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ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF ZAMAN IN THE KAZAKH WORLDVIEW

This article analyzes the concept of *zaman* in the Kazakh worldview, its significance in the collective consciousness, and the semantic complexity it acquires in accordance with the changing flow of time, while examining its philosophical and social dimensions. The concept of *zaman* in the Kazakh worldview is examined from the perspective of the unity of social space and time, and on this basis, the idea that the essence of *zaman* is revealed through such unity is systematized.

A philosophical study of the concept of *zaman* makes it possible to explore the profound and multifaceted issues of time and existence. In the traditional worldview of the Kazakh people, *zaman* is considered not only as a chronological measure but also through its social, historical, and cultural context.

Through the objective and subjective aspects of *zaman*, one of the key philosophical tasks becomes understanding the historical development of the individual and society, as well as their spiritual evolution. The study of the problem of *zaman* in the Kazakh worldview is aimed at comprehending the interconnection between society and time. The article considers aspects that illustrate the complexity of defining the concept of *zaman*, and attempts to provide a socio-philosophical interpretation of this broad phenomenon, to reveal its role in historical consciousness, and to demonstrate its interrelation with space.

Keywords: *zaman*, time, space, worldview, historical consciousness, society, era, apocalypse, *qily zaman*, *zar zaman*.

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Қазақ танымындағы заман түсінігін талдау

Мақалада қазақ дүниетанымындағы заман түсінігі, оның халық санасындағы мәні мен заман ағымының өзгерістеріне сай, мағыналық күрделенуі мәселесі талданып, философиялық және әлеуметтік мағынасы қарастырылады. Қазақ дүниетанымындағы заман түсінігі әлеуметтік кеңістік пен уақыт біртұтастығы тұрғысынан талданып, заманның мәні осы негізде ашылады деген тұжырымдаманы жүйелейді.

Заман түсінігін философиялық тұрғыда зерттеу уақыт пен болмыстың терең және көпқырлы мәселелерін тануға мүмкіндік береді. Қазақ халқының дәстүрлі дүниетанымындағы заман тек хронологиялық өлшем ретінде ғана емес, сонымен бірге әлеуметтік, тарихи және мәдени контекст арқылы қарастырылады.

Заманның объективті және субъективті аспектілері арқылы адам мен қоғамның тарихи дамуын, рухани эволюциясын түсіну маңызды философиялық міндеттердің бірі болып табылады. Қазақ дүниетанымындағы заман мәселесін зерттеу қоғам мен уақыттың өзара байланысын түсінуге бағытталған. Заман ұғымын анықтаудың күрделілігін сипаттайтын аспектілер қарастырылып, кең көлемді бұл құбылысты әлеуметтік-философиялық тұрғыда түсіндіруге, тарихи санадағы рөлін ашып, оның кеңістікпен өзара байланысын көрсетуге талпыныс жасалады.

Түйін сөздер: заман, уақыт, кеңістік, дүниетаным, тарихи сана, қоғам, дәуір, ақырзаман, килы заман, зар заман.

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Анализ понятия *заман* в казахском мировоззрении

В статье анализируется понятие *заман* в казахском мировоззрении, его значение в народном сознании и усложнение смысла в соответствии с изменениями течения времени, рассматриваются философское и социальное измерения этого понятия. Понятие *заман* в казахском мировоззрении анализируется с позиции единства социального пространства и времени, и на этой основе систематизируется концепция, согласно которой сущность *заман* раскрывается именно через такое единство.

Философское исследование понятия *заман* позволяет познать глубокие и многогранные вопросы времени и бытия. В традиционном мировоззрении казахского народа *заман* рассматривается не только как хронологическая величина, но и через социальный, исторический и культурный контекст.

Через объективные и субъективные аспекты *заман* одной из важнейших философских задач становится понимание исторического развития человека и общества, духовной эволюции. Изучение проблемы *заман* в казахском мировоззрении направлено на осмысление взаимосвязи общества и времени. Рассматриваются аспекты, характеризующие сложность определения понятия *заман*, предпринимается попытка социально-философского осмысления этого широкого явления, раскрытия его роли в историческом сознании и демонстрации его взаимосвязи с пространством.

Ключевые слова: «*заман*»; время; пространство; мировоззрение; историческое сознание; общество; эпоха; апокалипсис; «*килы заман*»; «*зар заман*».

Introduction

At a new stage of social and cultural changes, there arises a need to deeply study the concepts that hold a special place in the collective consciousness of the people. The worldview of the Kazakh people is based on profound philosophical and spiritual principles, among which the concept of *zaman* plays a significant role. *Zaman* is not just a measure of time but a multifaceted concept that characterizes social and cultural existence as well as the complex system of historical transformations.

Historical periods and eras have been passed down from generation to generation through the concept of *zaman*, with each era being described by its unique characteristics and values. These features reflect the socio-cultural state of a given period. This indicates that the Kazakh people perceive time not only in a quantitative but also in a qualitative sense. The role of time and space in the national identity of the Kazakh people is of particular importance, influencing their spiritual and social structures and revealing their essence.

As time progresses, the values of the people, their way of life, the state of society, and the condition of the country also undergo transformation. In this regard, studying this issue becomes especially relevant.

Relevance of the topic of articles, goals and objectives.

Time and space are fundamental categories of being through which human history, culture, and civilizational development take shape. *Zaman* (Era) represents the intersection of time and space, embodying the social, cultural, and philosophical characteristics of a particular period. In the era of globalization, the accelerating transformation of time and the deterritorialization of space raise new philosophical questions: What is the essence of *zaman*? How is it related to time and space? How can historical processes be understood? These issues highlight the significance of the topic. Exploring this subject helps to understand human existence, the relationship between time and humanity, and the cultural dynamics of society.

The aim of this article is to analyze the phenomenon of *zaman* from the perspective of time and space categories and to determine its philosophical, cultural, and historical dimensions. Accordingly, the study sets forth the following objectives: to examine the categories of time and space, clarifying their philosophical significance and their connection to the concept of *zaman*; to investigate the ontological foundations of *zaman* by analyzing how epochal changes influence the nature of being.

Methods and methodology

This article, aimed at analyzing the meaning of the concept of *zaman* in the Kazakh worldview, examines *zaman* within the unity of social space and time, employing the hypothetico-deductive method to substantiate this systemic unity; identifies, from a historical perspective, the periods experienced by the Kazakh people and referred to as “*zaman*”; and, in considering *zaman* as a phenomenon, applies analytical and interpretative methods based on cognitive and structural approaches.

Literature review

The concept of *zaman* in the Kazakh worldview has been extensively studied from philosophical, historical, cultural, and literary perspectives. These studies aim to explore how the categories of time and space manifest in Kazakh society and to understand national consciousness and historical transformations. For Kazakh thinkers, *zaman* is not only a reflection of time and space but also a dynamic process of change in human and societal existence.

Sh. Ualikhanov analyzed the historical and social meaning of *zaman*, comparing the perspectives of nomadic and sedentary civilizations on time and space. A. Kunanbayuly emphasized the transient nature of *zaman*, highlighting the dependence of spiritual renewal in individuals and society on time. In contemporary Kazakh philosophy, the category of *zaman* has been examined from an ontological and axiological perspective in the works of Zh. Moldabekov, A. Kasymzhanov, D. Kishibekov, and G. Yesim.

This article draws on internet-based resources, encyclopedic definitions, and the dissertation research of scholars who have systematized *zaman* as a philosophical category (B. Satershinov, S. Sapargaliyeva, R. Kemberbai). The in-depth exploration of *zaman* in the Kazakh intellectual tradition is further enriched by the works of prominent Kazakh scholars (Yesim, Nurysheva, Kaidar), who have provided profound insights into the concept's complexity.

Results and discussion

The history and culture of the Kazakh people have undergone continuous changes over the centuries, with each era leaving its unique imprint. The nomadic way of life, close connection with

nature, and spiritual values inherited from ancestors have shaped the Kazakh perception of time. The concept of *zaman* emerged as an indicator of these transformations, becoming a notion that reflects the acceptance or rejection of new social trends, as well as hopes and uncertainties about the future.

Today, a significant body of knowledge has been developed, allowing for the study of *zaman* in philosophical, historical, and social contexts. However, providing a precise and unambiguous definition of this concept is challenging. Given the breadth of concepts it encompasses and the constantly changing conditions of social development, the very notion of *zaman* alters its character within the framework of time and space, as well as political and social circumstances.

The categories of time and *zaman* have long been central themes in philosophy. Throughout the history of global philosophy, various thinkers have explored the essence of *zaman*, its impact on individuals and society, and have proposed different interpretations. Notably, *zaman* has held a special place in the study of metaphysical issues related to time and space.

The issue of time has been of great significance in understanding the world since ancient times. Examining the philosophical approach to *zaman* and time reveals that their importance as subjects of inquiry dates back to antiquity. However, it is worth noting that the Kazakh concept of *zaman* is difficult to fully convey through terms such as epoch or era, as it carries a deeper, transcendent meaning.

The most fitting definition would be: “An epoch is a period of time characterized by certain events or phenomena. Often, though not always, it is associated with the activities of a specific individual.” However, historical periodization and definitions of a geological nature relating to an epoch distance it from the notion of *zaman*. Therefore, to comprehend *zaman*, it must be analyzed through the interrelation of time, space, and society, which serves as the foundation of our study.

Plato compared time to eternity, arguing that, unlike the immutable and eternally existing world of ideas, time is transient and changeable. In his analysis of time, he distinguished three types of being based on their relationship to time: the unborn and indestructible; the created but indestructible; and the created and perishable. Thus, the world and everything in it are revealed in accordance with their temporal nature.

His disciple, Aristotle, regarded time as a measure of movement, understanding it as the

sequence of changes. In his concept, time is connected with numbers and the life of the cosmos.

In medieval philosophy, the problem of time became a subject of deep reflection, engaging many thinkers. Notably, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas examined time within a theological framework. Augustine linked the beginning and end of time to divine creation, exploring its subjective nature and its connection to human consciousness. In his view, time is a creation of God and exists only in the human mind, in thoughts and feelings. A person recalls the past, hopes for the future, but real time is only the present, which instantly turns into the past, making it unstable. In his understanding, time has a beginning and an end and depends on the material world and its changes.

Thomas Aquinas offered a broader interpretation of time compared to Augustine. He argued that time is not limited to the movement of objects in space but can also be measured by the sequence of events, thoughts, and even emotions. For this reason, he classified time into internal and external: internal time represents changes in individual consciousness, while external time is an objective measure related to the movement of stars and planets. These ideas emphasize the close connection between time, space, and human perception.

During the Renaissance, concepts of time and space evolved alongside the growing interest in science and nature. For example, the astronomical discoveries of Nicolaus Copernicus and Galileo prompted a reconsideration of the physical measurement of time. Philosopher René Descartes attempted to integrate metaphysical and scientific perspectives, viewing time as a measurable and objective category.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant conducted a profound philosophical analysis of time and space, considering them as *a priori* (independent of experience) forms of human consciousness. According to Kant, time and space are not objective realities but rather ways in which humans perceive the world—fundamental conditions of cognition. This idea introduced a new dimension to the philosophical understanding of time.

Georg Hegel viewed epochs and history as a dialectical process. In his view, each historical period represents the realization of a particular idea, while the development of an era reflects the struggle and resolution of contradictions. He explained the dynamics of time through the laws of historical development, asserting that each era carries its own unique spirit.

In the 20th century, existentialist philosophy brought the subjectivity of society and time to the forefront. In the works of Martin Heidegger, an era is closely linked to human existence, and time is the key to understanding being. Heidegger viewed time as a phenomenon that reveals the essence of being, arguing that a person realizes their existence within the limits of their lifetime. Jean-Paul Sartre associated an era and time with human freedom and responsibility, showing that a person creates their own time and future. According to him, the meaning of time is realized through human choices and actions.

Postmodernist philosophy considers time as a nonlinear, multiple, and fragmented phenomenon. Philosophers such as Jean-François Lyotard and Michel Foucault argued that time does not follow universal laws, and each society shapes its own time and history. Postmodernist ideas propose viewing time as a multifaceted phenomenon consisting of numerous separate “microhistories.” In our consciousness, this is reflected through the concept of *zaman*.

A review of various concepts of time reveals the complexity of its understanding and the attempts to define it through humans, society, space, and change. Time, interacting with the world of things, reveals their essence, expresses movement and transformation, or depends on them. In relation to the human being, time becomes the sequence of events and our feelings, a way of perceiving the world, and a means of understanding human existence. Time is multidimensional; it is not formed on the basis of a universal law, but shaped by each society in accordance with its own time and history, bringing with it a unique and unrepeatable spirit as a law of historical development. From this, we conclude that *zaman* is an interval of time distinguished and defined by events, circumstances, and changes occurring within it.

In Eastern thought, the concept of *zaman* also holds deep significance. It is considered within the context of social, historical, and philosophical issues. *Zaman* is closely related to global change, time, and fate. In general, within this concept, human existence and the process of comprehending changes in the world are understood.

Eastern thinkers studied the nature of time, its infinity, and its dependence on divine governance. Ibn Sina linked time and era with movement and space, defining the finiteness of time in relation to divine eternal existence. He sought to explain time through human experience and the laws of the created world.

Al-Ghazali argued that this world is temporary, that eras are transient, and that their course is subject to destiny. Human life has a predetermined measure, but one has the freedom to determine its meaning and purpose. The concept of *zaman* is defined through human choice.

In the philosophy of Al-Farabi, an era is revealed through the relationship between humans and society. He asserted that the development of society and its historical stages influence people's way of life and values. Human life is determined by the conditions of the society in which they live. Drawing on Aristotle, Al-Farabi understood time as a measure of movement and an indicator of changes in being.

Rumi viewed time and space as part of infinite love. Through love, one can comprehend time, transcend it, and ultimately attain eternity. In his view, a person does not merely live in time but is time itself. Beginning in eternity, they return to eternity. In his philosophy, time is understood through spirituality and serves as a measure of spiritual growth.

In his work *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun defined *zaman* as a reflection of the rise and decline of society. His ideas about time and space were considered not only from a philosophical perspective but also as a methodology for explaining historical processes. Discussing societal development, the patterns of historical processes, and contemporary changes, he described the differences between nomadic and sedentary peoples. According to him, nomadic societies, being closer to nature, used *zaman* as a tool for adaptation. He argued that the prosperity and decline of each society follow natural laws and depend on time and space.

Thus, the understanding of *zaman* expands and transforms depending on how the category of time is perceived. In the Western tradition, time is generally viewed as a linear, rational, and measurable phenomenon based on dynamic progress. In the Eastern worldview, on the other hand, it is understood through spiritual development and the harmony of nature and time. These perspectives on understanding the meaning of *zaman* indicate that it cannot be assessed solely in terms of a temporal dimension; rather, it lies in synthesizing the complete totality of space, society, and human existence.

The term epoch, which is close in meaning to *zaman*, is also used in modern scientific and educational contexts in various ways. Primarily, an epoch denotes a specific historical period of societal development, a timeframe under study. It serves as

a criterion for distinguishing one historical period from another. However, the boundaries of an epoch depend on the research objective and the individual perspective of the author, making them relative. The temporal limits of an epoch are determined by various aspects of historical development, such as social, economic, and cultural changes. These characteristics shape the essence of an epoch.

The uncertainty of an epoch's boundaries and the variability of conditions influencing its nature make it similar to *zaman*. However, an epoch cannot fully capture the meaning of *zaman*.

In order to systematize the understanding of *zaman* in the Kazakh worldview as a broad and deeply rooted concept in the collective consciousness, we have taken as our basis the position that *zaman* is a system of the unity of society, time, and space. Accordingly, the influence of the concepts of time and space on social conditions, as well as the understanding of *zaman* in the Kazakh worldview and the notions associated with it, will be examined.

From a philosophical perspective, the concepts of time and space are extremely complex and profound, as they belong to the category of multifaceted problems of human consciousness. Although time may seem simple and understandable from a physical point of view, its true nature is hidden in depth. Time is infinite, eternal, and retains its uniqueness as a phenomenon that exists independently of human consciousness and being. It serves as a measure of history, the flow of life, and a unique natural phenomenon. Understanding the deep essence of time is impossible purely through theoretical means, as it lies beyond the boundaries of human cognition.

Space, in turn, develops in close connection with time and serves its flow. It possesses not only physical characteristics but always carries spiritual significance as well, functioning as a space of life interwoven with the passage of time. In the traditional worldview of the Kazakh people, space derives its essence and properties not only from the mysteries of nature but also from deep harmony with it. It is well known that our ancestors, who led a nomadic lifestyle, did not seek to dominate nature but, on the contrary, considered it sacred, submitting to its laws and living in harmony with it.

In the Kazakh worldview, *zaman* is a complex and multifaceted concept that requires deep comprehension. It signifies not just a specific time period or historical era but also a system of values, living conditions, and the perceptions of people of that time—their understanding and inner experiences.

Furthermore, *zaman* is a comprehensive phenomenon that encompasses the historical and social essence of society. It influences human existence and social communities, their living environment, and their attitude toward life, revealing its unique features within the framework of time and space.

In the Kazakh worldview, *zaman* is also closely connected with nature. The changing seasons and natural phenomena are all part of *zaman*. For example, spring, which brings warmth and hope, as well as the bright summer, is called “*zhaqsy zaman*” (good times), whereas a harsh winter and difficult life periods are referred to as “*surapyl zaman*” (turbulent, difficult times).

The connection between *zaman*, nature, lifestyle, and historical changes is vividly expressed in the Kazakh worldview. Expressions such as “*aqyr zaman*” (the end of the world), “*qoi ustinde boz torgai zhumiyrtaqalagan zaman*” (a time when a lark laid eggs on the back of a sheep—symbolizing prosperity), “*qily zaman*” (troubled times), “*zar zaman*” (a period of suffering), and “*tar zaman*” (hard times) reflect the social and moral values of an era, helping to assess ongoing changes. These concepts convey the social atmosphere of a particular period, shifts in public consciousness and moral norms, allowing for a deeper philosophical understanding of time.

If we turn to the etymology of the word *zaman*, dictionaries indicate that it is borrowed from the Turkic language, which, in turn, borrowed it from Persian (Zaman, 2024:URL:<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/zaman>). It likely entered the Turkic languages under the influence of Arab-Persian culture. Today, this word holds deep significance and is widely used in the Kazakh language. In the Kazakh worldview, it is applied both in reflections on existence and being, as well as in everyday life when discussing societal events, the future, the past, change, and the complexities of modernity.

According to dictionaries, the word “*zaman*” is used to denote such concepts as time, period, epoch, era, circumstances, days, years, and life span. The “Encyclopedia of Ethnographic Categories, Concepts, and Terms” provides the following definition: “*Zaman* is a concept and a system of representations about the beginning of the passage of years and its conventionally accepted segment” (Encyclopedia of the traditional system of Kazakh ethnographic categories, concepts and names, 2012).

The concept of “*zaman*” in the Kazakh worldview has been shaped over centuries, with its meaning deepening and becoming more complex over time.

The change of eras makes this concept even more multifaceted. The complexity of studying this phenomenon was noted by the statesman and public figure Gabit Musrepov, who stated: “*Zaman* is not a phenomenon of a single day; it is a complex period that takes a long time to form”. He also remarked: “*Zaman* is not just a marketplace; it is a great and prolonged selection of values. Understanding its essence—from mentality and religious foundations to its philosophical meaning—cannot be achieved in a single day”.

A researcher of social time and space in the civilization of the Kazakh steppe, Sairash Sapargaliyeva, defines “*zaman*” in her work as follows: “*Zaman* is a concept that reflects the unity of time and space, as well as the people who set life into motion within these coordinates. Each *zaman* has its own civilization, spiritual essence, unique characteristics, joys, and challenges. Every *zaman* is distinguished by its historical phenomena and unique values.” She further clarifies that for Kazakhs, “*zaman* is the integrity of time and space, measured within the span of a single generation” (Sapargaliyeva, 2007).

The depth of the meaning of the word “*zaman*” makes it difficult to provide a comprehensive and clearly defined explanation. This is why discussing *zaman* and reflecting on it is not an easy task. It is particularly challenging for a person to evaluate their own time. The concept of “*zaman*” encompasses the historical process and changes of a specific period, reflecting the entire way of life of that era. It is a category that examines in unity the individual, society, social environment, life principles, values, and aspirations.

“*Zaman*” is a concept that is understood through the inner perception of ongoing changes. Its meaning is revealed in relation to time and space, based on life values. It is a key concept that integrates the social order, life principles, and even the destiny of an entire nation into a single system. Within the framework of “*zaman*”, aspects such as the fate of a people, the essence of existence, the way of life, and the material and spiritual conditions of a particular period are considered (Kemberbai, 2020).

Academician Garifolla Yesim examines the concept of “*zaman*” not only through the unity of time and space but also through its perception in the Kazakh worldview as fate. He identifies three main approaches to understanding *zaman*: recognizing it as fate, accepting the need for change, and striving to resist an undesirable *zaman*.

- The Kazakh people perceive “*zaman*” as a measurement of time and space within a particular

era or generation. In this sense, distinctions are made between: “*osy zaman*” (present time), “*otken zaman*” (past time), “*keler zaman*” (future time).

At different historical periods, certain events were given names associated with *zaman*, such as: “*qyly zaman*” (difficult times) – mentioned in the *tolgau* (poetic reflection) of Bukhar Zhyrau, where he says: “*Kunbatystan bir dushpan, Aqyrynda shygar sol tustan*” (“An enemy will come from the West, and eventually, he will appear from there”); “*zar zaman*” (era of suffering) – appears in the poetry of Shortanbai, for example: “*Myna zaman qai zaman?*” (“What kind of times are these?”); “*aqyrzaman*” (end of the world) – a religious concept expressing a pessimistic view of the future.

- In this perspective, *zaman* is seen as beyond human control. A person lives within the framework of *zaman* and can only accept it as it is. Shortanbai warns: “*Qyly-qyly zaman bolar, qaragai basyn shortan shalar*” (“Different times will come, and even a pike will jump onto the top of a pine tree”), symbolizing unexpected and uncontrollable changes in life.

- *Zaman* can also be perceived as a challenge, requiring struggle for change. This protest-oriented approach is reflected in the poetry of Makhambet, Aktamberdi, and Dospambet, who glorified the fight for justice and transformation. (Yesim, 1997).

However, Abai offered a different perspective. In his poem “*Totyquss tysti köbelek*”, he wrote:

“*Arkimdi zaman suiremek, zamandy qai zhan bilemek?*”

(“*Zaman* carries everyone along, but who can rule over *zaman*?”)

“*Zamanga zhaman kuilemek, zamana oni ilemek.*”

(“A bad person, drifting with *zaman*, will be ruled by it.”)

This suggests that a person cannot fully control *zaman*, but at the same time, they have a choice—to go with the flow or strive for change.

In Kazakh philosophy, *zaman* is viewed as a fluid and ever-changing phenomenon, possessing both good and bad aspects. This is reflected in proverbs and folk wisdom: “*zamannyn azuy*” (“the sharpness of *zaman*”) – emphasizes its harshness; “*zamannyn tulkiligi*” (“the cunning of *zaman*”) – highlights its unpredictability and deception; “*zaman tülki bolsa, tazy bop shal*” (“if *zaman* is a fox, be a greyhound to catch it”) – advises adapting to circumstances.

This idea was also discussed by Abduali Qaidar, who explained: “If the times are cunning like a fox,

be a swift greyhound to seize your chance” (Qajdar, 2004). Additionally, the change of generations is also seen as the wave-like movement of *zaman*: “*Aldyngy tolqyn – agalar, artqy tolqyn – iniler*” (“The front wave is the elder brothers, the back wave is the younger ones”) – expressing the idea of continuity, where one generation replaces another, just like waves in a river.

The Kazakh people have deeply understood the idea of “*zaman ozgeredi, adam ozgeredi*” (“time changes, people change”). It was believed that each era has its own unique characteristics, and the laws of life and societal demands inevitably evolve over time. For example, the proverb “*zamanina qarai adamı*” (“a person conforms to their time”) reflects the idea that human behavior and actions depend on the conditions of their era. This principle implies not only adaptation but also an awareness of the values and challenges of each period. In this sense, the proverb “*zaman tuzelmey, adam tuzelmes*” (“until time improves, a person will not improve”) highlights the interconnection between social conditions and human nature.

The Kazakh people have always considered adaptation to a changing world an essential part of life. In any era, a person must find ways to meet new challenges, adjust their way of life, and develop survival strategies. This is particularly evident in the nomadic lifestyle, where harmony with nature and flexibility of thinking were crucial. The Kazakh people understood that the ability to adapt was not just a survival strategy but also a form of wisdom that allowed them to preserve traditions and culture in changing circumstances.

An important aspect of discussing *zaman* is its interaction with humans. People influence the world around them, but they are also shaped by time and circumstances. For instance, it was believed that the unity of the people and justice in society could improve *zaman* itself. Peace and order within a country were not just a consequence of a good time but also its cause. This perspective particularly emphasizes the role of batyrs (warriors) and biys (judges) in strengthening moral and social values. As the saying goes: “*zaman osylai bolsa, jurt ta osylai bolady*” (“if the time is like this, then people will be like this too”). Another proverb states: “*qai zaman'nın bolmasın uly bir tulğasy bolady*” (“every era has its great figure”), which highlights that each epoch produces its own hero, wise person, or leader. Time is defined by individuals, their qualities, values, and actions. At the same time, there are eternal and unchanging values—humanity and moral

principles, which connect different eras and create a continuous flow of history.

As noted earlier, the complexity of understanding *zaman* is linked to its fluid nature. The Kazakh worldview is deeply rooted in the idea that each period brings its own challenges. This awareness formed the basis of the people's philosophical outlook and was reflected in their traditional way of life. The cyclical nature of time is expressed through the concept of "the sequence of eras". According to this view, good and bad times replace each other, and no state remains permanent. Kazakh wisdom holds that after hardship, relief will surely come, but after prosperity, challenges may arise as well.

Academician Garifolla Yesim notes that the concept of "*qily zaman*" ("turbulent times") is not just a historical term but a recurring socio-political crisis in every century. It is a pattern that all generations go through. He writes: "*qily zaman degenimiz adamdy qauip-qaterden saqtandyru, belgisiz bolashaq kundin sanasyn qalyptastyru*" ("qily zaman is a warning against dangers, a way to shape awareness of an uncertain future").

In other words, difficult times require conscious preparedness. The real threat is not the hardships themselves but the lack of readiness for them. In history, there has never been eternal prosperity, and a life without difficulties is a utopia.

A lack of preparedness for challenges can lead to a break in generational continuity, the loss of historical experience, and the weakening of national identity. A symbolic Kazakh metaphor reflects this idea: "*qaragai basyn sudagy shortan saldy*" ("a pike in the water snatched the top of the pine tree"), which embodies the Kazakh worldview of the world's unpredictability and constant change.

Kazakh thinkers never lulled people into utopian dreams but rather taught them to accept reality and prepare for hardships. They said: "*qily-qily zaman bolady*" ("there will be different times"), reminding people that trials are inevitable and that one must learn to live with patience and an awareness of the cyclical nature of life (Yesim, 2023).

Thus, the idea of *zaman* in Kazakh philosophy encompasses not only historical processes but also deep existential wisdom about change, survival, and the preservation of human values.

This is also confirmed in our religious perception. Time does not stand still; therefore, both the state of a person and the conditions of society change—bad days are replaced by good ones. "Thus, We alternate the days (of trials) among the people so that Allah may make evident

those who believe and take among you martyrs" (Quran, 2021). In other words, the alternation of times is necessary for equality among people, for their understanding and testing. Accordingly, human actions change, revealing their true values. Sometimes we face hardships, and sometimes we are freed from worries and enjoy peaceful days—this is the law of life. We perceive success and failure as either a blessing or its absence. Sometimes we laugh, and sometimes we cry—such is the path of life. It is well known that nothing in this world remains in place; everything changes and moves. Our people have conveyed this truth through the concept of *zaman* (time, era).

In the Kazakh worldview, three types of time are distinguished: past, present, and future. In folk literature, there are many descriptions of time: *qily zaman* (a turning point era), *zar zaman* (an era of sorrow), *tar zaman* (difficult times), *qu zaman* (a turbulent period), *nar zaman* (a glorious time), *zheruyik zaman* (a golden age), and "*qoi ustine boz torgai zhumyrtkalagan zaman*" (an ideal time when there was no need or hardship). A special place is occupied by the concept of *akyrzaman* (the end of the world). All these terms represent the people's assessment of various historical periods.

The concepts of *akyrzaman* (the end of the world), *qily zaman* (a turning point era), *zar zaman* (an era of sorrow), and *tar zaman* (difficult times) hold an important place in the Kazakh worldview, and each of them describes specific historical periods. Their differences are primarily related to the circumstances of the time, the causes of changes, and the condition of the people. Let us examine the meanings of these concepts in more detail:

Akyrzaman (The End of the World) – This is a religious and philosophical concept signifying the end of the world. In the Kazakh religious and philosophical worldview, it is associated with "the final times" and "the end of existence." It refers to the "Day of Judgment", the conclusion of all life. This concept is primarily based on Islamic beliefs. The Kazakh people integrated this term into their culture, interpreting it as a radical change in the world, the disappearance of humanity, or a disruption of natural balance.

Akyrzaman represents the complete end of the world, nature, and society. This period is characterized by fatalism, meaning an absolute and inevitable change that no one can influence. It evokes both natural and spiritual fear. At its core lies a religious and cosmological understanding of the world's destruction and the transition to eternal life.

Legends and narratives about the end of the world are widely spread among the Kazakh people. There is a common belief: “When *akyrzaman* comes, the earth will tremble, and the sky will shine brightly.” This is based on the religious faith that, with the arrival of the end of time, all life on earth will cease, the temporary world will come to an end, and eternal life will begin. In Islam, eternal life occurs in the afterlife after the establishment of *akyrzaman*.

Zar zaman is a socio-philosophical concept that emerged in Kazakh literature in the second half of the 19th century. The period known as *zar zaman* is characterized by changes in the socio-political life of Kazakh society. It was a time of intensified colonial policies, the destruction of the traditional Kazakh way of life, injustice, and spiritual crisis.

The poets of *zar zaman* expressed the people’s sorrow, protested against injustice, and condemned the consequences of colonialism in their works. During this period, the Kazakh people lost their traditional values and were forced to adapt to a new social reality. The poetry of this movement reflected the hardships of the people, the consequences of oppression, and the loss of justice. *Zar zaman* is used to refer to a specific historical period, particularly associated with the decline of traditional Kazakh society.

This era was marked by a gloomy mood, disappointment, and a sense of regret for the past and present, overshadowing hope for the future. The people looked to the future with anxiety, fearing the loss of their national values due to colonial oppression. There was a growing threat to the destruction of national identity.

Tar zaman refers to a period of repression, hardships, resource scarcity, and restrictions on the freedom of the people. The word “*tar*” means “compressed” or “under pressure.” This term signifies a limitation of personal freedom and a difficult social situation. In such periods, political, economic, and social pressures intensified, reducing people’s ability to make choices and restricting their means of existence. Society faced hardships, restrictions, and a sense of hopelessness. However, despite these difficulties, an inner desire to resist and fight remained.

For example, the Soviet period, with its repressions, famines, and the threat of losing national identity, is considered *tar zaman*. During this time, people’s living conditions were extremely harsh, their freedoms were restricted, and their everyday

lives and spiritual world were subjected to severe pressure.

Qily zaman is a term that denotes difficult and critical periods in the history of the Kazakh people. The word “*qily*” in the Kazakh language means “complex” or “varied.” *Qily zaman* refers to eras filled with changes and contradictions, challenging times that had a significant impact on the fate of the people. During such periods, social, political, and natural conditions worsened, putting the survival and peaceful life of the people to the test.

The academician Garifolla Yesim argued that the concept of “*zaman*” in Kazakh worldview is connected to the unity of time and space. When space and time become compressed, it is perceived as “*qily zaman*”. This highlights the complexity of the concept of time in the Kazakh worldview and its inseparable connection with space. The ancestors of the Kazakhs perceived such times as a narrowing of space and time. In Kazakh beliefs, human beings and society exist in an interconnected state within *zaman*, yet spatial reality remains fluid and changeable.

Historical periods considered *qily zaman* include the Dzungar invasions, the colonial policies of the Russian Empire, and the famine and repressions of the Soviet era. During such times of hardship, thinkers like Asan Qaigy foresaw changes in *zaman* and urged the people to prepare for difficulties.

In the history of the Kazakh people, there have been periods that can be called *qily zaman* (turbulent times), such as the Dzungar invasions, the colonial policies of the Russian Empire, and the famine and repressions of the Soviet era. During such times, wise men like Asan Qaigy foresaw changes in the era, warned the people of upcoming hardships, and called for preparedness.

From a historical point of view, the term “*qily zaman*” emerged during periods of severe hardship for the Kazakh people, especially in times of struggle with external enemies, colonisation or social and political changes. These periods brought about dramatic changes in the life of the people and subjected them to many trials, due to which the term “*qily zaman*” became a symbol of difficult epochs in the people’s consciousness. During these periods, hope and hopelessness go hand in hand. Social and political conditions often change, and people’s faith in the future may be shaken (Salymatova et al., 2025).

“There were times of great trials. Time was changing, fortune was unstable, and established foundations were under threat. The people of the

Kazakh Horde, like a dense forest, bore the weight of suffering. Enemies surrounding us from all sides watched closely, waiting for our banner to fall. It was a time of instability, an era of upheaval. The heroes of the past were forced to endure harsh conditions, sleep on cold ground, and remain vigilant. The people had to strengthen their defense before authority could gain stability” (Amantai, 2016).

Mukhtar Auezov’s historical work “Qily Zaman” depicts the national liberation uprising of 1916, portraying the hardships and struggles of the Kazakh people during that period.

The poet Qaztughan Zhyrau also deeply worried about the fate of his homeland. The further he moved away from the banks of the Volga, the more he realized the true value of his native land. He referred to the period of the Kazakh people’s annexation to the Russian Empire as *qily zaman*, as he was troubled by the nation’s future and the uncertain prospects ahead (The philosophy of the Kazakh poet-zhyrau, 2008).

All these concepts play a significant role in Kazakh historical and socio-philosophical thought. They describe specific periods in the life of the Kazakh people, their trials and transformations, helping to understand the difficulties faced by society. *Zaman* is a conceptual representation of the social and historical reality of a given period (Nuryshева, 2015).

In his study “A socio-philosophical analysis of the formation and development of historical consciousness,” B. Satershinov identifies several periods in Kazakh worldview: *altyn zaman* (golden age), *qily zaman* (turbulent time), *zar zaman* (time of sorrow), *zhana zaman* (new era), and *kazirgi zaman* (modern age).

Altyn zaman refers to the peak of the Great Steppe’s nomadic civilization, when the alliance between the Kazakhs and the Nogais flourished during the Golden Horde period. Traces of historical consciousness from this era can be found in epic poems such as *Erqosai* and *Erkokshe*.

The next *Qily Zaman* is associated with the separation of the Kazakhs and the Nogais and the beginning of a complex period of Kazakh statehood formation. This historical stage, spanning the 15th–18th centuries, is reflected in the works of zhyrau such as Asan Qaigy, who sang about the search for a better homeland, the establishment of borders, and the struggle for independence.

The next period, *zar zaman*, was when the Kazakh people lost their freedom, were forced to

abandon their nomadic way of life—the foundation of their existence—and fell under the rule of a foreign state. Nostalgia for the past, inner protest against colonial subjugation, and the pain of losing their free nomadic lifestyle found vivid expression in the works of poets known as *zar zaman* aqyndary (“poets of the era of sorrow”), including Shortanbai Qanayuly, Dulat Babataiuly, and Murat Monkeuly.

Zhana zaman marks the time when, under colonial oppression, national consciousness began to awaken, and the people rose in resistance against imperialism. During this period, reformist movements spread across all Eastern nations, and ideas of national development, independence, and cultural revival materialized through the Enlightenment movement, the ideology of Alash Orda, and other national initiatives.

The next stage in Kazakh history is *kazirgi zaman*, characterized by the formation of unions and the threat of losing national culture under a totalitarian system. The development of historical consciousness during this time is linked to modernization and globalization, the transition to industrial and post-industrial societies, which led to significant changes in national identity (Satershinov, 2010).

Conclusion

The concepts we have examined confirm that the term *zaman* in Kazakh worldview has a deep and broad meaning. It is not just chronological time but also a reflection of the phases of societal, natural, and human life, their transformations, and transitions. *Zaman* is a temporal, historical, and cultural category that influences not only individuals but also the destiny of an entire people. Each era shapes the lifestyle and values of its generation; thus, *zaman* is preserved in the historical memory of the people through significant events. “Among all philosophical categories, the concept of *zaman* is the closest to comprehending time in its full scope. It encompasses fundamental changes in the universe, life, and existence, reflecting the most crucial historical periods” (Ergaliev, 1993). The understanding of *zaman* is formed through people’s perceptions, emotions, reflections, and consciousness. In the Kazakh worldview, this phenomenon is perceived as an inseparable unity of time and space.

From the above, we can conclude that *zaman* is a complex phenomenon. Its examination requires a

comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach. In the Kazakh worldview, the periods when *zaman* emerges as a distinct and pressing issue correspond to times marked by historical and political events, changes in social life, shifts in cultural values, and heightened existential tensions in which the meaning of life is reconsidered. It follows that *zaman* is defined by the event that has actually occurred in reality. Naturally, there are also notions of the future *zaman*, such as the proverbial “era when a skylark lays eggs on the back of a sheep,” yet these remain only as images in the mind—formed as aspirations, ideals, and ideas—which, due to their subjective nature, cannot fully reveal or determine the meaning of *zaman*, and are instead constructed as projections. Having shaped their way of life in harmony with nature, the Kazakh

people regarded *zaman* as a form of mastering space and time.

Perspectives on *zaman* shape a person’s principles, character, and worldview. The path to preserving national identity and striving for the eternal existence of the people begins with self-awareness, with analyzing the traditional concepts of Kazakh thought. By contemplating *zaman*, one embarks on a journey through time—moving from the past, through the present, into the future.

Time is the endless cycle of life, while *zaman* is inseparably linked to its meaning. We understand ourselves through our era. As Boris Pasternak wrote: “You are a prisoner of time, taken as an eternal pledge.” These words reflect the fate of all humanity.

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Поступила 29 марта 2025

Принята 20 июня 2025