as a people's *batyr* (hero) far exceeded his actual role in the uprising, which had many leaders. Why then did Amangeldy Imanov become the center of the new national history of Soviet Kazakhstan? In

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<sup>43</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>44</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>45</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>46</sup> Kozybaev and Pakhmurny.

<sup>47</sup> “Opisaniye geroyskogo podviga i gibeli syna Amangel'dy Imanova Ramazana Amangel'diyeva. Konets oktyabrya — seredina noyabrya 1941 g.,” Fond 394, Ministerstvo oborony SSSR, accessed May 18, 2023, <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/274235#mode/inspect/page/1/zoom/4>.



order to answer this question, we need to examine the historical context in which the figure of Amangeldy Imanov was first used as an example of Kazakh struggle for justice and equality before the October Revolution.

Amangeldy's own life was cut short before he could become a living myth. Killed in 1919 in the Civil War (1917-1922), Amangeldy Imanov did not witness the victory of the Bolsheviks on whose side he fought. Despite their victory, Bolsheviks had few supporters in the Steppe. Unlike Amangeldy Imanov, most Kazakhs were hostile to the Bolsheviks and Whites alike. The Civil War alienated the non-Russian population of Central Asia from the Bolsheviks because of the destruction of native communities by the local Bolsheviks, most of whom came from the settler society and were hostile to the natives.<sup>48</sup> A combination of the continued resistance of the native population (*Basmachi* or *Qurbashi* movement) and the Bolshevik desire to incite the revolution in the colonies of Western states made Soviets keen to enlist the support of the native population.

The campaign to recruit the native population to the Soviet cause was premised on the state sponsorship of nation-building in the national peripheries of the Soviet Union. In the 1920s, the Soviet national building project involved a soft-line policy of *korenizatsiia*.<sup>49</sup> The policy was meant to gain trust and break the perception of that the Soviets were an external force. The Soviet rule consolidated national languages, promoted autonomous cultural development of national republics, increased the number of "schools, newspapers, theaters, written languages, museums, folk music ensembles" as well as promoted national elites "into positions of leadership in the party, government, industry, and schools".<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Marco Buttino, *Revoliutsiia naoborot: Sredniaia Aziia mezhdru padeniiem tsarskoi imperii i obrazovaniem SSSR*, ed. L Eremina, trans. Nikolay Okhotin (Moscow: Zven'ja, 2007), <http://www.aigine.kg/images/1916/butino.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*.

<sup>50</sup> Martin, 22; Martin, 10.

Along with the establishment of national institutions, the Soviet authorities sought to establish new national identities. As Danielle Ross shows, the creation of the Soviet national origin myth was one of the ways of distancing the Soviet power from the image of an external Russian imperial imposition.<sup>51</sup> In this context, the uprising of 1916 provided a narrative that linked the Bolsheviks and the Kazakh rebels. Thus, for Soviet historians, the uprising of 1916 served as a prologue to the October Revolution and the rise of the Bolsheviks.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the memory of Amangeldy Imanov became a convenient point of identification for the Kazakh masses with the newly constructed story of 1916.

Intriguingly, Amangeldy Imanov did not feature prominently in the early Soviet publications on the uprising. It was not until the early 1930s that Amangeldy Imanov became the key figure in the Soviet historiography of the rebellion. Characteristically perhaps, the building of the myth of Amangeldy Imanov was driven by ethnic Kazakh activists and writers. For example, the first mention of Amangeldy Imanov was made by Alibi Dzhangildin in his article on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Communist Party published in 1923. Dzhangildin emphasized the inspirational and “avant-garde” role played by Amangeldy Imanov in “awakening the laboring masses to the conscious life”.<sup>53</sup> In Dzhangildin’s piece, Amangeldy Imanov was simultaneously “one of the first Kirghiz fighters for the oppressed” and an “active fighter of the revolution”.<sup>54</sup> As my thesis will show, Dzhangildin’s portrayal of Imanov foreshadowed the mature myth of Amangeldy Imanov as simultaneously national and class hero.

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<sup>51</sup> Danielle Ross, “Domesticating 1916: The Evolution of Amangeldy Imanov and the Creation of a Foundation Myth for the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (1916–1939),” in *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916* (Manchester University Press, 2019), 327–46, <https://www.manchesterhive.com/display/9781526129437/9781526129437.00023.xml>.

<sup>52</sup> Ross, 334; Ross, 339; Ross, 340.

<sup>53</sup> T Eleuov, ed., *Alibi Dzhangil’din: dokumenty i materialy* (Kazakhskoye gos. izd-vo, 1961), 174–78, [https://books.google.kz/books?id=8LM8AAAAMAAJ&source=gbs\\_book\\_other\\_versions](https://books.google.kz/books?id=8LM8AAAAMAAJ&source=gbs_book_other_versions); Kozybaev and Pakhmurny, *Amangel’dy Imanov: Stat’i, dokumenty, materialy*.

<sup>54</sup> Eleuov, *Alibi Dzhangil’din*, 174–78; Kozybaev and Pakhmurny, *Amangel’dy Imanov: Stat’i, dokumenty, materialy*.

In the meantime, however, Soviet historians largely ignored Amangeldy Imanov or portrayed him in unflattering terms. Thus, in the first study of the uprising of 1916 in the Turgay Steppe, published in 1926, its author K. Kharlampovich, suggests that Amngeldy Imanov enjoyed “an established and well-deserved reputation of a bandit (*barymtach*), a daredevil without whom not a single attack, not a single mass brawl in the *volost* happened”.<sup>55</sup>

Kharlampovich also notes that while Amangeldy commanded an army of Kazakh rebels, he was in the service of an *emir*, Abdigapar Zhanbosynov, who led the uprising of the Kypchak tribe.<sup>56</sup>

As this passage shows, the construction of national history did not happen overnight and involved a range of actors. While academic historians largely overlooked the figure of Amangeldy Imanov in the 1920s, for Kazakh party and state leaders, Amangeldy Imanov provided a convenient means of “domesticating” and nativizing the narrative of the October revolution.<sup>57</sup> In the 1930s, Amangeldy’s figure was used by Kazakh playwrights and novelists, including Beimbet Mailin and Gabit Musrepov, who played a key role in shaping the “historical narratives of the Kazakh masses” to consolidate popular support for the Soviet project.<sup>58</sup> It makes sense that the figure of Amangeldy Imanov was introduced and used by Soviet Kazakh elites “who understood the way of life, customs, and habits of the local population” and were given the task of making Soviet power seem “native”, “intimate”, “popular”, and “comprehensible” to the non-Russian masses.<sup>59</sup>

Amangeldy Imanov was a figure cut for valorization. It was easier for Soviet historians to transform the image of Imanov with whom Kazakh population could identify on the basis of

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<sup>55</sup> Konstantin Kharlampovich, “Vosstanie Turgaiskikh Kazak-Kirgizov 1916– 1917gg. (Po Rasskazam Ochevidtsev)” (Kzyl-Orda: Izd. Obshch. Izucheniia Kazakstan, 1926), 28.

<sup>56</sup> Kharlampovich, 28.

<sup>57</sup> Ross

<sup>58</sup> Ross, “Domesticating 1916,” 327–28.

<sup>59</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*.

ethnicity and class rather than invest time into creating a wholly fictional hero.<sup>60</sup> Thus, as Ross suggests, Soviet Kazakh elites claimed to have found references to Amangeldy Imanov in Kazakh oral tradition, including songs about 1916 by singers (*aqyns*) Sartai and Narymbet.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, the domestication of the narrative about the Central Asian uprising of 1916 involved the singling out and reconstruction of memory about Amangeldy Imanov.<sup>62</sup> In other words, the historicization, alteration and re-writing of Kazakh songs of 1916 was a way of presenting and legitimizing the Soviet national historical narrative about the uprising as a story that originated “within the common people” and was therefore “authentically Kazakh”.<sup>63</sup>

How then do we explain his near absence from the Soviet historiography of the uprising in the 1920s? In contrast to the Kazakh state and party activists, academic historians appeared to have ignored Amangeldy Imanov – the fact that brought forth *korenizatsiia*’s local dimension. In other words, local elites acted often autonomously from the center in pursuit of the state and nation building goals.

Another possible explanation is that Soviet historians of the period tended to focus on the “people” (*narod*) or the masses, not individuals, as the driving forces of the uprising. At the same time, the affirmative action policies of the *korenizatsiia* campaign alongside the persecution of the Great Russian chauvinism meant that the uprising was described as a movement of national liberation. Early Soviet historians characterized the hostilities in 1916 as an interethnic conflict contributing to the official demonization of the Russian Empire as a “prison for the peoples”.<sup>64</sup> This description aligned well with “the anti-Russian and anti-colonial ideological trends” of the

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<sup>60</sup> Ross, “Domesticating 1916,” 335.

<sup>61</sup> Morrison, Drieu, and Chokobaeva, *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916*, 327.

<sup>62</sup> Morrison, Drieu, and Chokobaeva, 327–28.

<sup>63</sup> Morrison, Drieu, and Chokobaeva, 327.

<sup>64</sup> Ross, “Domesticating 1916,” 335; Morrison, Drieu, and Chokobaeva, *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916*, 6; Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 5.

1920s.<sup>65</sup> Chokobaeva et al. note that many influential Soviet historians of that period, such as Miklashevskii and Chekaninskii, identified the rebellion as national, because it was directed against the dominant nationality (Russians) and driven by the desire for self-determination.<sup>66</sup> The aforementioned Kharlampovich argued that “the resistance to the requisition was perceived as the declaration of war against the Tsarist government, even more so, as a break with Russia” and that “the actions of the Kazak-Kirghiz made it feel that they declared the war not only against the Russian government, but also the Russian people”.<sup>67</sup> According to Ross, native communists and intelligentsia, including Saken Seifullin, Turar Ryskulov, Alikhan Bukeikhanov and Mirzhakyp Dulatov, also portrayed the revolt as an anti-colonial mass movement of Kazakhs against the Tsarist government.<sup>68</sup> The focus of the early Soviet historians on the people (*narod*) instead of individuals left room for a national interpretation of the uprising.

However, the nationalist interpretation of the revolt became problematic when the Party introduced changes to the nationalities policy in 1932.<sup>69</sup> According to Martin, the Friendship of the Peoples became “the new principle of unity” for the multi-national state, designed to manage people of different ethnic, historical, religious, and linguistic background.<sup>70</sup> Lowell Tillett notes that the earlier emphasis on interethnic conflict and violent Russian colonial expansion in the construction of historical narratives about the non-Russian nationalities became an “incorrect” and rejected view of history.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Aminat Chokobaeva, “Frontiers of Violence: State and Conflict in Semirechye, 1850-1938” (The Australian National University, 2006), 5.

<sup>66</sup> Morrison, Drieu, and Chokobaeva, *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916*, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Kharlampovich, p. 20, 26

<sup>68</sup> Morrison, Drieu, and Chokobaeva, *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916*, 330.

<sup>69</sup> Chokobaeva, “Frontiers of Violence: State and Conflict in Semirechye, 1850-1938,” 162.

<sup>70</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 432; Lowell R. Tillett, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities*, 1st edition (The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 6.

<sup>71</sup> Tillett, *The Great Friendship*, 5–7.

Joseph Stalin introduced the trope of the Friendship of the Peoples in 1935, during the speech at the Conference of the Foremost Collective Farmers of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.<sup>72</sup> The campaign aimed to unite the multi-ethnic population of the Soviet Union by celebrating cultural diversity and ensuring that all ethnic groups had equal representation and rights. Stalin said at the Conference that: “For as long as this friendship exists, the peoples of our country will be free and invincible. Nothing can daunt us, neither enemies at home nor enemies abroad, as long as this friendship lives and flourishes.”<sup>73</sup> The Friendship of the Peoples policy was a way for the regime to counteract anti-Soviet resistance in the national republics caused by the forced collectivization of the countryside, but which the Soviet leadership believed to be an expression of nationalist tendencies; it was also a way to promote loyalty to the Soviet Union among an ethnically diverse population in the face of the growing tensions with the Nazi Germany. The Friendship of the Peoples was designed to aid in the mobilization of diverse ethnic groups in the event of a war.<sup>74</sup>

The policy was formalized in the 1936 Constitution of the USSR, which recognized “the equality of rights of citizens of the U.S.S.R. irrespective of the nationality or race” and emphasized the importance of inter-ethnic unity and cooperation.<sup>75</sup> The campaign was implemented through a range of measures and policies. Tillet writes that the creation of cultural institutions such as theaters, museums, newspapers, and schools, and educational programs in

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<sup>72</sup> Joseph Stalin, “Speech at a Conference of the Foremost Collective Farmers of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan 4 December 1935” (Red Star Press Ltd, 1978), Works, Vol. 14, Marxists Internet Archive (2008), <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1935/12/04.htm>.

<sup>73</sup> Stalin.

<sup>74</sup> Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 43.

<sup>75</sup> “Chapter X. Fundamental Rights and Duties of Citizens,” in *1936 Constitution of the USSR, 1936*, <https://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/36cons04.html#chap10>.

each of the different national republics designed to promote local cultures, languages, and traditions while at the same time cultivating a sense of Soviet patriotism.<sup>76</sup>

At the same time, despite the claim of the Soviet government that socialism fostered a united and harmonious society, the Friendship of the Peoples policy contained a dimension that intentionally valorized the Russian proletariat.<sup>77</sup> As the largest ethnic group in the Soviet Union, Russians became the “state-bearing” people of the Soviet Union.<sup>78</sup> Stalin combined the idea of Russian cultural superiority and Soviet unity in his December 1935 Friendship of the Peoples speech.<sup>79</sup> In the same year, Stalin commissioned historians to write a book on Soviet history, which led to the publication of “The History of All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks): Short Course” textbook in 1938. The Central Committee turned the book into a mandatory reading for university students. The textbook ignored the history of non-Slavic people and focused on an officially approved pantheon of Russian historical, artistic, literary, and scholarly heroes and historical events.<sup>80</sup>

On the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution in October 1938, Stalin proclaimed the Russian nation to be “the most Soviet and most revolutionary” among “the equal nations” of the Soviet Union.<sup>81</sup> The publication of “The Great Russian People” article in the *Istoricheskiy zhurnal* by V. Volin in the same year solidified the Soviet government’s determination to portray Russians as the first among equals, whose “remarkable qualities” as “the People-Fighters” and “People-Freedom lovers” made them the source of “brotherly help” to non-Russians.<sup>82</sup> The

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<sup>76</sup> Tillett, *The Great Friendship*.

<sup>77</sup> Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 43.

<sup>78</sup> Brandenberger, 2.

<sup>79</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 453.

<sup>80</sup> Martin, 451.

<sup>81</sup> Martin, 453.

<sup>82</sup> Martin, 453–54; V Volin, “Velikiy Russkiy Narod,” *Istoricheskiy zhurnal*, no. 5 (1938): 1–17.

notion that Russian culture as the most progressive, and therefore an inspirational model for the other peoples of the Soviet Union to follow, grew in strength in the second half of the decade.<sup>83</sup>

The cultural production commemorating 1916 responded to the change in the official discourse.<sup>84</sup> The mid-1930s marked the second stage in the evolution of the Soviet narrative about Amangeldy Imanov, which involved the accentuation of his class identity. The Soviet leaders' wariness with "the disintegrating forces of national particularism" led to a shift in the nationalities policy and an increased supervision of the Communist Party over Soviet historians.<sup>85</sup> By the mid-1930s, Soviet policymakers heavily curtailed any calls for self-determination and the celebration of pre-revolutionary traditions and national histories that were not based on the narrative of the Friendship of the Peoples and class struggle.<sup>86</sup> The language of class struggle replaced the language of ethnic conflict in the new interpretations of historical events of the non-Russian nationalities.<sup>87</sup>

To ensure that national histories were written in a "correct" class fashion, the task of reinterpreting the uprising of 1916 was assigned to and controlled by trusted Party writers and historians.<sup>88</sup> This put pressure on historians in the national republics of the Soviet Union "to incorporate the formula of class struggle into their analyses of national movements" to demonstrate political loyalty.<sup>89</sup> The rewriting of national histories, specifically the 1920s Soviet historiography of 1916, which emphasized ethnic conflict, within the new framework of class struggle required an assumption that the native society "exhibited all signs of class divisions

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<sup>83</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 456; Martin, 452.

<sup>84</sup> Morrison, Drieu, and Chokobaeva, *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916*, 335.

<sup>85</sup> Claus Bech Hansen, "Power and Purification: Late-Stalinist Repression in the Uzbek SSR," *Central Asian Survey* 36, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2016.1213702>; Tillett, *The Great Friendship*, 3.

<sup>86</sup> Hansen, "Power and Purification," 154.

<sup>87</sup> Tillett, *The Great Friendship*, 7–8.

<sup>88</sup> Morrison, Drieu, and Chokobaeva, *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916*, 334.

<sup>89</sup> Chokobaeva, "Frontiers of Violence: State and Conflict in Semirechye, 1850-1938," 163.



before the uprising.”<sup>90</sup> Thus, as Chokobaeva notes, “historians introduced the concept of class stratification into the history of pre-revolutionary Central Asia.”<sup>91</sup>

The revolt of 1916 was no longer a mass movement underscored by interethnic conflict but a class struggle, which cut across ethnic lines. In this new interpretation, the Kazakh toiling masses, were joined by Russian workers in their struggle against the Kazakh bourgeoisie and imperial authorities. The re-writing of songs composed by Sartai and Narymbet, which were collected through ethnographic research by the Kazakh branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and the outpouring of new songs by the trusted “traditional” cadre of writers and singers such as Omar Shipin, Dzhabul Dzhabaev, Kenen Azerbaev, and Kuder Joldybauly merged feudal *bais, bis, manaps, qojas, mullahs, aqsaqals* into “a single exploitative class that transcended” ethnic differences.<sup>92</sup> The hunt for class enemies in the historiography of the uprising of 1916 was paralleled by the purges of Kazakh elites, particularly the former Alash activists, which was reflected in the new publications on the uprising.

In the context of class stratification, the class uprising could only be led by class heroes.<sup>93</sup> As someone who fought on the Bolshevik side and was killed by the Alash activists, Amangeldy Imanov could serve as a perfect embodiment of the class hero who remained distinctly Kazakh. His growing importance in the historiography of the 1930s was underscored by the ideological campaign against the Alash Orda, which came to represent the bourgeois enemy. Thus, in 1935, S. Brainin and SH. Shafiro published a historical study, *Essays on the history of Alash Orda*, which aimed to “expose the class essence” of the Alash Orda movement:

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<sup>90</sup> Chokobaeva, 166; Tillett, *The Great Friendship*, 6; Tillett, 9.

<sup>91</sup> Chokobaeva, “Frontiers of Violence: State and Conflict in Semirechye, 1850-1938,” 166.

<sup>92</sup> Ross, “Domesticating 1916,” 329, 334–37.

<sup>93</sup> Chokobaeva, “Frontiers of Violence: State and Conflict in Semirechye, 1850-1938,” 166.

“Regarding the uprising of 1916, there can be no two opinions about the fact that the Alash intelligentsia and its leaders not only did not play a revolutionary role, but, on the contrary, acted as executioners, sowed defeatist slogans, disorganized the front of the uprising, and served as a support for the tsarist autocracy.

...The Alash Orda movement does not represent the interests of the petty national bourgeoisie, but the interests of the *bais* as a class with typical feudalist features.”<sup>94</sup>

According to S. Brainin and SH. Shafiro, the *Essays on the history of Alash Orda* was a contribution to the process of subjecting “the literature and materials collected and tendentiously processed by bourgeois economists” to “Marxist revision”.<sup>95</sup> The task of the book was to “expose the past” of a “counter-revolutionary chauvinist group” and establish a “correct understanding of the role of the Alash intelligentsia” to “arm the masses” and “put an end to the fragments of the *bais*’ structure (*baistva*) quickly and without much sacrifice.”<sup>96</sup>

S. Brainin and SH. Shafiro wrote in the introduction that “[Soviets] still have not overcome in Kazakhstan the backlog on the front of historical science.”<sup>97</sup> *Essays on the history of Alash Orda* was a part of the Soviet revisionist machine at work, which targeted the pre-revolutionary history of Kazakhstan, and focused on incorporating the 1916 uprising into a broader narrative of October Revolution:

“The national revolutionary movement of the Kazakh masses developed directly in the closest connection with the all-Russian revolutionary movement,

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<sup>94</sup> S Brainin and SH Shafiro, *Ocherki Po Istorii Alash Ordy*, ed. N Vanag (Alma-Ata, Moscow: Kazakhstanskoye Krayevoye izdatel'stvo, 1935), 7.

<sup>95</sup> Brainin and Shafiro, 5–10.

<sup>96</sup> Brainin and Shafiro, 10.

<sup>97</sup> Brainin and Shafiro, 9.

experienced the force of the influence of 1905, grew, and strengthened in the environment of the labor movement led by the Bolshevik Party. The fact that in Kazakhstan there were small groups of workers, insignificant and weak organizations of our Party, does not at all mean that the influence of our Party and the influence of the entire revolutionary movement did not penetrate the steppe. Through a whole series of channels that are yet to be explored by us [authors of the essay], [the Party's] influence penetrated and revolutionized the masses."<sup>98</sup>

In the revised narrative of 1916, Amangeldy Imanov represented a capacious figure capable of reconciling national and class identities. The following section focuses on the accentuation of class identity during the hero making process of Amangeldy Imanov in the 1930s.

Selective forgetting of Imanov's personal history was instrumental in projecting an image of a class hero. The corpus of songs about the revolt and Amangeldy Imanov written between 1934 and 1938 emphasized the poverty of Imanov's parents but omitted any mentions of his education in a *madrassa*, highlighted the kinship with Iman *Batyr* (1780–1847), Amangeldy's grandfather, who was a participant in Kenesary Kasymov's revolt, but ignored the dual leadership of *khan* Abdigapar Zhanbosynov and Amangeldy Imanov in the uprising.<sup>99</sup>

The songs characterized Imanov in general terms such as a "just man, skillful leader, and a son of the people"<sup>100</sup>. The portrayal of Amangeldy in general terms such as fearless leader, people's *batyr* could be found in the recollections about Amangeldy Imanov produced by those who either served under his command during the 1916 uprising in Turgay or came across

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<sup>98</sup> Brainin and Shafiro, 9.

<sup>99</sup> Hallez and Ohayon, "Making Political Rebellion 'Primitive,'" 336.

<sup>100</sup> Morrison, Drieu, and Chokobaeva, *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916*, 335.

Amangeldy in their lifetimes. On May 18 of 1931 the Secretariat of the regional party cell ordered to establish an Institute of Political Research of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan<sup>101</sup>, whose function was to study the history of the Party, collect, preserve, publish documents of the republican party bodies, provide translations of the classics of Marxism-Leninism into Kazakh language.<sup>102</sup> The institute recorded memories of participants of the Revolution, Civil and Patriotic Wars, Socialist Construction, and Heroes of Socialist Labor.<sup>103</sup>

In *Telling October*, Frederick C. Corney argues that the Soviet regime relied on the collection of personal reminiscences when shaping the foundational story of the October Revolution.<sup>104</sup> The members of the Commission on the History of the October Revolution and the Russian Communist Party (Istpart) believed that “personal reminiscences by the right people would add flesh to the dry bones of the past provided by the printed materials”, because of the “inherit vividness and drama of the lived revolutionary experience.”<sup>105</sup> The commission’s goal was to produce a coherent revolutionary narrative.<sup>106</sup> The theatricalized representations of the October Revolution and cinematic treatments of October in the late 1920s supplemented the

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<sup>101</sup> On April 24, 1956, the resolution of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan renamed the institute into the "Institute of Party History at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan - Kazakh Branch of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan".

<sup>102</sup> E Gribanova and A Seysenbayeva, *Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan Putevoditel'*, ed. B Dzhaparov and V Chuprov (Almaty, 2016).

<sup>103</sup> Gribanova and Seysenbayeva.

<sup>104</sup> Frederick C. Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Cornell University Press, 2004).

<sup>105</sup> Corney, 119–20.

<sup>106</sup> Corney, 119.

efforts to collect and preserve the memory of the revolution.<sup>107</sup> They also buttressed the official vision of the October Revolution.<sup>108</sup>

The personal reminiscences that I retrieved from the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan about Amangeldy Imanov, and the uprising of 1916, conform to this vision of the drama of the uprising in the Turgay Steppe in 1916 and flesh out the figure of Amangeldy Imanov as a revolutionary hero. The interviews with contemporaries of Amangeldy Imanov were collected by the Institute of Political Research of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan on the occasion of the twenty-year anniversary of the uprising of 1916. It is illuminating that most of the interviewees identify themselves as Bolsheviks, who became party members, and who participated in the revolt.

For example, N. B. Bermukhamedov states in his recollection that he served with Dzhangildin in his detachment from 1918 to 1920, retiring from the Red Army in 1922 and becoming a Party member.<sup>109</sup> He later worked as a prosecutor, a member of the Supreme Court, as Chairman of the Control Commission in the districts and Deputy of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.<sup>110</sup> He also worked in the farm bodies of the collective farm union.<sup>111</sup> At the time of the interview, Bermukhamedov was the Head of the Political Department of the Karabal'skogo M/Sovkhoz. Bermukhamedov writes that he sent his personal recollections to the Party committee at the regional committee (raikom) of the All-

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<sup>107</sup> Corney, 91; Kathleen E. Smith, "Book Review: Frederick C. Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2004; Xvi + 301 Pp.; \$59.95 Hbk; ISBN 0801442193; \$22.50 Pbk; ISBN 0801489310," *Journal of Contemporary History* 44, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 354, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220094090440020809>.

<sup>108</sup> Corney, *Telling October*, 2; Corney, 35; Smith, "Book Review," 354.

<sup>109</sup> N Bermukhamedov, "Vospominanie Bermukhamedova N. B. ob otryade Amangeldy Imanova. Turgayskaya oblast'. Na 23 listakh.," March 21, 1935, Fond 811, Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan.

<sup>110</sup> Bermukhamedov, 16.

<sup>111</sup> Bermukhamedov, 16.

Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, to be placed in the book on the History of the Civil War in Kazakhstan.<sup>112</sup> He expresses his frustration with the fact that the recollections he sent earlier about his participation in the Civil War in the detachment of comrade Dzhangildin in the territory of the Turgay region were not printed and he does not know the reason why.<sup>113</sup>

Bermukhamedov ends the recollections with a request:

“[I am] sending a copy of the photo card. A copy of the documents, I also ask you to take authentic (*podlinnyy*) information about me from Comrade Dzhangildin. I had to recall some moments; I could not find out the details because of my illiteracy. That is why I ask you to write in the conclusion the deficiency of my recollections.”<sup>114</sup>

According to Bermukhamedov, the Institute of Political Research of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan ignored the first recollection he sent, but welcomed another recollection, which focuses on Amangeldy Imanov rather than on Alibi Dzhangildin. It seems that the collectors of the reminiscences prioritized reminiscences that clearly established the animosity between Amangedly Imanov and Alash-Orda.

Bermukhamedov shows active engagement in the process of sharing his personal reminiscences with the Party authorities. The need to fulfill an order from above, and a desire to be included in the book on the History of the Civil War in Kazakhstan are factors driving him to share his recollections. He signs his recollection as a “Red partisan (guerrilla)

Bermukhamedov.”<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Bermukhamedov, 20.

<sup>113</sup> Bermukhamedov, 16.

<sup>114</sup> Bermukhamedov, 18.

<sup>115</sup> Bermukhamedov, 18.

However, Bermukhamedov does not describe Amangeldy as a leader with an inborn talent or people's *batyr*, instead Amangeldy is portrayed as a supporter of "the Reds":

"... Comrade Imanov always told us about the Reds and informed us that Comrade Dzhangildin is a military commissar of the Reds somewhere, and must come to Turgay to establish Soviet authority in Turgay. ...

... Imanov in April 1918 participated in the first congress of Soviets in Orenburg, after arriving from Orenburg, Comrade Imanov clearly understood how to organize the Red partisan detachment and explained to us about discipline, that he would mercilessly fight with persons violating discipline. ...

... After the establishment of Soviet power in Turgay, Comrade Dzhangildin appointed Comrade Imanov as military commissar. In April 1919 Alash-Ordinian detachment defeated Comrade Dzhangildin's detachment, caught Comrade Imanov and brutally killed him".<sup>116</sup>

Bermukhamedov claims that Alash Orda members murdered Amangeldy Imanov:

"The participants in the murder of Imanov were Mirzhakyp Dulatov, Toktabaev Karim, Makatov and Kulzhanov Sheihi, as evidenced by the letter Imanov left to Comrade Dzhangildin, found by me and Koidasov Hanafia in spring 1920 under the ground in the prison cell where Imanov was sitting. This letter says that at 1 a.m. "they came to take me away and mocked me, "You're a Bolshevik, you won't live anymore, etc.". And I responded by saying: "If you kill me, there will still be our Red fighters, who can destroy even more of you, bloodsuckers."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Bermukhamedov, 17.

<sup>117</sup> Bermukhamedov, 22.

One of the agendas in the construction of a Soviet narrative about Amangeldy Imanov was to prove that Alash Orda killed Amangeldy Imanov. Rustem Abdulgafar and Sabida Sarbasova's recollections recorded in 1936 have a clear agenda – to prove that Abdulgafar Dzhanbusynov (Abdigapar Zhanbosynov) did not participate in the murder of Amangeldy Imanov.<sup>118</sup> The former member of the Turgay Oblast Executive Committee wrote 50 pages on how Amangeldy Imanov's brother Bektpbergen and *bai* Balyk Kochumbek shifted the blame for murder of Amangeldy Imanov on Abdulgafar:

“...Abdulgafar was not an opponent of Soviet power and was not a terrorist against Comrade Dzhangildin's detachment, moreover, he was not a participant in the murder of Amangeldy.

Despite all these facts, there will be people from the population of Turgay, Batkary and other districts who will claim that Abdulgafar is a participant in the murder of Imanov. These are earlier opponents of Abdulgafar and Amangeldy, who incited enmity between the two, and [who claim that] Abdulgafar is not a supporter of Soviet power.”<sup>119</sup>

The idea that Amangeldy Imanov was the sole leader of the uprising of 1916 in Turgay was growing in the 1930s. The former member of the Turgay Soviet of Deputies, H. Baydavletov referred to Amangeldy Imanov as *vozhd'* (leader/chief) and described as “the leader of the masses who set an example with his courage and fearlessness by participating in the battles.”<sup>120</sup> In his recollections, Amangeldy is described as a supporter of the Soviet power, who participated

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<sup>118</sup> Rustem Abdulgafarov and Sabida Sarbasova, “Vospominanie Abdulgafara Rustema i Sarbasova Sabida o Vosstanii Kazakhov v 1916 Godu i Oktyabr'skoi Revolyutsii v Turgayskoy Oblasti i Ob Ubiystve Amangel'dy Imanova. Napisano 29/X 1936 Goda Na 50 Listakh.,” October 29, 1936, Fond 811, Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan.

<sup>119</sup> Abdulgafarov and Sarbasova, 26. Abdulgafarov and Sarbasova, 24.

<sup>120</sup> KH Baydavletov, “Vospominaniye Baydavletova KH. ob otryade Amangel'dy Imanova. Turgay. Na 14 listakh Kustanayskaya oblast,” October 21, 1935, 1, Fond 811, Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan.



in a polemic with one of the leaders of the Kazakh nationalist Alash Orda government, Mirzhakyp Dulatov, in 1917, and who became a member of the Turgay Soviet of Deputies in 1918. Baydavletov's recollection begins with the portrayal of the resistance against the conscription into labor battalions as a class struggle:

“...the poor and the oppressed clans [rebelled], against the mobilization, while the governors and *bais* stood for the mobilization, they did not see any harm in this for themselves, but, on the contrary, the benefit and even greater enslavement of the main masses.”<sup>121</sup>

Baydavletov emphasizes that it was the masses who “gave Imanov the title *batyr* (brave man) [and] *mergen* (sniper).”<sup>122</sup> He wrote:

“...I didn't know Imanov that closely, but the masses gave such a description of him: an exceptionally direct (*pryamoi*) individual, an excellent speaker, and a nugget sniper.”<sup>123</sup>

Baydavletov identifies Khan Ospan's betrayal as the cause of Imanov's failed siege of the city of Turgay in the autumn of 1916. In other battles mentioned by Baydavletov, Imanov is portrayed as the sole leader of the rebels. Baydavletov dedicates the rest of his recollections to the struggle of Amangeldy Imanov against the Alash Orda members and *bais*:

“In 1917, on the eve of the October Revolution, being at some kind of a rally, according to the stories of the participants of this rally, [Imanov] enters into a debate with one of the leaders of the Alash Orda, the counter-revolutionary Dulatov, and wins. Being an elected member of the Soviet of Deputies council in

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<sup>121</sup> Baydavletov, 1.

<sup>122</sup> Baydavletov, 1.

<sup>123</sup> Baydavletov, 1.

the autumn of 1918, where Amangeldy Imanov was also elected a member...comrade Zhangeldin led this council, I got to know [Imanov] better. He was a comrade of exceptional strength and energy, an excellent orator and truly a batyr. Alash-Orda members feared him like fire”.<sup>124</sup>

The story of how Baydavletov convinced Imanov’s brother, Bektebergen to leave the detachment organized by Kaydaul'skiye (Kaidaul) *bais* and Alash Orda to fight for “Imanov and the Soviet regime” concludes the recollection:

“I talked with Amangeldy and he said that Kaydaul'skiye *bais* want to use [Amangeldy’s] brother not against me, but against the Soviet regime, you must prove this to my brother, if the [Bektebergen] leaves them, then everything [their detachment] will fall apart. I managed to persuade and prove to Bektebergen the incorrectness of his opinion and his behavior, he left them, their detachment broke up. While I was on this command trip, the Alash-Ordinians in Turgay ... sent Baytursynov to Moscow, made a counter-revolutionary coup and killed Amangeldy Imanov, but the work begun by Amangeldy will remain in Soviet memory.”<sup>125</sup>

In the recollections Baydavletov frames the resistance to mobilization as a class struggle, which in Turgay region was led and organized single-handedly by Amangeldy Imanov, portrays *bais* as oppressors and *khans* as traitors, refers to Alash Orda members as counter-revolutionaries and accuses them of killing Imanov. Baydavletov focuses on describing qualities that made Amangeldy a leader and a fighter rather than on any of the details of Imanov’s past. According to Baydavletov, Imanov achieved the respect, glory, and fame among the masses of the steppe by

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<sup>124</sup> Baydavletov, 2.

<sup>125</sup> Baydavletov, 3.

“setting an example with his courage and fearlessness” during the battles with the “Cossack detachments from the front.”<sup>126</sup> Imanov was a people’s hero, from the people, who was given the title of *batyr* by the people. The people were Kazakh proletariat masses. Imanov was a class hero, because he fought against the oppressing class led by *bais*, *khans*, representatives of the Tsarist regime, and the Alash Orda.

The accentuation of class identity of Amangeldy Imanov was another factor that the authors of the reminiscences focused on. The recollections of Sultan Bektasov focus on Amangeldy’s life before the uprising. Amangeldy’s father, Uderbai, was a “very poor and humble person,” one of Amangeldy’s brother, Bektpbergen, was a blacksmith, while Amangeldy was a sheep herder until he turned 16 and became a hunter.<sup>127</sup> Bektasov portrayed Amangeldy as the defender of the poor from the exploitative rich class:

“The characteristic features of Amangeldy: truthful, justful and honorable (*pravdiv, spravedliv i blagoroden*). If any of the strong and *bais* offend the poor or the weak, Amangeldy would immediately intercede, even if the offender was his relative, he was ready to kill him. [Amangeldy’s] authority grew during the first 10 years, first among these 20-30 yurts (*kibitok*) of the poor, and then gradually all the poor of the Kaidaul *volost*’ recognized Amangeldy as their justful protector. Amangeldy was merciless with offenders. For example, all his life he was an enemy with his cousin, the son of his stepfather Bylak – Kushembek, who, in alliance with Rahmet, oppressed the poor. There was a case

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<sup>126</sup> Baydavletov, 1.

<sup>127</sup> Sultan Bektasov, “Vospominanie o vosstanii kazakhov v 1916 godu Bektasova Sultana,” 1936, 95, Fond 811, Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan.

when Amangeldy caught Kushembek, tied him up and wanted to kill him, for his mockery of the weak.”<sup>128</sup>

The collection of personal reminiscences contributed to the solidification of a story that Amangeldy Imanov was brutally, violently, and mercilessly killed by the Alash Orda members. In another recollection that was recorded in 1936, Bayseitov Seydakhmet and Aysy Nurmanova dedicate several pages to describing how the Alash-Orda members betrayed, deceived, imprisoned, and killed Amangeldy Imanov. The different beliefs cause the tension between Imanov and Alash-Ordinians:

“Amangeldy put a question in front of Alash-Ordinians that they refused to obey:

“After all, you have come under my command, so serve to protect the Soviet power, you must obey the order of the Bolsheviks without question”.

Mirzhakyp and his men declared: “Right, we are Bolsheviks, but we will protect only the Turgay district and the Kazakh people, and we will not let our unit to fight with some other Bolsheviks.

Then Amangeldy said: “If you do not give your detachment to help the Bolsheviks, my troops and I will go to Chelkar to help the Bolsheviks.”<sup>129</sup>

The recollections above resemble the autobiographies that individuals had to produce when being considered for membership in the Party. Other than that, the recollections establish a chronological sequence of events. For example, an excerpt from the memories of Rustem Abdulgafar and Sabida Sarbasova reveals not only a strict sequence of historical events, but also a hierarchy – with the uprising of 1916 being the uprising of the Kazakh masses, which

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<sup>128</sup> Bektasov, 95.

<sup>129</sup> Saydakhmet Bayseitov and Aysy Nurmanov, “Iz vospominaniy Bayseitova Saydakhmeta i Aysy Nurmanova,” 1936, 97–98, Fond 811, Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan.

transforms into the October Revolution across the Russian Empire, and which eventually culminates in the establishment of the Soviet power:

“That mass of the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) population that participated in the uprising of 1916 also took part in the October coup to establish the Soviet power on the ground, and the other part of the population and the exploiters who protested the uprising found themselves during the civil war on the side of the Alash Orda and the white gang (*beloy bandy*). Most of the national Kyrgyz (Kazakh) intelligentsia helped the officials of the tsarist system during the uprising of 1916, and during the civil war they organized the national government of Alash-Orda, which had close ties with the Provisional Government.”<sup>130</sup>

Overall, Bermukhamedov focused on describing Amangeldy Imanov as the supporter of the Soviet power, Sultan Bektasov focused on describing Amangeldy as the ‘Robin Hood’ for the Kazakh poor, Baydavletov focused on framing the uprising as a class struggle, for Rustem Abdulgafar and Sabida Sarbasova it was of utmost importance to prove that Amangeldy Imanov was killed by non-other than Alash Orda, while Bayseitov Seydakhmet and Aysy Nurmanova focused on describing in detail the tensions between Alash Orda members and Amangeldy Imanov. In every recollection Alash Orda are mentioned as enemies of the Soviet power. It is clear from these recollections that the construction of the image of Amangeldy Imanov as a Bolshevik was a gradual process in the 1930s. Each recollection adds a piece to the image of ‘a properly proletarian biography’ of Amangeldy. The narrative that Amangeldy Imanov was killed by the members of the Alash-Orda grew more detailed with each recollection. The portrayal of

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<sup>130</sup> Abdulgafarov and Sarbasova, “Vospominanie Abdulgafara Rustema i Sarbasova Sabida o Vosstanii Kazakhov v 1916 Godu i Oktyabr’skoi Revolyutsii v Turgayskoy Oblasti i Ob Ubiystve Amangel’dy Imanova. Napisano 29/X 1936 Goda Na 50 Listakh.,” 26.

Alash Orda as enemies of the Soviet power was an integral part of the creation of the Soviet national origin myth of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic.

The incorporation of 1916 into the framework of the October Revolution turned Amangeldy Imanov into a Bolshevik, who internalized Marxism-Leninism, or rather had a ‘natural presentiment’ of Marxism. Ross highlights that the songwriters utilized the historical figure of Alibi Dzhangildin, who aligned himself with the Bolsheviks prior to 1916, as a means of showcasing close ties between Moscow and Turgay (center and periphery), and as a way of linking Amangeldy to the Bolshevik Party.<sup>131</sup> Alibi Dzhangildin played the role of a revolutionary guide who introduced Amangeldy to the Bolshevik ideals.

Songs were not the only genre where the Bolshevizing process of Amangeldy Imanov and the uprising of 1916 took place. In the article called “Fearless commander of partisan detachments” from *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda* dated 24th October 1935, H. Baydavletov portrayed Amangeldy as “an excellent Bolshevik, a comrade of exceptional strength and energy, a real *batyr*, and, moreover, an exceptional sharpshooter.”<sup>132</sup>

According to Ross, the period 1936-1939 was rich in publications of historical studies of the uprising of 1916.<sup>133</sup> One of the first Soviet historical studies dedicated to Amangeldy Imanov was written in Kazakh language by S. Brainin and entitled *Amangeldy Imanov* in 1936.<sup>134</sup> The incorrect sentence structure (the frequent absence of verbs at the end of sentences, tautology, poor vocabulary) reveals that Kazakh was not Brainin’s first language.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Morrison, Drieu, and Chokobaeva, *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916*, 336.

<sup>132</sup> KH Baydavletov, “KH. Baydavletov (Byvshiy Chlen Turgayskogo Soveta v 1918 Godu). Gazeta Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, №246, 24 Oktyabrya 1935 g. ‘Besstrashnyy Polkovodets Partizanskikh Otryadov’.”, 1935, 13, Fond 811, Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan.

<sup>133</sup> Ross, “Domesticating 1916,” 337.

<sup>134</sup> S Brainin, *Amankeldi Īmanov* (Qazaqstan Baspasi, 1936).

<sup>135</sup> I follow the translation from Kazakh into English of the *Amankeldi Īmanov* book by S. Brainin carried out with the help of Yernar Nadyrbayev. I also follow the translation done by Danat Issa.

The book states that Amangeldy Imanov's grandfather contributed significantly to Kenesary's cause and died fighting. Amangeldy Imanov's father was a poor cattle breeder. After losing his parents Amangeldy worked for a *bai* – a relationship the author characterized as oppressive.<sup>136</sup> Brainin mentions how Amangeldy Imanov fell in love with Zlyiqa, a girl whom an old *bai* loved.<sup>137</sup> Amangeldy didn't have funds or property to pay dowry; so, he decided to steal Zlyiqa and run away with her.<sup>138</sup> However, the old *bai* managed to use his influence in the community, find and imprison Amangeldy for one and a half years.<sup>139</sup> After being released from the prison Amangeldy didn't have a dowry, stole Zlyiqa again, and run away with her anyway.<sup>140</sup> The author provides no information about what happened to Amangeldy and Zlyiqa as a pair afterwards. Through the love story, Brainin critiques the 'traditions and rules resembling medieval times that should be eliminated' first, the anti-*bai* sentiment comes second.

The book portrays Alash Orda as the “ideologists of *bais*”.<sup>141</sup> According to Brainin, Amangeldy did not trust Alash Orda members and refused to collaborate with them. After the overthrow of “the Romanov monarchy”, which “was ruinous and drank the soil and blood of Kazakh workers”, Alash Orda “did everything to push the colonial exploitation of workers” as part of the Kazakh provisional government.<sup>142</sup> The confiscation of weapons from the rebels and the decision to raise money from Kazakh tribes to compensate *bais* was part of “the Russian Imperial Bourgeois policy”<sup>143</sup> Alash Orda persuaded with their “sweet talks” one of the leaders

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<sup>136</sup> Brainin, *Amankeldi İmanov*.

<sup>137</sup> Brainin, 6–7.

<sup>138</sup> Brainin, 6–7.

<sup>139</sup> Brainin, 6–7.

<sup>140</sup> Brainin, 6–7.

<sup>141</sup> Brainin, 16.

<sup>142</sup> Brainin, 48–49.

<sup>143</sup> Brainin, 48–53.

of the uprising of 1916, Abdigapar Zhanbosynov, to “betray Kazakh workers”.<sup>144</sup> Bukeikhanov’s agenda when he became the commissar of Turgay was to imprison Imanov, so he sent punitive forces after him.<sup>145</sup> According to the author, Russian soldiers refused to follow the order, while the punitive forces of *bais* were on Bukeikhanov’s side. Dulatov called Amangeldy a “thief” and demanded his arrest.<sup>146</sup> In response, Imanov urged people to reject Alash Orda and support Bolsheviks.<sup>147</sup> Brainin cited recollections from Baidavletov on how Dulatov and Imanov had public debates during which Amangeldy appeared victorious.<sup>148</sup>

In November 1918, the Special Commissar of Turgay, Alibi Dzhangildin, and his forces forced Dulatov to retreat to Orsk, captured Turgay city, and made Imanov the *uezd* war commissar. According to Brainin, at the beginning of 1919, when Dulatov tried to persuade Imanov not to send forces to help Kolchak, Imanov replied: “We are Bolsheviks, if [Russians] lose, then we lose. If Bolsheviks win there, the whole movement will succeed. Therefore, we must support them, and I am personally taking my soldiers to the front”.<sup>149</sup> However, Alash Orda forces captured Imanov before he managed to send his soldiers to the front. Brainin ends the book with Imanov’s last words before his death: “Reds are going to win, and it will be the time for the fall [of Alash Orda]”.<sup>150</sup> Imanov did not live to see how in a couple of months the Turgay region “was cleansed of Alash Orda”:

“Only twenty years have passed since the battle/fight of the rebels against the tsarist regime, led by Amangeldy. The proletariat government was assembled

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<sup>144</sup> Brainin, 48–49.

<sup>145</sup> Brainin, 52–53.

<sup>146</sup> Brainin, 52–53.

<sup>147</sup> Brainin, 57–58.

<sup>148</sup> Brainin, 53–57.

<sup>149</sup> Brainin, 66–67.

<sup>150</sup> Brainin, 66–67.



nineteen years ago. Within that short historical period colonial Kazakhstan sank into oblivion. Instead, the Soviet Social Republic of Kazakhstan, a free, happy member of the Soviet Union that has equal rights with the other members of the union, turning into a Republic with a blossoming Socialist national economy (*hosyaistvo*) and culture. The National hero of Kazakhs, Imanov's name was closely related to these accomplishments and his fight played a distinct role. Famous Communist, hero of the people...he wrote his name in the golden book as the hero of the people with his blood and sweat."<sup>151</sup>

In the book, S. Brainin built a historical narrative that connects the events of 1916 with the February and October Revolutions through the prism of Imanov's biography: Amangeldy single-handedly leads the toiling Kazakh masses in Turgay, members of Alash-Orda and the local exploitative wealthy class are classified as counter-revolutionaries supporting the Provisional Government, Imanov refuses to join forces with Alash-Orda during the month of October, thereby showing his allegiance to Bolshevism, Dzhangildin coordinates Imanov's actions in tune with the Bolsheviks, in 1919 Alash-Orda captures Imanov and violently executes him.<sup>152</sup> The book makes a claim that the uprising in Turgay would not have had a chance of success if not for Amangeldy's intelligence in military strategy and tactics, organizational skills, natural awareness of the oppressive class stratification, and his assurance and trust in the ideals of Bolshevism.

According to Ross, Brainin creates a multilayered description of Imanov: 1) as a skillful charismatic leader of the revolt, 2) as a trustful assistant of Bolsheviks in the fight against

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<sup>151</sup> Brainin, 68–69. In the paragraphs where I discuss excerpts from the *Amankeldi İmanov* book written by S. Brainin I follow the translation from Kazakh language into English carried out with the help of Yernar Nadyrbayev. I also follow the translation done by Danat Issa.

<sup>152</sup> Ross, "Domesticating 1916," 337–38.

imperialism, 3) as a visionary who contributed, even though he died and didn't see witness, the establishment of the Soviet Social Republic of Kazakhstan.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ross, "Domesticating 1916."

## Chapter 2.

### Amangeldy Imanov as a Civil War hero.

In the previous Chapter, I have discussed the gradual transformation of Amangeldy Imanov from a local rebel into a personification of the uprising of 1916. Selective remembering and forgetting of various facts such as dual leadership between Abdigapar Zhanbosynov as a *khan* and Amangeldy Imanov as a *batyr*, the focus on the description of Amangeldy as the supporter of the Soviet power and as the sole leader (*vozhd'*) of the uprising of 1916, and the construction of a proletarian biography of Imanov were the key elements in the expanding Soviet narrative about Amangeldy Imanov. The Friendship of the Peoples policy marked the ideological shift towards the rehabilitation and elevation of the great Russian people, which resulted in the accentuation of the class identity of Amangeldy Imanov. In Chapter 2, I discuss the factor that solidified the notion that Amangeldy Imanov was a Bolshevik, which is the release of first Kazakh feature film, *Amangeldy*, produced by Lenfilm studio in 1938. I look at the historical context that surrounded the production of the film *Amangeldy*. I argue that the film was part of the process of rewriting the history of the Revolution and the Civil War encouraged and controlled by Stalin.

Stalin's involvement in the production and his subsequent support for the film *Chapaev* (1934), his initiative for the creation of "Ukrainian Chapaev" in *Shchors* (1938), which was released in 1938 after the film *Amangeldy* (1938), went parallel in time to the military purge (1936-1938) of such high-ranking figures of the Red Army as Mikhail Tukhachevskii, Andrey Bubnov, Alexander Yegorov, Iona Yakir, Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, Ieronim Uborevich, Boris Fel'dman, Robert Eideman, Avgust Kork, Vitalii Primakov, and Vitovt Putna. According

to Rollberg (2022), the party officials of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic summoned the country's leading artists with a request to create a film about "Kazakh Chapaev", Amangeldy Imanov, around that time too.<sup>154</sup> The first Kazakh feature film, *Amangeldy*, produced by Lenfilm studio, was released in 1938.<sup>155</sup>

The process of rewriting the history of the Revolution and the Civil War was an intrinsic part of Stalinism, which erased the contribution of the former front commanders of the Civil War and replaced them with the 'people's heroes' and self-made commanders, who never enrolled or finished military academy, and never commanded fronts, such as Chapaev, Bozhenko, Gorodovikov, Kotovskii, Lazo, Parkhomenko, Shchors and Imanov.<sup>156</sup> The vacuum had to be filled with 'common heroes' once the actual commanders were purged during the Great Terror. The people's hero is a selfless martyr possessing natural talent, who already, perhaps unconsciously, exhibits the qualities of an exemplary Soviet Man. That helps him overcome his peasant/nomadic backwardness and reinforces his receptiveness of the Bolshevik ideals.

The process of rewriting Civil War narratives began before the Great Purge. The new history lent legitimacy to Stalin, who lacked the credentials of his opponents. The Stalinist industrialization was the background for the power struggle and the mythologization of Chapaev, Shchors and Imanov, and the rewriting of the history of the Civil War. Chapaev, Shchors, and Imanov crowded out the important participants of the Civil War from the popular memory. Clark (1981) argues that Dmitry Furmanov's novel *Chapaev* published in 1923 became a "model work

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<sup>154</sup> P. Rollberg, *The Cinema of Soviet Kazakhstan 1925-1991: An Uneasy Legacy*, Contemporary Central Asia : Societies, Politics, and Cultures (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 17.

<sup>155</sup> Rollberg, 16.

<sup>156</sup> Evgeny Dobrenko, "Creation Myth and Myth Creation in Stalinist Cinema," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 1, no. 3 (January 1, 2007): 249, [https://doi.org/10.1386/srsc.1.3.239\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/srsc.1.3.239_1); Ivan M. Grek, "The Chapaevization of Soviet Civil War Memory, 1922-1941" (Miami University, 2015), 61, [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws\\_olink/r/1501/10?clear=10&p10\\_accession\\_num=miami1440544170](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_olink/r/1501/10?clear=10&p10_accession_num=miami1440544170).

of Soviet fiction”.<sup>157</sup> The novel focuses on the relationship between a commissar, Klychkov, an “educated, selfless working-class Party official”, and a spontaneous *buntar*’ (rebel), Chapaev, a semiliterate politically ignorant peasant leader.<sup>158</sup> Chapaev, despite being confused about the Party’s ideology and policies, speaks “from the heart”, which inspires men under his command to win.<sup>159</sup> Furmanov assigns the task of “enlightening” Chapaev about the Marxist-Leninist world view to Klychkov. For Furmanov, the evolution of Chapaev as a character lies in the promise that from an unpredictable, spontaneous hero, Chapaev will mature into a “conscious” and “reliable Party cadre”.<sup>160</sup> Clark mentions that Furmanov intended to write a “historical account of Chapaev” and make a “contribution to Party history rather than literature.”<sup>161</sup> However, the novel became a canonical work, a part of the official classics of Socialist Realism in the field of Soviet literature.<sup>162</sup> Clark argues that Furmanov’s *Chapaev* emphasizes the “spontaneity-consciousness dialectic”: a backward peasant progresses into a conscious follower of Bolshevik ideology with the help and tutelage of an already “formed” and “conscious” mentor.<sup>163</sup> Clark calls the “spontaneity-consciousness dialectic” to be the “master plot” of Socialist Realism, which was officially established during the First Writers’ Union Congress in 1934.<sup>164</sup> In other words, *Chapaev* was a prototype of a Socialist Realist novel.<sup>165</sup>

*Chapaev* marked the beginning of the infiltration of “the socialist-realist dogma in Soviet cinema”.<sup>166</sup> According to Rollberg, *Amangeldy* was a depiction of the “new norm”, which was an

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<sup>157</sup> Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Indiana University Press, 2000), 85.

<sup>158</sup> Clark, 85.

<sup>159</sup> Clark, 85.

<sup>160</sup> Clark, 85.

<sup>161</sup> Clark, 84–85.

<sup>162</sup> Jason Read Morton, “The Creation of a ‘People’s Hero’: Vasilii Ivanovich Chapaev and the Fate of Soviet Popular History” (UC Berkeley, 2017), 4, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4b0946m7>.

<sup>163</sup> Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 86–87.

<sup>164</sup> Clark, 86.

<sup>165</sup> Morton, “The Creation of a ‘People’s Hero,’” 35.

<sup>166</sup> Morton, 2.

immortalizing story about a charismatic man from lower classes with a talent for leadership and fervor to fight the ruling class, who gets killed in the process, however his cause is remembered and “triumphantly continued by others” – a martyr narrative of an ideological hero.<sup>167</sup>

*Amangeldy* was produced by Lenfilm in 1938, directed by Moisei Levin. *Amangeldy* is conventionally understood and considered to be the first Kazakh feature film.<sup>168</sup> In response to the success of *Chapaev* the film, the representatives of the Kazakh SSR requested the creation of a film which celebrated a local popular hero.<sup>169</sup>

Based on the screenplay written by Vsevolod Ivanov, Beimbet Mailin and Gabit Musrepov the film solidified the interpretation of the uprising as an Imanov-centered, Lenin-inspired, Bolshevik-led anti-colonial class struggle within the larger framework of the October Revolution.<sup>170</sup> Kozitskaya notes that in the film *Amangeldy* acts in accordance with the basic ideas of the Bolsheviks, embodies both the spirit of the people and the belief in a happy Soviet future.<sup>171</sup> The protagonist’s belief in a happy Soviet future is a Socialist Realist element in the film.

The reconstruction process of the memory about Amangeldy Imanov, the leader of the uprising of 1916 in the Turgay region, began in 1920s by Kazakh cultural elites such as Beimbet Mailin, Gabit Musrepov, and Alikhan Bukeikhanov. The Soviet narrative about Imanov reflected the changes in the Soviet nationalities policy. If in the 1920s, Imanov was portrayed by Soviet historians as a Kazakh leader fighting in an interethnic conflict against the Great Russian

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<sup>167</sup> Rollberg, *The Cinema of Soviet Kazakhstan 1925-1991*, 16–17.

<sup>168</sup> Rico Isaacs, *Film and Identity in Kazakhstan: Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture in Central Asia*, Paperback edition (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 69.

<sup>169</sup> Isaacs, 69.

<sup>170</sup> Rollberg, *The Cinema of Soviet Kazakhstan 1925-1991*, 17; Rollberg, 21.

<sup>171</sup> Yuliya Kozitskaya, “Kazakhskaya literatura kak chast’ proyekta «mnogonatsional’noy sovetskoy literatury» v 1930-ye gody,” 171.

Chauvinism and colonialism represented by the Tsarist regime, in the 1930s, under the new trajectory in the Soviet nationalities policy, “Friendship of the Peoples”, Imanov received a class identity, while the revolt was characterized as a class struggle between Kazakh toiling and poor masses and Kazakh bourgeois elements, who cooperated with the Tsarist government. When the Soviet power began building “a pantheon of semimystical patriot-heroes”, emphasizing the need for a pan-national identity (Soviet identity), Imanov became a follower of Lenin and Stalin, and a personification of the entire 1916 revolt, which was transformed into a “national liberation uprising” linked to a bigger myth of the October Revolution.<sup>172</sup>

The film *Amangeldy* (1938) consolidated the image of Imanov as a Civil War hero, in addition to being a leader of the 1916 uprising. The first forty minutes of the film are dedicated to the revolt, the rest of the film is about the struggle between Imanov and the supporters of the nationalist party (*alashordyntsy*). The film treats the uprising of 1916, the October Revolution, and the Civil War as the revolutionary continuum. Kozitskaya argues that the formation of the narrative about Civil War on the territory of Kazakh SSR was aimed to legitimize the subordination of the national republic to the center (the Soviet power).<sup>173</sup> *Amangeldy* (1938) provided Kazakh SSR with its “own national version of the Civil War”.<sup>174</sup>

Rollberg notes that the screenplay was authored by a Russian specialist on Civil War narratives, Vsevolod Ivanov, as well as Beimbet Mailin and Gabit Musrepov.<sup>175</sup> The Great Purge affected the production of the film: when Beimbet Mailin was labeled as a supporter of Alash-Orda and executed in 1938, his name was deleted from the credits, while his contribution to the

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<sup>172</sup> Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 11.

<sup>173</sup> Yuliya Kozitskaya, “Kazakhskaya literatura kak chast’ proyekta «mnogonatsional’noy sovetskoy literatury» v 1930-ye gody,” 171.

<sup>174</sup> Yuliya Kozitskaya, 171.

<sup>175</sup> Rollberg, *The Cinema of Soviet Kazakhstan 1925-1991*, 17.

screenplay was barely mentioned in any of the reviews that followed the release of the film.<sup>176</sup> The film followed the formula established by *Chapaev* (1934): a positive hero, who is guided by an ethnically Russian Bolshevik, driven by the vision of the socialist future, but whose life ends abruptly in his struggle for the Soviet cause. Kozitskaya points out that in the film, Amangeldy was portrayed as a poor man who does not know Lenin, but intuitively speaks and acts in terms of Lenin's ideals.<sup>177</sup> Rollberg notes that Imanov resembles Chapaev in that both came from poor families, have "natural talent for military strategy and tactics", and believe in the Lenin's cause.<sup>178</sup> *Amangeldy* (1938) explicitly calls Imanov a Bolshevik. The film situates Imanov as a people's commissar who fights counterrevolutionaries, which indicates the determination of the filmmakers to adapt the Socialist Realist dogma to the peculiarities of the local national hero.<sup>179</sup>

In the film, officials of the tsarist government, corrupt Kazakh elites (national bourgeoisie) and feudal elites such as *bais* constitute the oppressive class, while *auyl* dwellers and Bolshevik prisoners belong to the oppressed and exploited.<sup>180</sup> Amangeldy fearlessly speaks the mind of the people, by opposing the "requisition" of Kazakhs in front of the governor. The local elites label Amangeldy a "horse thief" and send him to prison.

Egor Ponomarev fills the role of an archetypical character, a class-conscious ideologically trained sidekick, who later acts as an emissary between Imanov and the Bolshevik Party, by replacing Alibi Dzhangildin. Egor persuades Amangeldy that Russian proletariat suffers as much as Kazakh from the yoke of imperialism. The notion that the uprising was

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<sup>176</sup> Rollberg, 21.

<sup>177</sup> Yuliya Kozitskaya, "Kazakhskaya literatura kak chast' proyekta «mnogonatsional'noy sovetskoy literatury» v 1930-ye gody," 182.

<sup>178</sup> Rollberg, *The Cinema of Soviet Kazakhstan 1925-1991*, 17.

<sup>179</sup> Rico Isaacs, *Film and Identity in Kazakhstan: Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture in Central Asia* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018). P. 70

<sup>180</sup> Rollberg, *The Cinema of Soviet Kazakhstan 1925-1991*, 23.



approved/sanctioned by Lenin is transmitted through Amangeldy's words to Egor: "When you meet the smart person Lenin, tell him that Kazakh people rose up against the Tsar"<sup>181</sup>. The untrustworthiness of Alash Orda is shown through unfair decision of the Kazakh arbitration court concerning Amangeldy's actions in the uprising. Amangeldy complains to Egor that instead of being celebrated for killing "the eagle with two heads in the Turgay region" he is labelled as "a thief, horse thief, and a scammer."<sup>182</sup> The reply that Egor gives to Amangeldy implies that Imanov does not need to seek to meet Lenin, because he has already internalized Lenin's words and ideas. Amangeldy asks: "Amangeldy became a smart man. However, Lenin didn't say what to do next in the Turgay region". Egor replies: "He [Lenin] has already told you what to do – the Soviet power is needed."<sup>183</sup> Amangeldy refers to himself in third person, which indicates at the exoticization of Amangeldy and the Kazakhs, and at the presentation of Amangeldy Imanov as a "native". In my opinion, the character's occasional speech in third person coupled with the emphasis on the importance of becoming "smart" (educated by a class-conscious ideologically trained person in understanding Lenin is an example of orientalism. Lenin is "smart" in a sense that he has a vision that must be adopted by the "natives". Someone like Egor will help the "natives" to realize the benefit of being a part of this vision, while Amangely Imanov is an example of that any "native" can become "smart". Yet Amangeldy Imanov, and people that he leads, don't have a room to disagree, change or enhance the vision, neither did they have a chance at constructing the vision in the first place. Overall, Amangeldy's actions before, during and after the uprising are inspired by Lenin and guided by Bolshevik Egor.

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<sup>181</sup> *Amangeldy*, Historical Drama (Lenfilm, 1938).

<sup>182</sup> *Amangeldy*.

<sup>183</sup> *Amangeldy*.

The production of *Amangeldy* was a prominent event in the Soviet cultural production about the revolt and Imanov because it explicitly identifies Amangeldy as a Bolshevik. In the episode, where Amangeldy gathers soldiers (*sarbazy*) from different *auyls* in preparation to fight Alash Orda's troops, one of Imanov's followers says: "He [Amangeldy] is a Bolshevik. And who are the Bolsheviks? They are smart people, brave, just individuals who fight for the people." Egor adds: "Soviets – they should be ours, without those scoundrels from Alash-Orda (*gadov Alashordintsev*)".<sup>184</sup> The film provides a capacious definition of who the Bolsheviks are: individuals marked by such qualities as bravery, class consciousness, and obedience to Lenin. Although lacking formal credentials, Amangeldy was a Bolshevik because he possessed all of the aforementioned qualities and because he wanted fellow Kazakhs to become Soviets too.<sup>185</sup>

Rollberg argues that Stalinist ideology relied on the cult of personality and "the personalistic view of history", which explains the film's heavy focus on the figure of Amangeldy Imanov (there is almost no scene without Imanov's presence).<sup>186</sup> According to Rollberg's analysis the film distances itself from "any ethnocentric or nationalist interpretation" by emphasizing the class nature of Amangeldy's uprising.<sup>187</sup> However, Isaacs points out that the national particularism is represented through local dress, mountainous landscape, custom of playing the *dombra*, singing a Kazakh song in a yurt, and traditional dance moves performed by Amangeldy's wife, Balym.<sup>188</sup> Isaacs mentions that *Amangeldy*'s utilization of national and ethnic signs of Kazakh nationhood "provided the template for the representation of Kazakh national identity in cinema" *Amangeldy* was the starting point for the imagining of the Kazakh nation on

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<sup>184</sup> *Amangeldy*.

<sup>185</sup> Rollberg, *The Cinema of Soviet Kazakhstan 1925-1991*, 19.

<sup>186</sup> Rollberg, 18.

<sup>187</sup> Rollberg, 23.

<sup>188</sup> Isaacs, *Film and Identity in Kazakhstan*, 70–71.

the silver screen and provided an example of how to represent Kazakh national identity in cinema.<sup>189</sup>

The national signs of Kazakh nationhood are portrayed through traditional dress, *yrta*, dances, musical instruments, songs, and Kazakh language at the background during the scenes depicting masses of people.<sup>190</sup> Rollberg mentions that the film was received warmly by the audience in Kazakh SSR and was “touted as a success story of the Soviet cultural policy” by the critic Rostislav Iurenev, who praised the Kazakh performers in the film as “genuine offspring of the October revolution.”<sup>191</sup> Despite the fact that the film was produced by Lenfilm studio in Leningrad, Rollberg concludes that *Amangeldy*’s status as the first Kazakh sound feature film and the perception of its “Kazakhness” “remained undisputed” until the end of the Soviet era.<sup>192</sup>

Isaacs claims that *Amangeldy* was a political film that imitated the traditions of early Soviet biopics of Bolshevik revolutionaries.<sup>193</sup> However, Rollberg states that *Amangeldy* failed to “become part of the all-Soviet socialist-realist canon”, because its “aesthetic weaknesses were openly discussed” by Soviet film critics.<sup>194</sup> In 1941, *Amangeldy* (1938) was ignored and didn’t receive Stalin Prize, while other non-Russian films were recognized.<sup>195</sup> In my opinion, the film did not become a “Soviet canon” but it succeeded in solidifying the narrative that Amangeldy Imanov was a Bolshevik. The film was created as a response to the success of *Chapaev* (1934) but didn’t intend to outshine *Chapaev* (1934). The Friendship of the Peoples policy and the process of rewriting the history of the history of the Civil War encouraged by Stalin would not

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<sup>189</sup> Isaacs, 71.

<sup>190</sup> Isaacs, 70; Yuliya Kozitskaya, “Kazakhskaya literatura kak chast’ proyekta «mnogonatsional’noy sovetskoy literatury» v 1930-ye gody,” 186.

<sup>191</sup> Rollberg, *The Cinema of Soviet Kazakhstan 1925-1991*, 21–22.

<sup>192</sup> Rollberg, 21–22.

<sup>193</sup> Isaacs, *Film and Identity in Kazakhstan*, 70.

<sup>194</sup> Rollberg, *The Cinema of Soviet Kazakhstan 1925-1991*, 24.

<sup>195</sup> Rollberg, 24.

have allowed that. The film followed the ‘master plot’ (the spontaneity-consciousness dialectic) of Socialist Realism, yet “was accepted and ultimately embraced by Kazakh audiences as theirs.”<sup>196</sup> In the evolution of the Soviet narrative about Imanov, the film represented a major development – the uprising of 1916 became synonymous with the figure of Amangeldy Imanov and vice versa, from a class hero Amangeldy turned into a Bolshevik (the two terms are not mutually exclusive but rather the ‘Bolshevik status’ was accentuated strongly in the film), Amangeldy transformed into a martyr of the revolution who was deceived, captured and killed by Alash-Orda.

I argue that the film was successful in portraying a memorable image of Amangeldy Imanov as a martyr for the Soviet cause. The occasional speaking in the third person, the focus on ethnic dress, song and dance, the abundance of an incorrectly pronounced word *batyr* are crude representations of Kazakh identity through the lens of Soviet orientalism. Egor is the representation of the elder Russian people, who guides Amangeldy Imanov, by quoting Lenin, into taking up arms against the counterrevolutionaries represented by the national bourgeoisie.

A letter from the sniper of the Leningrad Front Duysenbay Shynybekov to the people's *akyn* Dzhambul, a Soviet and Kazakh traditional folksinger, poet and storyteller, whose songs and poems were meant to “burn the hearts” of Kazakh soldiers so that they “rushed to the battlefield”. Suggests that many Kazakh soldiers watched the film.<sup>197</sup> Shynybekov remembered Amangeldy Imanov because of the film *Amangeldy* (1938). He recounted the film's concluding scene:

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<sup>196</sup> Rollberg, 24.

<sup>197</sup> Duysenbay Shynybekov, “Pis'mo snaypera Leningradskogo fronta D. Shynybekova narodnomu akynu Dzhambulu. 21 noyabrya 1941 g.,” 1941, <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/274244#mode/inspect/page/2/zoom/4>.

“I remember the glorious Kazakh freedom fighter Amangeldy. When the hero's chest was shot and his arm was hanging, his wife raised that bloody hand,

Amangeldy held his rifle and aimed at the enemy's heart...

A shot rang out, Amangeldy's bullet pierced the enemy's rotten heart. I killed 170 of the meanest of the meanest, killed 170 Germans and never missed a shot.”<sup>198</sup>

The film *Amangeldy* (1938) solidified the image of Amangeldy as a Kazakh freedom fighter, Bolshevik, a Civil War hero, and as a fearless martyr.

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<sup>198</sup> Shynybekov, 159.

## Chapter 3.

### Amangeldy Imanov as the example of heroism and the bearer of “fighting traditions” of Kazakhs.

In the previous two Chapters, I have discussed the two phases of the development of the Soviet narrative about Amangeldy Imanov and the impact of the changes in the Soviet nationalities policy. The first stage unfolded in the 1920s, during the policy of *korenizatsiia*. Amangeldy Imanov was presented to be “of the people”, “people’s *batyr*”. The accentuation of class identity, and the construction of a proletariat biography of Amangeldy Imanov, culminated in a socialist realist film *Amangeldy* (1938), where Amangeldy Imanov was explicitly portrayed by the Soviet power as Bolshevik. The transformation of Amangeldy Imanov into a personification of the 1916, and a Civil War hero, marked the second stage that unfolded in the 1930s, during the ideological shift towards the rehabilitation and elevation of the role of Russians and Russo-centric traditions through the Friendship of the Peoples policy.

In the third Chapter, I look at the period of the Great Patriotic War. Specifically, how the image of Amangeldy Imanov was instrumentalized by the Soviet propaganda, and how Kazakh soldiers responded to the narrative about Amangeldy Imanov published in the front-line newspapers. First, I provide a background about the appearance of an ethnic-specific propaganda rooted in the Kazakh national history.

The ideological shift from ‘Soviet internationalism’ towards the national hierarchy, where Russians have the “status of a leading nation in the Soviet family of nations” influenced

the formation of ethnic and national hierarchies inside the military.<sup>199</sup> According to Carmack, military mobilization involved discriminatory conscription policies based on nationality.<sup>200</sup> Rakowska-Harmstone indicates that the structure and operation of military service in the Soviet Union was based on models developed by the Imperial Russian Army, where Central Asians peoples were considered untrustworthy to bear arms due to “cultural backwardness” and “cowardly nature.”<sup>201</sup> The prejudice remained and evolved into institutional distrust as military commanders believed that the assimilation of soldiers with a “European cultural background” into the Russian-dominated linguistic and cultural environment of the Red Army was easier and faster than that of soldiers with Muslim background and non-European cultural attributes.<sup>202</sup>

In 1941, the People's Commissariat for Defense (NKO) followed Stalin's command to form national units in the Red Army.<sup>203</sup> Carmack argues that NKO succeed in raising national units that were mostly Kazakh in composition.<sup>204</sup> However, the Kazakh national brigades were not combat effective and suffered high number of casualties due supply shortages, and lack of representation in Moscow.<sup>205</sup> The Kazakh national brigades were caught in a vicious loop, where the distrust by the Soviet authorities restricted the brigades' access to army supply points, which caused poor performance on the battlefield, which in turn perpetuated the belief about the unreliability of the non-Russian soldiers.<sup>206</sup> Carmack notes that NKO officials and military officers ranked Central Asians above diaspora groups but lower than Slavs and soldiers with a

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<sup>199</sup> Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, “Nationalities and the Soviet Military,” in *The Nationalities Factor In Soviet Politics And Society* (Routledge, 1990), 4.

<sup>200</sup> Roberto J. Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II: Mobilization and Ethnicity in the Soviet Empire* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2019), <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/266/monograph/book/69489>.

<sup>201</sup> Rakowska-Harmstone, “Nationalities and the Soviet Military,” 1.

<sup>202</sup> Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 13; Carmack, 37.

<sup>203</sup> Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 26.

<sup>204</sup> Carmack, 27.

<sup>205</sup> Carmack, 27; Carmack, 29.

<sup>206</sup> Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 27; Carmack, 30.

“European cultural background.”<sup>207</sup> Soviet conscription policies managed by NKO reflected the Red Army’s short-term manpower needs instead of the long-term goal of integrating non-Russians into Soviet society.<sup>208</sup>

According to Carmack and Rakowska-Harmstone, in Stalin’s Soviet Union, military service was a marker of political loyalty, and seen by the Soviet authorities as a “Sovietization” platform, where peoples of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds had a chance to be molded into model Soviet soldiers, ‘new Soviet men.’<sup>209</sup> After 1941, to forestall a military collapse, NKO began to send Central Asians to the front, allowing them to join frontline units.<sup>210</sup> Carmack concludes that the service at the Red Army solidified “Kazakh membership in the Soviet multinational community”. However, the membership also implied “subordination to the Russian elder brother.”<sup>211</sup>

The Communist Party launched a patriotic propaganda campaign during the Great Patriotic War to mobilize people behind the front lines and increase their fighting spirit.<sup>212</sup> The need of the Main Political Administration of the Red Army (PURKKA) for a heroic narrative rooted in the Kazakh national history appeared in 1941 when Kazakh soldiers arrived to defend Moscow.<sup>213</sup> PURKKA republished in different front-line Kazakh newspapers an article printed in *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda* in September of 1941 dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the 1916 uprising to appeal to Kazakh soldiers.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 22; Carmack, 38; Carmack, 39.

<sup>208</sup> Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 38–39.

<sup>209</sup> Carmack, 17; Rakowska-Harmstone, “Nationalities and the Soviet Military,” 1.

<sup>210</sup> Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 22.

<sup>211</sup> Carmack, 13.

<sup>212</sup> Roberto J. Carmack, “History and Hero-Making: Patriotic Narratives and the Sovietization of Kazakh Front-Line Propaganda, 1941–1945,” *Central Asian Survey* 33, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2014.883808>.

<sup>213</sup> Carmack, 101.

<sup>214</sup> Carmack, 101.



“The Kazakh people – active participants of the Great Patriotic War” is an article that was written by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, Zhumabay Shayakhmetov, in 1941 for the newspaper *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* the occasion, as the article claimed, of the “25th anniversary of the national liberation uprising of the Kazakhs in 1916.”<sup>215</sup>

Shayakhmetov draws on themes from the Kazakh national history such as the Syrym Datov’s uprising and the revolt of 1916, appealing to the reader’s sense of Kazakh national identity. The author followed what Ross calls “the Soviet master narrative of Kazakh 1916” created in the mid- and late 1930s.”<sup>216</sup> In the master narrative Amangeldy Imanov is an idealized proletariat leader of a “national-liberation movement”, inextricably linked to the October Revolution. Shayakhmetov presents the October Revolution as a key event in the formation of the national identity of the Kazakh people. In other words, the Kazakh people achieved the long-awaited “freedom and independence” from the yoke of “class oppression” thanks to the “help of the Russian proletariat” and “the leadership of the Bolshevik Party.”<sup>217</sup> The underlying argument of the article is that the Kazakh people are indebted to Russians, Bolsheviks, and the Communist Party for the opportunity to have “their own socialist fatherland.”<sup>218</sup> The argument implies that in the context of World War II the way Kazakhs can repay this debt is by fighting at the forefront of the Red Army.

In the article, Shayakhmetov describes the uprising of 1916 as a class struggle and labels the uprising as a national-liberation movement. The author avoids the phrase “anti-colonial

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<sup>215</sup> Zhumabay Shayakhmetov, “Kazakhskiy narod – aktivnyy uchastnik velikoy otechestvennoy voyny,” *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, September 14, 1941, №217 (4199) edition, 3, Fond redkikh knig i rukopisey, Natsional’naya Biblioteka Respubliki Kazakhstan.

<sup>216</sup> Ross, “Domesticating 1916,” 333.

<sup>217</sup> Shayakhmetov, “Kazakhskiy narod – aktivnyy uchastnik velikoy otechestvennoy voyny,” 3.

<sup>218</sup> Shayakhmetov, 3.

rebellion” and disregards the view that hostilities in 1916 occurred along ethnic lines, which was popular among Soviet historians until the early 1930s.

The glorification of Russians during the WWII by the Communist Party did not halt the creation of a parallel narrative, which emphasized the non-Russian histories to appeal to and mobilize people of different nationalities.<sup>219</sup> During the war, the PURKKA conducted propaganda and agitation work among troops of different nationalities to inspire “stalwart service at the front.”<sup>220</sup> Carmack argues that at the beginning of WWII PURKKA produced “historically based propaganda”, which relied on “popular cultural material.”<sup>221</sup> In the article, Shayakhmetov refers to Syrym Datov, Beket, Kenesary, Nauryzbay, Isatai, Makhambet, Amangeldy Imanov as *batyrs* to appeal to the reader’s sense of Kazakh national history and culture.<sup>222</sup> It is safe to say that the rehabilitation of the Kazakh figures such as Kenesary Kasymov who fought for the reestablishment of the Kazakh Khanate went hand in hand with the rehabilitation of the figures from the Russian history. The recycling of history was not something that applied only to the Kazakh SSR but was an all-Union undertaking to energize people to stand against the foreign invader.

The source of inspirational propaganda during the early years of World War II was the pantheon of national heroes, according to Brandenberger, Carmack and Ross. Shayakhmetov does not mention a single non-Kazakh historical figure, hero, or soldier. The author singles out two Kazakh soldiers, the sniper Balykbek Akhmetov and the machine-gunner Kongurbayev, equating their “courage and bravery” with Amangeldy Imanov’s “fearlessness”.<sup>223</sup> The article

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<sup>219</sup> Carmack, “History and Hero-Making,” 101.

<sup>220</sup> Carmack, 95.

<sup>221</sup> Carmack, 102; Ross, “Domesticating 1916,” 333.

<sup>222</sup> Shayakhmetov, “Kazakhskiy narod – aktivnyy uchastnik velikoy otechestvennoy voyny,” 3.

<sup>223</sup> Shayakhmetov, “Kazakhskiy narod – aktivnyy uchastnik velikoy otechestvennoy voyny.”

provides an opportunity for the reader to identify with Imanov. Shayakhmetov tries to persuade the reader that sacrificing oneself in the name of the fatherland and freedom is a fighting tradition passed down by such national heroes as Syrym Datov, Beket, Kenesary, Nauryzbay, Isatai, Makhambet, and Amangeldy Imanov.

The article represents a period when the Communist Party appealed to the non-Russian history in efforts to mobilize the people of different Soviet nations. Shayakhmetov incorporates the 1916 uprising in the broader revolutionary narrative and singles out Imanov to create a sense of belonging, to inspire and motivate Kazakh population to contribute to the war efforts.

Historians highlight that in 1942 the Party officials and PURKKA noticed that the Russo-centric representation of the Soviet Union through printed propaganda and oral agitation in the Red Army did not resonate with the non-Slavic troops and was ineffective either in promoting patriotism among the non-Russians, or patriotic unity between Russians and non-Russians.<sup>224</sup> According to Schechter, in summer of 1942, PURKKA received reports about desertion of “non-Russians”, who were unwilling to subordinate to the “Russian” officers and comrades, and about heavy losses among soldiers that did not speak Russian, due to an insufficient military training and poor conditions in the army.<sup>225</sup> Schechter notes that many Central Asians did not understand that self-inflicted wounds were a capital offense.<sup>226</sup> In June 1942, Aleksandr Shcherbakov replaced Lev Mekhlis and became the head of PURRKA.<sup>227</sup> Under Shcherbakov, PURKKA mobilized Central Asian political and cultural apparatuses to localize Soviet propaganda

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<sup>224</sup> Boram Shin, “Red Army Propaganda for Uzbek Soldiers and Localised Soviet Internationalism during World War II,” *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 42, no. 1 (April 13, 2015): 41, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18763324-04201003>; Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 41–42.

<sup>225</sup> Brandon Schechter, “Indigenizing The Great Patriotic War Among Non-Russians,” *Ab Imperio* 2012, no. 3 (2012): 111.

<sup>226</sup> Schechter, 111.

<sup>227</sup> Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 41.

campaign.<sup>228</sup> Frontline agitators were ordered to instruct non-Slavic soldiers in their native languages to appeal to Central Asians.<sup>229</sup> Carmack draws a parallel between the *korenizatsiya* campaign and PURKKA's efforts to indigenize the rhetoric of Soviet friendship, with the Russians as "first among equals" and Central Asians indebted to Russians and Russia for the October Revolution and for paving the road to socialism.<sup>230</sup> Carmack argues that *korenizatsiya* in Kazakh SSR was supposed to portray Soviet power with a "Kazakh face."<sup>231</sup> In the same way, PURKKA aimed to portray the Red Army as an "institutional and ideological space where Kazakh soldiers could cultivate a complementary Soviet-Kazakh identity."<sup>232</sup>

In the "Electronic Library of Historical Documents" database I have found a document dated November 1941, which is a description of the heroic feat and death of Amangeldy Imanov's son Ramazan Amangeldiev:

"[He] fought heroically, the son of the legendary *batyr* of the Kazakh people, the leader of the revolt of the Kazakh poor in 1916 against the Tsarist government, Amangeldy Imanov – Ramazan Amangeldiev.

Private Amangeldiev, an automatic rifleman, found himself alone in an encirclement of a group of German soldiers, and took an unequal fight."<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Shin, "Red Army Propaganda for Uzbek Soldiers and Localised Soviet Internationalism during World War II," 41.

<sup>229</sup> Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 42; Shin, "Red Army Propaganda for Uzbek Soldiers and Localised Soviet Internationalism during World War II," 41.

<sup>230</sup> Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 42; Shin, "Red Army Propaganda for Uzbek Soldiers and Localised Soviet Internationalism during World War II," 43.

<sup>231</sup> Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 42.

<sup>232</sup> Carmack, 42.

<sup>233</sup> "Opisaniye geroyskogo podviga i gibeli syna Amangel'dy Imanova Ramazana Amangel'diyeva. Konets oktyabrya — seredina noyabrya 1941 g.," 146.

The document highlights that heroism is inherited, passed by blood. However, the persistence in the face of the enemy, the heroic sacrifice is a Soviet quality:

“Enraged by the persistence of the Soviet machine gunner, the Nazis threw a grenade at him [Ramazan Amangeldiev].”<sup>234</sup>

The balance of two identities, being Kazakh and being Soviet, was an idea that the image of Amangeldy Imanov had to convey. Internalization and embrace of this dual identity was part of a Kazakh soldier’s journey.

The media through which PURKKA operated were printed propaganda and oral agitation.<sup>235</sup> According to Carmack, from November 1942 to May 1945 PURKKA oversaw several Kazakh-language newspapers and frontline journals, while the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party sent literary works, historical literature written in Kazakh, and a tenth of the circulation of the newspapers *Sotsialistik Qazaqstan* and *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda* to frontline units.<sup>236</sup> PURKKA recruited political workers who spoke Central Asian languages as a way to fulfill Shcherbakov’s order, which asked political propagandists to pay particular attention to “native languages, customs and structure of national life of non-Russian troops.”<sup>237</sup> According to Eden, and Shin, the idealization of national history, and instrumentalization of the Muslim faith for military purposes were tolerated during the war.<sup>238</sup> Schechter argues that *Nakaz Naroda*, “The People’s Instructions”, a series of addresses published in *Pravda* newspaper to

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<sup>234</sup> “Opisaniye geroyskogo podviga i gibeli syna Amangel’dy Imanova Ramazana Amangel’diyeva. Konets oktyabrya — seredina noyabrya 1941 g.,” 146.

<sup>235</sup> Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, 41.

<sup>236</sup> Carmack, 42.

<sup>237</sup> Carmack, 43–44.

<sup>238</sup> Shin, “Red Army Propaganda for Uzbek Soldiers and Localised Soviet Internationalism during World War II,” 55; Jeff Eden, “A Soviet Jihad against Hitler: Ishan Babakhan Calls Central Asian Muslims to War,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59, no. 1–2 (February 11, 2016): 241, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685209-12341398>.

non-Russian soldiers from their home republics signed by “toilers” in the rear, was an example of ethnic-specific propaganda, which embodied the “national in form, socialist in content” paradigm.<sup>239</sup>

According to Schechter, the letters were written collectively, with the help of a political officer.<sup>240</sup> The letters were printed in Russian and native languages, and included folk aphorisms, quotations from national poets, references to national epic poems (*narodniy epos*) or legendary heroes, appeals to an epic past and military traditions.<sup>241</sup> Schechter mentions that Kazakh *Nakazy* emphasized the importance of national pride, highlighted the importance of showing bravery on the battlefield, and loyalty to the motherland.<sup>242</sup> Schechter argues that the “national folk-epic idiom” was a way to include the experiences of soldiers in “the ancient traditions of their people” and make them feel that their sacrifices and accomplishments were appreciated and praised at home.<sup>243</sup>

The author notes that *Nakazy* were a success and prompted non-Russian soldiers to reply with letters addressed to the “toilers” in the rear.<sup>244</sup> The responses enacted the language of *Nakazy* and used the same Soviet idioms, ideologically correct metaphors, references to epic history etc. Schechter notes that the exchange between the front and the rear via *Nakazy* continued and maintained the stylized form of the content, which indicated at the “ritualized nature” of this form of communication.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Schechter, “&quot;The People&#39;s Instructions&quot;,” 116.

<sup>240</sup> Schechter, 127.

<sup>241</sup> Schechter, 118.

<sup>242</sup> Schechter, 118.

<sup>243</sup> Schechter, 127.

<sup>244</sup> Schechter, 126–27.

<sup>245</sup> Schechter, 127.

In the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan I found a response to one of such *Nakazy* written by the soldiers, commanders and political workers of the Order of Lenin and the Red Banner, named after the Hero of the Soviet Union Major General Panfilov of the 8th Guards Rifle Division printed in *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda* on July 4, 1943.<sup>246</sup> The letter praises the feats of Kazakh soldiers, quotes the “centenarian sage Dzhambul”, and reassures that the Division “did not deceive the hopes of Kazakh people” that ordered (*dal nakaz*) “to ruthlessly exterminate the fascist invaders, and to drive the vile occupiers out of the Soviet land.”<sup>247</sup> The authors use the ‘language of loyalty’, which requires the necessary mention of such Soviet idioms as Friendship of Peoples, the inspirational nature of “the great past of the Russian people”, the devotion to “the cause of the party of Lenin-Stalin”, and references to Stalin’s orders. In other words, the letter is stylized within the framework of ideologically correct metaphors.<sup>248</sup> One of the paragraphs in the letter mentions Amangeldy Imanov:

“When the heroes gave their precious lives in the name of victory over the brown plague, they were inspired by the great past of the Russian people - Poltava, Borodino, Sevastopol. Next to us were the legendary heroes of the Kazakh people - Amangeldy, Isatai, Makhambet, as well as the heroes of the Civil War - Shchors and Kotovsky, Chapaev and Frunze.”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> “Pis’mo kazakhskomu narodu ot boytsov, komandirov i, politrabotnikov ordena lenina i krasnogo znamenii, imeni geroya sovetskogo soyuza general-mayora panfiolova 8-oy gvardeyskoy strelkovoy divizii,” *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, June 4, 1943, №138 (4740) edition, Fond redkikh knig i rukopisey, Natsional’naya Biblioteka Respubliki Kazakhstan.

<sup>247</sup> “Pis’mo kazakhskomu narodu ot boytsov, komandirov i, politrabotnikov ordena lenina i krasnogo znamenii, imeni geroya sovetskogo soyuza general-mayora panfiolova 8-oy gvardeyskoy strelkovoy divizii,” 3.

<sup>248</sup> “Pis’mo kazakhskomu narodu ot boytsov, komandirov i, politrabotnikov ordena lenina i krasnogo znamenii, imeni geroya sovetskogo soyuza general-mayora panfiolova 8-oy gvardeyskoy strelkovoy divizii.”

<sup>249</sup> “Pis’mo kazakhskomu narodu ot boytsov, komandirov i, politrabotnikov ordena lenina i krasnogo znamenii, imeni geroya sovetskogo soyuza general-mayora panfiolova 8-oy gvardeyskoy strelkovoy divizii,” 3.

The authors do not provide a distinction between Amangeldy, Isatai, and Makhambet, instead they put them in the category of “legendary heroes of the Kazakh people.”<sup>250</sup>

In another letter of the Kazakh people to Kazakh front-line soldiers dated 6 February 1943, published in *Pravda*, Amangeldy is put in the same line as Karasai *batyr*, who took an active part in the Kazakh-Dzungarian war:

“Contempt for death in the name of life - these words were not born now, they have always lived in the hearts of the mighty Kazakh *batyrs*.

The ancient Karasai did not spare his life for the good of the people. Amangeldy *Batyr* bravely accepted death. The honor of a fighter and the love of the people for him is more precious than life. Our ancestors used to say: "I will sacrifice my soul for my honor", and those words were said again by four Kazakh fighters of the 28 Panfilov defenders of Moscow - Alikbay Kosayev, Narsutbay Esibulatov, Askar Kozhebergenov and Musabek Sengirbayev.”<sup>251</sup>

Amangeldy Imanov is portrayed as an ancestor to all Kazakhs, as a bearer of wisdom about courage. The image of Amangeldy Imanov served as an example of how a Kazakh soldier should face the risk of death. The spirit of Kazakh fighting traditions is omnipresent, it inspired and guided “the Kazakh fighters of the 28 Panfilov defenders.”<sup>252</sup>

In the letter by Guards Captain Doskenov to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR about the combat operations of the parachute battalion, dated 23 February 1944, Amangeldy Imanov was described as one of the representatives of the “heroic images of Kazakh

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<sup>250</sup> “Pis'mo kazakhskomu narodu ot boytsov, komandirov i, politrabotnikov ordena lenina i krasnogo znamenii, imeni geroya sovetskogo soyuza general-mayora panfiolova 8-oy gvardeyskoy strelkovoy divizii,” 3.

<sup>251</sup> “Iz pis'ma kazakhskogo naroda frontovikam - kazakham. 6 fevralya 1943 g.” (*Pravda*, February 6, 1943), 528, <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/274461#mode/inspect/page/3/zoom/4>.

<sup>252</sup> “Iz pis'ma kazakhskogo naroda frontovikam - kazakham. 6 fevralya 1943 g.”



ancestors.”<sup>253</sup> The heroic ancestors that were listed to “inspire Kazakh soldiers to fight” are “Koblandy-*batyr*, Er-Targyn, Isatai and Makhambet, Amangeldy-*batyr*.”<sup>254</sup>

Carmack argues that positive references to the Kazakh political figures such as Isatai and Makhambet, who rebelled against tsarist colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “remained part of frontline Kazakh narrative” until 1945.<sup>255</sup> Carmack analysis of the Kazakh frontline press of the 1943-1945 period revealed that the propaganda divided of “legendary heroes of the Kazakh people” into two types of warrior heroes: in the first group were the 19<sup>th</sup> century pre-revolutionary Kazakh political leaders who rebelled against Russian colonialism and “fought bravely but futilely for the independence of the Kazakhs”, in the second group were ingenious military leaders who allied with the Russian proletariat and peasants under the leadership of the Bolsheviks in their resistance to the tsarist regime, and who supported the establishment of the Soviet power on the territory of the Kazakh steppe.<sup>256</sup> In the narrative of positive portrayal of the pre-revolution Kazakh heroes, Amangeldy was allocated a privileged position.<sup>257</sup> Carmack notes that the series of newspaper articles about Amangeldy published in 1943 adhered to the narrative surrounding the 1916 uprising, and portrayed Imanov as a defender of the Kazakh poor, as an adversary of the Kazakh elites and tsarist officials.<sup>258</sup> A particular chain of heroes and events was sustained in the articles published in 1943 and 1944: first, Amangeldy from a young age imbibed stories about Kenesary Kasymov’s rebellion, where Amangeldy’s grandfather fought alongside

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<sup>253</sup> B Doskenov, “Iz pis’ma gvardii kapitana B. Doskenova v Prezidium Verkhovnogo Soveta Kazakhskoy SSR o boyevykh delakh parashyutno-desantnogo batal’ona. 23 fevralya 1944 g.,” February 23, 1944, 354, Fond 1109, Tsentral’nyy gosudarstvennyy arkhiv Kazakhskoy SSR (TSGA KazSSR), <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/274717#mode/inspect/page/1/zoom/4>.

<sup>254</sup> Doskenov, 354.

<sup>255</sup> Carmack, “History and Hero-Making,” 106.

<sup>256</sup> Carmack, 106.

<sup>257</sup> Carmack, 106.

<sup>258</sup> Carmack, 106.

the rebel leader, second, Amangeldy's military campaigns were inspired by the Kazakh people's centuries-long struggle against the tsarist regime, third, Amangeldy is a "bright example" that soldiers shall follow to fulfill their duty of defending their motherland, and achieving victory in their march against fascists.<sup>259</sup>

Apart from *nakazy*, and letters from soldiers to the rear, I have found documents containing stories of workers in the rear that mention Amangeldy as their inspiration. In the story of a soldier-railway worker, Hero of Socialist Labor ZH. Asainov, to his fellow countrymen in Akmola about his military and labor feats, dated November 6, 1943, Amangeldy is mentioned as an image that stood in front of Asainov when he closed his eyes:

"The image of the fearless *batyr* Amangeldy stood before me, and I wanted to be as fearless as Amangeldy in defending Russian towns and villages."<sup>260</sup>

Aisanov's story was later published in the *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* newspaper in February of 1944.

The inspirational power of Amangeldy Imanov is evident in the report of the agitator of the political department of the 252nd Rifle Division, Captain S. Kantarbekov on propaganda work among soldiers of non-Russian nationality, dated 1943:

"After the operation I held a meeting with the soldiers about the results of the fighting, where I conveyed the gratitude to all the soldiers...

At the talk, Comrade Suleymanov said: "I am a former actor, performed the role of the Kazakh legendary hero Amangeldy and Chapaev. Today I have tested myself, that I can not only perform the role of a hero on the stage, but in

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<sup>259</sup> Carmack, 106.

<sup>260</sup> ZH Asainov, "Rasskaz voina-zheleznodorozhnika Geroya Sotsialisticheskogo Truda ZH. Asainova zemlyakam-akmolintsam o svoikh boyevykh i trudovykh podvigakh.," November 6, 1943, <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/274323#mode/inspect/page/1/zoom/4>.

real battle. I can kill fascists and command fighters. This is only the beginning of our fighting, this is only our second time in combat. We now know how to destroy the Germans."<sup>261</sup>

The emulation of Amangeldy Imanov is a point of pride for Suleymanov. Amangeldy Imanov is “a legendary hero”, the emulation of whom can awaken the innate bravery and skills of commanding.<sup>262</sup> By mentioning Amangeldy, the soldiers had a chance to speak about their contribution to the war among other soldiers and the authorities, to write letters to the rear, to answer *Nakazy* – an opportunity to feel connected to the homeland, to the people in the rear, to feel a sense of belonging among other soldiers at the front, and a way to be remembered.

I include the analysis of the history textbook published in 1943 called “History of the Kazakh SSR From Ancient Times to the Present (HKSSR)”, because it was extensively mentioned in *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda* newspaper during the war. Blocks of text were reprinted in the newspaper, which made me wonder about the influence the textbook had on the Kazakh frontline propaganda.<sup>263</sup>

The first edition of the HKSSR was written in collaboration with Soviet historians evacuated to Almaty during the war. A. M. Pankratova, an academician of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, and M. Abdikalykov, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CP(b)K for Propaganda were editors. According to the annotation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition published in 2011, the 1<sup>st</sup> edition represented the first attempt at producing an academic history of the Kazakh people undertaken in the USSR. The book received criticism because of the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter, which

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<sup>261</sup> K Kantarbekov, “Otchet agitatora politotdela 252-y strelkovoy divizii kapitana S. Kantarbekova ob agitatsionnoy rabote sredi boytsov nerusskoy natsional’nosti. 1943 g.,” 1943, Fond 32, Tsentral’nyy arkhiv Ministerstva oborony RF (TSAMO RF), <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/216068#mode/inspect/page/2/zoom/4>.

<sup>262</sup> Kantarbekov.

<sup>263</sup> M. Abdikalykov and A. Pankratova, *Istoriya Kazakhstana (Istoriya Kazakhskoy SSR s Drevneyshikh Vremen Do Nashikh Dney Izdaniye 1943 g.)* (Almaty, 1943).

“idealized” Kenesary Kasymov’s rebellion and his personality. In 1945, the editor of *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, K. Nefedov, and the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks composed reports to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) G. M. Malenkov about mistakes in the ideological and propaganda work of the party organization of Kazakhstan that negatively mentioned the history textbook, and accused the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CP(b)K for Propaganda M. Abdykalykov for hindering the publication of a book review of HKSSR in Kazakh newspapers. In the first pages the HKSSR, the authors, Pankratova and Abdikalykov, called Amangeldy as “*batyr-bolshevik*”:

“The struggle for independence brought forth such a national hero as Amangeldy Imanov, who in his person connected the struggle of many generations of the Kazakh people against tsarism with the struggle of the Kazakh poor for Soviet power. It was not by chance that Amangeldy grew up in a family of rebels of Kenesary times; he was politically brought up in the conditions of the 1905 revolution, went through the school of class struggle against *bais* and tsarist colonialists; he became a leader of the 1916 uprising and fought for the liberation of the Kazakh people under the banner of Lenin-Stalin during the Civil War. The Baty-Bolshevikr, who led the Kazakh poor and fought alongside and under the leadership of the Russian working class, belonged to the fighters of the new stage of the national liberation movement.”<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 26.

The chapter 22 called “National-liberation revolt of 1916 in Kazakhstan. The national hero Amangeldy Imanov” begins the narrative about Amangeldy by mentioning his connection to Kenesary Kasymov:

“Amangeldy Uderbayev (Imanov) was born in 1873 in one of the auls of the Kaidaul volost of the Turgay district. His father, Uderbay Imanov, was as simple a poor Kazakh as many thousands of other Kazakh herdsmen. ...

Amangeldy's grandfather Iman was known to the Kazakhs as an active participant in the struggle of the Kazakh people for their freedom and independence. He was Kenesary Kasymov's *qos agasy*, i.e. advisor. Together with Kenesary Kasymov he died in the battle with the Kyrgyz in 1847.. ...

Iman's sons - the eldest Borlady and the youngest Balik and Uderbay - also fought together with their father in the troops of Kenesary Kasymov.”<sup>265</sup>

According to the authors, the stories about “his father’s and grandfather’s participation” in “the heroic struggle of the Kazakh people for freedom and independence, the glory of the leader, Kenesary Kasymov”, and the “the folk epic that was composed about Kenesary” awakened in Amangeldy an interest in the past of his homeland”:

“... a deep love [in Amangeldy] for his free-willed people was born, and his young soul was ignited by a passionate dream to carry on the work of his fathers and grandfathers and achieve liberation of his people from colonial and national oppression.”<sup>266</sup>

In other words, the legacy of Amangeldy’s family represents the freedom-loving quality of the Kazakh people, and the generational desire “for national liberation” by ending “the colonial-

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<sup>265</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 569–70.

<sup>266</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 570.

national oppression”, which was passed to Amangeldy to try to put in fruition.<sup>267</sup> Amangeldy was a descendant of “the centuries-old traditions of the struggle for independence” – “the true son of the Kazakh people.”<sup>268</sup>

Whereas in the film *Amangely Egor* is a guide to Lenin’s words and Bolsheviks’ ideology, in the HKSSR neither Alibi Dzhangildin nor a Russian class-conscious and ideologically equipped “helper” is present. Instead Amangeldy learned about “the liberation ideas of the revolution” by socializing with the “Kazakh workers, participants in strikes”, listening to the “speeches by the Bolsheviks”, observing “political demonstrations of the workers in Aktobe and Kostanay.”<sup>269</sup> The main factor that “raised the level of national and political consciousness of Amangeldy” was his trip to Petersburg in 1908 “to the well-known lawyer Plevako in order to involve him as a defender in some kind of trial”:

“During his stay in the capital he saw and learned so many important and interesting things that he decided to write down his impressions and thoughts in a special notebook, which has come down to us under the name "Petersburg diary of Amangeldy Imanov". This important document makes it possible to judge the cultural and political level of Amangeldy in that period, reveals his thoughts and interests. He thought about the injustice of the autocratic system, the severe disenfranchisement and oppression of his people, he tried to find out how and why the Kazakh people became subject to the Russian Empire, how they became nationally oppressed and politically powerless.”<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 570.

<sup>268</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 569; Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 585.

<sup>269</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, *Istoriya Kazakhstana (Istoriya Kazakhskoy SSR s Drevneyshikh Vremen Do Nashikh Dney Izdaniye 1943 g.)*, 573.

<sup>270</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 573–74.

The authors portray Amangeldy as a literate, with a natural talent as a “commander and combat organizer”. The authors argue that Amangeldy was destined to become a leader of the uprising of 1916, because he was the bearer of fighting traditions of the Kazakh people, conscious defender of the poor as he himself was from a poor family and had rough childhood in service of *bais*, hated “*bais, biys* and *volost* governors”, and was literate to study the “history of the colonization of his region (*ego kraia*) by Tsarist Russia:

“The diary entries indicate that Amangeldy was a cultured and conscientious man. He was undoubtedly an outstanding son of the Kazakh people, with his natural talents and overall level of development far ahead of not only his peers from the people, but also many Kazakh intellectuals from the *bai (baiskie)* sons or the then literate teachers from the clergy. Such a man could lead the national liberation uprising of the Kazakhs in 1916, and the Kazakh people did not accidentally nominated Amangeldy Imanov as their leader in this historic struggle. ...

Amangeldy grew up with his army, revealing a genuine talent as a commander and combat organizer. That is why the military actions of the rebel units led by Amangeldy were so sensible, thoughtful, and organized. The successful battles that Amangeldy waged against the tsarist punitive armies also testified to this.”<sup>271</sup>

In the section entitled “The Historical Significance of The 1916 uprising”, the authors define “Syrym Datov, Isatai Taimanov, Kenesary Kasymov” as Amangeldy’s predecessors in carrying “the old banner of the struggle for independence”, but note that “only the conditions of

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<sup>271</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 573–79.

bourgeois-democratic revolution, when the Russian proletariat led this revolution as its only leader, did the national liberation movement [of Kazakhs] begin to gain a firm basis and a certain perspective.”<sup>272</sup> This represents an important compromise between the national and Marxist positions. The authors of the HKSSR were harshly criticized by the center at the end of the war for this compromise. In the same section of the book, Amangeldy unlike Syrym Datov, Isatai Taimanov, Kenesary Kasymov learned to “to seek an alliance with the Russian proletariat, to fight alongside it and with its help to go on to fight resolutely for [the Kazakh people’s] complete political and national liberation from imperialist oppression and feudal bondage.”<sup>273</sup>

The main argument in the HKSSR is that Amangeldy was a figure that linked the history of the Kazakh peoples’ struggle for national liberation against tsarism and the Kazakh peoples’ participation in the revolutionary struggle of the socialist proletariat for the establishment of the Soviet power.<sup>274</sup> In other words, the socialist revolution is portrayed as the precondition for the actualization of national aspirations. This is another factor for which Abdykalykov and Pankratova were criticized by the ideologists from the center and the Union of Soviet Writers of the USSR. The acquisition of national consciousness was seen as a precondition for the people’s participation in the socialist construction in the context of *korenizatsiia*.

The narrative is that Amangeldy was destined to be chosen by the Kazakh people as their leader, because of his ‘natural presentiment’ of Marxism, and his military ancestors, who passed down the ‘spirit’ of fighting traditions and the longing for ‘freedom’ from the shackles of the oppressors. In other words, the integration of the revolt of 1916 into a bigger narrative of the

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<sup>272</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 585–86.

<sup>273</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 586.

<sup>274</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 26.



Russian proletariat's struggle for a socialist revolution was personified in the figure of Amangeldy. The ideological framework referenced by the authors:

“The 1916 uprising was of great significance in the revolutionization of the Kazakh people and played a major historical role in the struggle of not only the Kazakhs, but also the Russian people against tsarism. ...

Lenin welcomed the national liberation struggle of the oppressed peoples of Russia's margins as part of the Russian people's struggle against the common enemy, tsarism. The struggle of the oppressed peoples, he taught, would eventually merge with the struggle of the socialist proletariat.”<sup>275</sup>

On October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1943, *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda* announced its decision to begin publishing materials from the book "The History of the Kazakh SSR from the ancient times to the present day" about the heroes-*batyrs*, the great enlighteners of the Kazakh people, who selflessly gave their lives for the freedom and the happiness of their people” in the article called “Heroes-*batyrs* of the Kazakh people.”<sup>276</sup> The article claims that “Kazakh soldiers on the front show courage, bravery, tenacity, and initiative” by looking back at and “reviving the best military traditions of the Kazakh people.”<sup>277</sup> The article highlights that Kazakh soldiers are capable of “such high Soviet patriotism” because they are from “a reborn nation, which fights for the preservation of freedom won in the centuries-long fight.”<sup>278</sup>

From the rest of the October of 1943, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* featured excerpts from HKSSR about Ablay, Syrym Datov, Isatai and Makhambet, and Kenesary Kasymov. On the 25<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Abdykalykov and Pankratova, 587.

<sup>276</sup> “Geroi-batyry kazakhskogo naroda,” *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, October 25, 1942, Fond redkikh knig i rukopisey, Natsional'naya Biblioteka Respubliki Kazakhstan.

<sup>277</sup> “Geroi-batyry kazakhskogo naroda.”

<sup>278</sup> “Geroi-batyry kazakhskogo naroda.”

year anniversary of the death “of a famous Kazakh batyr Amangeldy Imanov” in 1944, *Otan ushin uryysqa*, printed a full-page article called “*Batyr-Bolshevik, Revolutionary*”.<sup>279</sup> The content of the article is the Kazakh translation of excerpts from the HKSSR, except for the last three paragraphs that claim that Amangeldy died “from the hands of the whites” and that the “bright image of the lion-like fierce revolutionary *batyr-bolshevik* Amangeldy energizes the Kazakh warriors to go from a victory to a victory in the time of the Great Patriotic War”.<sup>280</sup> The duty of a Kazakh soldier to defend the motherland and fight against the enemy is part of “the tradition” passed by the brave “*batyr* predecessors”:

“The bright image of the lion-like fierce revolutionary *batyr bolshevik* Amangeldy energizes the Kazakh warriors to go from a victory to a victory in the time of the Great Patriotic War.

Without putting a stain on the tradition of bravery of their *batyr* predecessor (*ata*), [soldiers] are clearing the motherland from the German-fascist occupants.”<sup>281</sup>

The HKSSR was an influential book that the editors of frontline Kazakh newspapers quoted and translated to inspire soldiers “to achieve victory after victory”.<sup>282</sup> According to Carmack, by 1944 Kazakh propagandists explicitly portrayed Kazakhs as a militant nation with a rich military history, which is loyal to the Russian elder brother.<sup>283</sup> The authors of the HKSSR engaged in the rehabilitation of national narratives for which they were later reprimanded for.

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<sup>279</sup> “Batyr Bolshevik, revolyutsioner,” *Otan ushin uryysqa*, May 16, 1944, Fond redkikh knig i rukopisey, Natsional’naya Biblioteka Respubliki Kazakhstan. I follow the translation of the “Batyr-Bolshevik, Revolutionary” article from Kazakh into English done by Danat Issa.

<sup>280</sup> “Batyr Bolshevik, revolyutsioner.”

<sup>281</sup> “Batyr Bolshevik, revolyutsioner.”

<sup>282</sup> “Batyr Bolshevik, revolyutsioner.”

<sup>283</sup> Carmack, “History and Hero-Making,” 107.

In 1945, the HKSSR was heavily criticized by the Propaganda Department and the Union of Soviet Writers of the USSR, as well as by K Nefedov, the editor of the newspaper *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, Nefedov complained to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks G.M. Malenkov that “in the last 3-4 years, there has been a tendency for a number of leading Kazakh officials to exaggerate the historical role of the Kazakh people, particularly in the Patriotic War, trying to gloss over the role of the great Russian people.”<sup>284</sup> Nefedov argues that a book review on HKSSR that was printed in *Bolshevik* magazine “gave a politically sharp assessment, revealing the serious distortions outlined in the History of the Kazakh SSR”:

“The review will be an important document for Kazakhstanis to be more vigilant and to correct perversions in the assessment of the historical past of Kazakh people and its heroes, such as Kenesary Kasymov.”<sup>285</sup>

Nefedov claimed that the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Kazakhstan and the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CP(b)K for Propaganda, M. Abdykalykov, intentionally published the review in the Kazakh newspaper *Socialistik Qazaqstan* a month later than the actual deadline, and overall withheld the review from being printed in most newspapers curated in Kazakh.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Nefedov, “Zapiska redaktora gazety «Kazakhstanskaya pravda» K. Nefedova sekretaryu TSK VKP(b) G.M. Malenkovu ob oshibkakh v ideologicheskoy rabote partiynoy organizatsii Kazakhstana. 22 iyunya 1945 g.,” 962–63; Upravleniye propagandy TSK VKP(b), “Dokladnaya zapiska Upravleniya propagandy TSK VKP(b) sekretaryu TSK VKP(b) G.M. Malenkovu o rezul’tatakh proverki ideologicheskoy i propagandistskoy raboty partiynoy organizatsii Kazakhstana. [Raneye 24 oktyabrya 1945 g.]”

<sup>285</sup> Nefedov, “Zapiska redaktora gazety «Kazakhstanskaya pravda» K. Nefedova sekretaryu TSK VKP(b) G.M. Malenkovu ob oshibkakh v ideologicheskoy rabote partiynoy organizatsii Kazakhstana. 22 iyunya 1945 g.,” 961.

<sup>286</sup> Nefedov, 962.

The employees of the Propaganda Department and of the Union of Soviet Writers of the USSR that were sent to Almaty to check the results on the corrections of the ideological and propaganda work of the party organization of Kazakhstan. They complained that the HKSSR is nationalistic, anti-Russian, and provides a perverted focus on the pre-revolutionary history of the Kazakh people. They have also noted that little attention was paid to the concept of the Friendship of the Peoples. Another complaint involved the dissatisfaction with that the authors elevated Kazakh people at the expense of Russians, by ignoring the economic and cultural seniority of the Great Russian people.<sup>287</sup>

The issues that the authors had with the HKSSR are 1) the emphasis on the struggle of Kazakhs for their independence, instead of the class struggle within the society and revolutionary influence of the Russian working class, 2) the embellishment of the patriarchal-feudal relations, instead of portraying a joint struggle of Kazakhs and Russians against foreign invaders and landowner-capitalist oppression, 3) the negative outlook upon the Kazakhstan's entry into the Russian Empire, instead of the progressive significance of Kazakhstan's entry into the Russian Empire, 4) the sense of enmity and hatred towards Russians, instead of highlighting the differences between tsarist officials and the Russian people, 4) the negative perception of the notion of a collective farm, instead of a focus on the history of the Soviet Union, 5) the praise of religiosity and religious piety of the Kazakh people, instead of a focus on a secular notion of the Friendship of the Peoples, 6) the downplay of the role of Russian soldiers and elevation of the role of Kazakh soldiers, instead of acknowledging that Russian people is a vanguard nation, 7)

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<sup>287</sup> Upravleniye propagandy TSK VKP(b), "Dokladnaya zapiska Upravleniya propagandy TSK VKP(b) sekretaryu TSK VKP(b) G.M. Malenkovu o rezul'tatakh proverki ideologicheskoy i propagandistskoy raboty partiynoy organizatsii Kazakhstana. [Raneye 24 oktyabrya 1945 g.]."

the reluctance to praise the “advanced Russian theatre” and publish more of the Russian classical literature.

The authors of the report argued that the information on the Kazakh leaders of national liberation uprisings is inaccurate. First, Edige, Koblandy, Kenesary, Nauryzbay were involved in feudal reactionary movements. Second, “Amangeldy Imanov emerged as the leader of the workers Kazakhs in an atmosphere of class struggle within the Kazakh society and due to the influence of the Russian revolutionary movement.”<sup>288</sup> The authors claimed that the portrayal of Amangeldy as a successor of the work of Edige and other khans "in the struggle for freedom, happiness and interests of Kazakhs " is ideologically wrong and must be corrected. The critique of the HKSSR betokened the change in propaganda objectives and a shift in political and ideological objectives.

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<sup>288</sup> Upravleniye propagandy TSK VKP(b), 992.

## Conclusion

My goal was to contribute to the literature on Amangeldy Imanov, national heroes, and Soviet nationalities policy by investigating the making of Amangeldy Imanov as a national-liberation hero. It focused on the impact of the Soviet narrative about Amangeldy on the development of Soviet-Kazakh identity. The paper concentrated on the period from 1920s till the end of the Great Patriotic War in 1945, which witnessed the implementation of *korenizatsiia* campaign, the unfolding of the Friendship of the Peoples policy, and the building of Soviet Kazakhstan. My aim was to show that the figure of Amangeldy Imanov was at the center of the Soviet efforts at building a new identity for Kazakhs that would be “national in form and socialist in content”.

I have analyzed the sources that were compiled and published in the Soviet Union between the 1920s and 1940s that mention Amangeldy Imanov, such as Alibi Dzhangildin propaganda article written in the 1920s, history textbooks, interviews with the people who supposedly knew Imanov, the first Kazakh feature film *Amangeldy* produced by the Lenfilm studio, portraits of Amangeldy painted by Abilkhan Kasteev, wartime newspaper articles and reports of Amangeldy-inspired heroism, as well as reports from the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. These sources were retrieved from the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Central Scientific Library, the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Abilkhan Kasteev State Museum of Arts.

The existing scholarship shows that the figure of Amangeldy Imanov was used to harness popular support for the Soviet project, organized around the simultaneous nation-building and the construction of Soviet Kazakh identity. Thus, Danielle Ross, Yuliya Kozitskaya, Peter

Rollberg, and Rico Isaacs argue that the image of Amangeldy Imanov helped inscribe the classless Kazakhs into the history of the revolutionary struggle by portraying Amangeldy Imanov as a fighter for the oppressed.<sup>289</sup> Similarly, Roberto Carmack's analysis of the Kazakh frontline press of the 1943-1945 period shows that Amangeldy Imanov was portrayed as an ingenious military leader who allied with the Russian proletariat and peasants under the leadership of the Bolsheviks against the tsarist regime, and who supported the establishment of the Soviet power on the territory of the Kazakh steppe.<sup>290</sup>

The evolution of the Soviet narrative about Amangeldy Imanov included several stages which reflected changes in the nationalities policy. Each phase accentuated certain aspects in the Soviet narrative about Amangeldy Imanov. The first stage, dating to the 1920s during the introduction of *korenizatsiia*, involved the search and incorporation of a local historical figure into the reconstructed narrative about the 1916 uprising. The figure of Amangeldy Imanov was instrumentalized by Soviet historians of the 1920s to link the pre-revolutionary events in the Kazakh steppe and the October Revolution in Russia. The ideological shift towards the valorization of the Russian proletariat in the 1930s marked the second stage, which reflected the accentuation of the class identity of Amangeldy Imanov, which in turn culminated in Amangeldy Imanov being called a Bolshevik. State-sponsored collection of reminiscences in preparation for the twentieth anniversary of the 1916 uprising, the 1930s historical studies on Amangeldy Imanov and the 1916 revolt contributed to the construction of a proletarian biography for Amangeldy Imanov. The rise of the Socialist Realism doctrine in the 1930s manifested itself in the film *Amangeldy* (1938), which consolidated the image of Imanov as a Civil War hero, in

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<sup>289</sup> Ross, "Domesticating 1916"; Yuliya Kozitskaya, "Kazakhskaya literatura kak chast' proyekta «mnogonatsional'noy sovetskoy literatury» v 1930-ye gody"; Rollberg, *The Cinema of Soviet Kazakhstan 1925-1991*; Isaacs, *Film and Identity in Kazakhstan*.

<sup>290</sup> Carmack, "History and Hero-Making."

addition to being a leader of the 1916 uprising. By the end of 1930s, Amangeldy Imanov was a multilayered historical figure – a Kazakh fearless *batyr* who believed in the progress of Soviet power, a Bolshevik, and an adversary of the “petty national bourgeoisie” Alash Orda. The third stage occurred during the war in the first half of the 1940s, when Soviet propaganda turned Amangeldy Imanov into an immortal spirit of courage and bravery, into a representation of the “fighting traditions” of the Kazakh population, into a “bright example of heroism”. Once again the figure of Amangeldy Imanov was instrumentalized by the Soviet authorities, but now with the purpose to inspire stalwart service of Kazakh soldiers at the front and to instill loyalty to the Soviet Union.

Future research could focus on the time after the Great Patriotic War in order to trace how the image of Amangeldy Imanov continued to change in accordance with the shifting ideological goals of the regime. Moving into the post-Stalinist period, I would also like to explore whether and how the image of Amangeldy Imanov was appropriated by Kazakhstan’s intellectual and political elites in their efforts to write national history that would better reflect their nationalizing aspirations in the 1970s and 1980s. Did Kazakh writers and elites under Brezhnev and Gorbachev adopt Amangeldy Imanov as a symbol of national resistance and struggle for independence?

To answer these questions, I will examine the post-WWII scholarship on Amangeldy Imanov and literary works about the national hero written by Soviet-Kazakh writers during the Thaw years, as well as the Soviet-Kazakh historians’ collections of documents on Amangeldy published under Brezhnev, and the edits in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia made during the *perestroika* in the 1980s.



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