

# Mnemonic Practices and Cultural Memory: Analysis of Symbols and Rituals

 KURALAY YERMAGAMBETOVA, DANA ORAZBAYEVA,  
 MEIRAM KIKIMBAYEV,  ADIYA RAMAZANOVA

Department of Philosophy, L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University 010008, 2 Satpayev Street, Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan  
Email: [yermagambetovakuralay@gmail.com](mailto:yermagambetovakuralay@gmail.com)

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The study aimed to address memorial practices in the context of the formation of cultural memory in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Memorial objects and their socio-cultural context were addressed in the study, including the processes of rethinking memory in the countries of the region after independence. To achieve the aim of the study, key memorials were selected, information about their symbolism and architecture was collected and systematised, and a comparison with global memorialisation practices was made. The study demonstrated that memorial sites in Central Asia contribute to the preservation of national identity and cultural memory by integrating local symbols, ornaments, religious motifs, and historical narratives. The symbolism of memorials in Central Asia combines history with cultural traditions, creating a unique space for collective commemoration. The rituals that accompany memorial practices reflect the desire for social unity through an emphasis on shared values and past events. The peculiarity of the region is that Soviet monuments, unlike in many other post-Soviet countries, are rarely dismantled. Instead, they adapt to new realities by rethinking symbolism, changing the context or integrating national motifs. This approach contributes to the formation of a unique narrative of national memory that organically connects the historical past with modern ideas of national identity and cultural heritage. The findings underline the importance of memorial objects as instruments of cultural memory and provide a broader perspective on their role in shaping socio-cultural identities in postcolonial societies.

**Keywords:** collective memory, postcolonialism, national identity, memorial complex, historical narrative

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## INTRODUCTION

Studying memorial objects and practices clarifies how societies construct attitudes to history. In postcolonial contexts, memorials preserve local identity and link to global trends. They are places of memory and instruments of cultural policy that shape historical narratives, national identity, and social solidarity. Material culture is central to memorialisation. E. Hallam and J. Hockey (2020) show that material objects, including memorials, transmit cultural narratives and, through emotion, consolidate shared memories. However, this general theoretical approach underplays local and regional specificities in postcolonial societies.

A. M. Shanken (2022) studies how urban space interacts with memory, showing how memorials adapt to urban transformations and integrate into everyday life. He notes that memorials in urban centres become sites of public gatherings and political action, but his examples are Western, with little attention to Central Asia. R. C. Lauzon (2022) addresses the mnemonic function of memorials, showing how memorial spaces link past, present and future through collective memory. Memorials are 'active spaces' that shape public perceptions of historical events, yet his discussion focuses on Western cases (e.g. the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin) and omits postcolonial challenges. Q. Wang (2021) explores how cultural aspects of memory shape collective consciousness. Memory is intertwined with cultural narratives shaped by education, traditions, and social practices. The work addresses general mechanisms and omits specific regional examples. C. Kang and H. Yu (2022) use semiotics to analyse rituals of cultural memory, treating rituals as key mechanisms that transmit memory via symbolic actions and unite societies around common values, but they overlook adaptation to regional social challenges. R. Heersmink (2023) examines materiality in forming cultural identity, arguing that artefacts, including memorials, carry memory and shape collective identity; the treatment remains general and ignores specific regional practices. L. Yanez and C. Vanessa (2022) analyse 'nomadic memorials' as a new dimension of memorialisation, showing temporal and spatial flexibility, but leave out stationary memorials that shape local identity. M. Azaryahu (2021) analyses commemorative onomastics, highlighting names and titles as primary ways to preserve memory across space and time, yet rituals and symbolic design are scarcely addressed. U. Capdepón et al. (2020) study memorials to violent pasts within urban culture, showing how such objects enter contemporary urban spaces and influence perceptions of history; the analysis is Western-centric. Zh. E. Nurbaev and Zh. J. Kiyubek (2022) analyse how historical events shape national identity in Central Asia but do not cover symbolic and ritual dimensions of memorialisation. These works show progress but reveal gaps on symbolism, rituals, and socio-cultural impacts of memorials in postcolonial contexts. This study addresses these gaps with cases from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. It will analyse the symbolism, rituals, and socio-cultural significance of memorial sites in these countries for collective memory. The tasks are the following: to study the symbolism of Central Asian memorials; to analyse associated ritual practices; to assess impacts on socio-cultural processes in post-colonial contexts.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study analysed memorial practices, symbolism and rituals associated with memorial sites in the context of cultural memory formation in the postcolonial space of Central Asia. The main analysis was focused on five countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, which share a common historical heritage but demonstrate unique approaches to memorialisation.

The materials used in the research included academic papers relevant to the topic of this study, as well as information on memorial sites, cultural monuments and rituals associated with them. The main objects of analysis included memorials such as Korkyt Ata, Otpan Tau, the Death Waggon and monuments to the victims of the Atu in Kazakhstan; the Ata-Beyit Memorial Complex and the Monument to Manas the Great in Kyrgyzstan; the Alisher Navoi memorial, the Friendship of Peoples Monument and the Jahangir Mausoleum in Uzbekistan;

the National Reconciliation and Revival Memorial Complex, Victory Park in Dushanbe, and the Memorial to the Victims of the 1949 Khayit Earthquake in Tajikistan; and the Hulk Hakidasi Memorial Complex, the Milletiņ ogullary Monument, the Baky şöhrat Memorial, and the Ruhý tagzym Monument in Turkmenistan.

For the theoretical analysis, a systematic literature search was conducted in the Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar databases. The search queries included the following keywords: ‘memorial practices’, ‘cultural memory’, ‘postcolonial studies’, ‘Central Asian memorials’, ‘symbolism in memorials’ and ‘memorial rituals’. Particular attention was devoted to studies that highlight aspects of postcolonial memory, the meanings of symbols and rituals, and the cultural peculiarities of memorialisation. The literature was selected according to the criteria of relevance, scientific novelty, recognition of the source’s authority and its relevance to the research topic, and the date of publication was considered – no earlier than 2020.

Field research methods were used to collect data, such as observations and semi-structured interviews with local residents, ceremony participants, and visitors to memorial sites. The study was conducted in five Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, with a focus on the following memorials: Korqyt Ata in Kazakhstan, the Ata-Beyit Memorial Complex in Kyrgyzstan, the Alisher Navoi Monument in Uzbekistan, the National Reconciliation Memorial Complex in Tajikistan, and the Hulk Khakidasi Memorial Complex in Turkmenistan.

## **Observation**

Over the course of the year, researchers conducted observations of rituals and events related to the memorials. Their observations included participation in state ceremonies, such as Independence Day celebrations, anniversaries of tragic events, and national holidays, as well as informal practices (such as visits to memorials by local residents, including flower-laying ceremonies).

## **Semi-structured Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with various groups of participants: residents of surrounding areas, young people, tourists, and cultural experts. The questions focused on what the memorials symbolise, how historical significance is perceived, and what personal feelings are experienced during the ceremonies.

## **Data Analysis**

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, identifying key themes and images related to the memorials. These themes included memories of the past, symbols of the struggle for independence, the importance of preserving historical memory, and national identity. The analysis also examined the perception of the memorials in the context of contemporary political situations and post-Soviet transformations.

A comparative analysis of the memorial sites was conducted, including an assessment of their functions, symbolic meanings, and the role in collective memory. The post-colonial context that influenced the rethinking of Soviet heritage was emphasised.

## RESULTS

### The Importance of Memorial Sites in the Practices of Cultural Memory

Memory of the past and its preservation form a collective identity. Through commemorative practices – including memorial sites, symbols and rituals – communities shape interpretations of history that influence the present and future. Memorials serve as key elements of cultural memory, commemorating events and promoting shared values while condensing historical, cultural and emotional meanings (O'Connor 2019).

Globally, memorials function as crucial nodes in collective remembrance. The Holocaust Memorial in Berlin embodies tragedy through thousands of concrete stelae forming a disorienting labyrinth. The National September 11 Memorial in New York creates spaces for collective reflection through pools on the Twin Towers' footprints with engraved names (Brown 2020). The Memorial to the Holodomor Victims in Ukraine commemorates the Soviet-era famine that killed millions, while the Hiroshima Peace Memorial serves as a global symbol of nuclear horror with annual rites including silence and floating lanterns (De Luna et al. 2023). These sites demonstrate how memorials foster intergenerational bonds through repeated rituals.

In Central Asia, memorial practices acquired particular significance following the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. The shift from the Soviet rule to independence raised pressing issues regarding the formation of national identities, the recognition of historical traumas, and the management of intricate historical legacies. Unlike Central Europe, where decommissioning included the rapid dismantling of Soviet monuments (Gabowitsch 2021), Central Asian countries followed more adaptive patterns, balancing sovereignty assertion with geopolitical and domestic considerations. The region's memorial landscape reflects this negotiation, with new monuments affirming independence while selectively retaining or reinterpreting Soviet-era sites.

### Memorial Practices Across Central Asia

Central Asian memorial practices engage with multiple temporal layers: pre-colonial heritage, the Soviet period, specific repressions and tragedies, independence struggles, and post-Soviet nation-building.

Kazakhstan constructs a national narrative that emphasises continuity with pre-Soviet cultural traditions. The Independence Monument in Almaty symbolises restored sovereignty. The Korkyt Ata Memorial Complex in the Karaganda region connects contemporary identity to pre-Soviet roots through commemoration of a legendary sage from Kazakh epic tradition (Zanadil 2024), functioning as a pilgrimage site where visitors reconnect with ancestral traditions. The Otpan Tau memorial, which opened in 1991, honours heroes who died for freedom and includes traditional Kazakh architectural features (Medeuova 2024).

Kazakhstan also addresses Soviet-era repressions. The Death Waggon Monument in Semey commemorates victims taken to hard labour during the Great Terror, testifying to the thousands of repressed people who passed through Kazakhstan between 1930 and 1950 (Saktaganova 2021). The memorial complex in the village of Koram, which opened in 1993, honours Uyghur villagers who were oppressed during the Atu tragedy in 1918 (Medeubaev et al. 2023). Estimates indicate that massacres, starting in Zhanashar and continuing along the Kuldzhin road, may have killed up to 25,000 Uyghurs, forcing many to flee to China.

These memorials serve as gathering points for community events, memorial dinners, and collective remembrance, supporting social identification and national memory for historically marginalised groups.

Kyrgyzstan emphasises its epic heritage as a foundation for its post-independence identity. The Monument to Manas the Great in central Bishkek, erected in 1995, celebrates the legendary hero whose epic holds a central place in Kyrgyz culture (Singh 2022). The epic's themes of freedom, heroism and brotherhood provide a cultural framework for understanding contemporary sovereignty, by symbolising unity and serving educational purposes. Ata-Beyit, on the outskirts of Bishkek, honours those who died in independence struggles by hosting state events, national holidays, and memorial ceremonies. The Przewalski Memorial Complex south of Bishkek demonstrates Kyrgyzstan's approach of retaining certain monuments while reinterpreting their significance to emphasise scientific achievement.

Uzbekistan reflects a state strategy emphasising ancient civilised heritage. The monument to Alisher Navoi in Tashkent, erected in 1947, has been retained with renewed emphasis post-independence (Xolmanova 2021). Navoi, a poet, philosopher and statesman who created the Uzbek literary language, confirms the region's cultural accomplishments. The state invested in promoting Timurid heritage through sites like the Dorus-Saodat Memorial Complex with the Jahangir Mausoleum in Samarkand, which preserves this legacy and testifies to the period's cultural and political significance (Golombek, Subtelny 2023). Uzbekistan's diverse population has retained the Monument of Friendship of Peoples, unveiled in 1974, and reinterpreted its meaning to support contemporary nation-building. The Independence Monument, which was unveiled in 1991, stood for freedom and independence.

Tajikistan addresses both historical depth and recent trauma. After the Civil War of 1992–1997 (Nourzhanov 2024), symbols of reconciliation became necessary. In 1999, for the 1100th anniversary of the Samanid State (Meirison, Muzakki 2021), Dushanbe opened the Memorial Complex of National Reconciliation and Revival with a monument to Ismail Samani, serving multiple functions: celebrating mediaeval heritage, symbolising conflict resolution, and promoting unity. Victory Park commemorates soldiers who died in World War II, maintaining memorials of sacrifice and patriotism. The memorial to victims of the 1949 Khaiti earthquake, which claimed thousands of lives (Havenith, Bourdeau 2024), uses symbolic forms recalling destroyed buildings to affirm reconstruction capacity.

Turkmenistan developed a distinctive approach emphasising Turkmen historical continuity. The Hulk Khakidasi complex in southwestern Ashgabat gathers monuments to key events, including the 1881 Battle of Geok Tepe, the 1948 Ashgabat earthquake, and World War II heroes (Doose 2021). The monument 'Milletiň ogullary' depicts a mother with sons, focusing on bravery and dedication. The Baky Şöhrat Memorial with the Eternal Flame honours World War II heroes through annual commemorations. The 'Ruhy tagzym' memorial commemorates earthquake victims while highlighting unity and harmony. Together these sites form a cultural space integrating selected historical events and national values.

### **The Role of Ritual**

Rituals impart these memorials social and emotional force through repetition. At Ata-Beyit in Kyrgyzstan, state ceremonies on national holidays link contemporary politics to historical

struggles. In Tajikistan, Victory Park hosts public events, maintaining historical consciousness. In Kazakhstan, commemorations at sites like the Death Waggon monument and Uyghur massacre memorials involve silence, flowers, and collective remembrance. These ritual practices create temporal rhythms structuring memory, establishing continuity between past tragedies and present identities. Memorial dinners at Uyghur sites and pilgrimage practices at Korkyt Ata demonstrate how rituals transform physical monuments into living sites of memory, actively shaping community bonds.

The Central Asian experience demonstrates that memorial practices in postcolonial contexts operate simultaneously at multiple scales: addressing local community traumas, constructing national narratives, and positioning states within broader dialogues about historical memory. Unlike the rapid monument removal seen in Central Europe after 1989, Central Asian countries adopted gradual approaches shaped by diverse factors, including significant multinational populations, economic relationships with neighbouring states, and governance structures managing memory production through state institutions. This reveals that approaches to historical memory do not follow a single trajectory but adapt to specific political, demographic and cultural conditions.

Preliminary results indicated that memorials in Central Asia play a significant role in shaping public perception of historical events and in reinforcing national identity. For instance, in Kazakhstan, the Korkyt Ata Monument is perceived as an important symbol of connection to ancient traditions and the culture of the people, while the Death Waggon Memorial reminds of the tragic past related to political repression. In Kyrgyzstan, the Monument to Manas the Great symbolises heroism and national unity, while the Ata-Beyit Memorial commemorates the victims of the struggle for independence.

Additionally, rituals such as flower-laying ceremonies, participation in state events, and informal gatherings at memorial sites help create a link between the past and the present, reinforcing national consciousness and uniting generations. The study revealed that each of these memorials retains elements of traditional customs and modern reinterpretations, which helps integrate old heritage into new political and social realities.

The empirical study showed that memorials in Central Asia preserve historical memory and actively contribute to the shaping of national identity. The rituals associated with these memorials play a key role in uniting society and transmitting collective memory to future generations. Although memorial practices vary across the countries, they generally demonstrate a successful integration of local traditions with global approaches to memory preservation.

### **Post-Independence Approaches**

After gaining independence in 1991, each Central Asian country came up with new ways to remember their history while also taking into account a number of other factors. Unlike Eastern Europe's rapid Soviet monument removal, Central Asian countries adopted gradual approaches shaped by several factors: significant multinational populations (particularly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) affecting inter-ethnic relations, economic relationships with neighbouring states through post-Soviet organisations, and governance structures concentrating memory production decisions in state institutions rather than facilitating a widespread public debate.

Each country developed distinct strategies through: (1) new memorials asserting pre-Soviet cultural foundations, (2) acknowledgement of specific historical traumas, and

(3) selective retention of monuments that could be reinterpreted. This system differs from Eastern European patterns, representing a distinctly Central Asian approach to postcolonial memory work emphasising stability and continuity alongside transformation.

### **Analysis of Memorial Traditions in Different Regions of Central Asia**

A comparison of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan's memorial practices shows the importance of monuments in Central Asia's postwar developments. These memorials reflect national identity, political change and cultural customs, and shape regional memory. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have memorial monuments that reflect national history and societal conscience. All these countries share Soviet heritage, but each has unique historical events that affected memorial customs. Memorial structures like the Death Waggon Monument commemorate Kazakhstan's Stalin-era political repression. These memorials commemorate Chechens, Kalmyks, and others who were deported to Kazakhstan and killed. After independence, the Ata-Beyit Memorial honours freedom heroes and marks crucial milestones in national awareness. Kyrgyzstan, which went through similar Soviet processes, prioritises maintaining its epic history. The Manas the Great Monument emphasises traditional culture, heroic mythology, and identity by connecting the past and present. Kyrgyz monuments to national heroes like Ata-Beyit memorialise both political events and cultural heritage. Uzbekistan honours mediaeval figures like Alisher Navoi with memorials. The Dorus-Saodat Memorial Complex and other monuments honour outstanding figures and Uzbekistan's cultural and scientific achievements throughout prosperous times. In Tajikistan, memorial sites like the National Reconciliation Memorial Complex commemorate the conclusion of the Civil War (1992–1997) and reunion. They emphasise the nation's cultural narrative and the need to restore peace and togetherness via historical memory. Turkmenistan commemorates historical events and natural disasters like the Battle of Geok Tepe (1881) and the Ashgabat earthquake (1948). Monuments and traditional symbols provide a cultural environment that honours grief and courage at the Hulk Khakidasi Complex.

Memorial places shape national identities through their symbolism. Kazakhstan combines independence symbols and political repression victims with national culture. The Death Waggon Memorial commemorates national tragedies with symbols of sorrow and sacrifice. Kyrgyzstan employs national mythology to express valour and solidarity. The Monument to Manas the Great represents both a historical hero and cultural elements that shape national identity. In Uzbekistan, memorials to outstanding people like Alisher Navoi symbolise cultural and scientific advancement. They emphasise spiritual heritage for national identity by combining religious and traditional cultural elements. Memorials like Dushanbe's Victory Park celebrate World War II heroes and promote national memory and patriotism in Tajikistan. Annual flower-laying ceremonies raise historical awareness. Turkmenistan memorials like the Hulk Khakidasi Complex blend tragic and noble depictions of history.

Central Asian memorial customs are heavily rooted in post-independence political changes. Kazakhstan, where the Soviet rule left a deep footprint, uses memorials to restore national dignity and acknowledge past traumas. The Manas Monument symbolises Kyrgyzstan's post-independence political context, which was shaped by economic and social developments. Memorial rituals focus on national traditions and the struggle for freedom. Since independence, Uzbekistan has prioritised preserving its rich cultural heritage and

strengthening its national identity, as shown by the creation of memorials to great figures like Alisher Navoi. The National Reconciliation and Revival Memorial Complex in Tajikistan symbolises the end of the civil war (1992–1997) and the government's peace efforts. Politically, it shows the state's power to unite society via commemoration. Memorial traditions like the Halk Khakidasy Complex in Turkmenistan commemorate historical events like the Battle of Geok Tepe and contribute to state identity. Unity, heroism, and historical heritage are promoted by these monuments to legitimise the administration.

In each of these countries, memorials serve different functions, from commemorating national events to honouring the personal achievements of prominent individuals. In Kazakhstan, memorials typically focus on commemorating common tragedies, such as repression, deportation, and the struggle for independence. In Kyrgyzstan, monuments often focus on the perpetuation of national heroes and mythological figures that serve as examples of national unity and strength. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, focuses more on commemorating scientific and cultural achievements, particularly through monuments to great personalities such as Alisher Navoi. In Tajikistan, memorials focus on commemorating tragic events and national reconciliation processes after the civil war. They reflect the historical challenges that have contributed to the formation of modern Tajik identity. In Turkmenistan, the thematic focus of the memorials is on events that unite the people, symbolising the common struggle for freedom and independence, which strengthens national pride and unity.

Memorial sites in the five countries also vary in type, reflecting cultural and historical traditions. In Kazakhstan, these are often monumental monuments and complexes that perpetuate the deaths or struggle of people against political repression. Kyrgyzstan has more sculptural monuments that reflect the culture of epic and folk traditions. In Tajikistan, memorials cover both natural disasters and military events. Turkmenistan uses monumental complexes, such as the Hulk of Khakidasy, which combine several events in one memorial space. The architectural styles used in memorials also vary from country to country. Kazakhstan often chooses monumental forms that emphasise the scale of the tragedy and struggle. In Kyrgyzstan, the style of monuments often embodies traditional Kyrgyz motifs and elements symbolising mythological heritage. Uzbekistan uses architectural forms that combine Islamic traditions with local cultural influences. In Tajikistan, traditional motifs are combined with modern elements, as seen in the National Reconciliation Memorial. Turkmenistan has a monumental approach, notably in the Halk Hakidasi Complex, which combines majesty and cultural identity.

These theoretical implications suggest that memory studies scholarship requires greater attention to the diversity of postcolonial trajectories and various factors shaping memory politics. Central Asian cases demonstrate that rapid iconoclasm represents one possible response to political change but not a universal one, and that its absence does not necessarily indicate failure to address historical legacies. Rather, gradual memory politics can constitute adaptation to circumstances, including multinational populations, regional relationships, and governance structures, making rapid transformation challenging.

In the context of Central Asia, avoiding mnemonic iconoclasm is evident in the region's approach, where instead of demolishing or dismantling Soviet-era monuments, countries adopted a more gradual and adaptive strategy. Rather than completely destroying symbols of the Soviet era, these monuments were reinterpreted or supplemented with new national symbols, allowing for a connection with the past without rejecting it, while also highlighting a new national identity. For instance, in Kazakhstan, Great Patriotic War monuments remain,

but the emphasis is placed on Kazakhstan's contribution to the victory, helping to strengthen national identity. This process preserves historical heritage while adapting it to new political and social realities, avoiding the radical changes seen in other regions.

## DISCUSSION

Central Asian memorials shape collective memory through symbolism, rituals, and socio-cultural functions. They blend local traditions with global trends and align with A. Rigney's view of shifting 'mnemonic regimes' (2022). Monuments that lose meaning are either transformed or removed. In Central Asia, they are mostly reconceptualised by adding national symbols to Soviet forms. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan adapt gradually, while many European cases decommunised more radically. Symbolism underpins identity, consistent with B. Wagoner and I. Bresc  on design and emotional impact (2022). Central Asian sites rely on ornaments, geometric motifs, and religious signs. The Korkyt Ata memorial in Kazakhstan fuses architecture with musical heritage, linking culture, history and modernity. Global practice more often uses universal symbols aimed at broad audiences. Central Asia keeps a balance between tradition and contemporary readings. Rituals transmit narratives and integrate communities, echoing T. Hammer's findings in Prijedor (2021). In Central Asia, they are nationally framed, for example, ceremonies at Ata-Beyit in Kyrgyzstan commemorating victims of 1930s repression with participation of officials and civil society. In the Balkans, the focus is reconciliation across groups. Both preserve memory, and goals differ.

After regime change, Central Asia tends to reinterpret rather than dismantle. This contrasts with S. Yekelchik's account of Kyiv's mass removals (2021). In Kazakhstan, Great Patriotic War memorials remain but are reframed toward Kazakh contributions, strengthening identity without erasing heritage. Globally, as V. Sukovata notes (2022), demolition often creates 'clean space' for new narratives. Central Asia rarely removes monuments, instead shifts emphasis or adds national elements. A. Yatsyk and V. Sazonov (2024) show that Estonia often dismantles or relocates Soviet monuments as perceived threats; Central Asia integrates them into new contexts. Central Asian memorials thus preserve national identity, support social integration, and pass history across generations while engaging with global memorialisation.

The results of this study align with broader trends in memorialisation, demonstrating how monuments in Central Asia function as tools for shaping collective memory and reinforcing national identity. Similar to other regions, memorials in Central Asia combine local traditions with global influences, balancing the preservation of historical legacies with the adaptation to contemporary political and social realities. While some regions engage in rapid dismantling or radical redefinition of memorials in response to political change, Central Asia tends to adopt a more gradual and nuanced approach, reinterpreting Soviet-era symbols and integrating new national elements. This process supports the preservation of cultural memory while reinforcing national narratives and fostering social integration, aligning with broader findings on how memorials serve as instruments for both historical reflection and political legitimisation.

## CONCLUSIONS

Symbolism, rituals, and socio-cultural functions of Central Asian memorials shape collective memory and national identity. Memorials integrate local ornaments, geometric and religious

motifs, linking heritage with today; Korkyt Ata in Kazakhstan fuses architecture with musical heritage to signal harmony of tradition and modernity. Rituals bind sites to society and integrate communities; at Ata-Beyit in Kyrgyzstan, ceremonies commemorate victims of Soviet repression and revive national identity. Soviet monuments are typically reinterpreted rather than dismantled by adding national symbols or shifting emphasis; in Kazakhstan, Great Patriotic War memorials keep form but foreground Kazakh contributions. Central Asian practice preserves and reframes heritage within a global discourse that elsewhere more often removes monuments. Implications include guidance for cultural policy and practice that preserves heritage and connects local narratives with global contexts; results are useful for architects, cultural managers and policymakers. Limits and next steps include focus on three Central Asian countries and on official sites; expand to other post-Soviet regions, include unofficial memorials, and study digital memorialisation.

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KURALAY YERMAGAMBETOVA, DANA ORAZBAYEVA, MEIRAM KIKIMBAYEV,  
ADIYA RAMAZANOVA

## Mnemoninės praktikos ir kultūrinė atmintis: simbolių ir ritualų analizė

### *Santrauka*

Straipsnio tikslas – ištirti memorialines praktikas kultūrinės atminties formavimo kontekste Kazachstane, Uzbekistane, Kirgizijoje, Tadžikistane ir Turkmėnistane. Tyrime analizuojami memorialiniai objektai bei jų sociokultūrinis kontekstas, kartu nagrinėjant atminties permąstymo procesus Centrinės Azijos šalyse po nepriklausomybės atkūrimo. Siekiant šio tikslo, atrinkti reprezentatyviausi šio pobūdžio paminklai, surinkta ir susisteminta informacija apie jų simbolinę reikšmę ir architektūrą. Atliktas palyginimas su pasaulinėmis memorializacijos praktikomis. Tyrimas atskleidė, kad Centrinės Azijos šalių memorialinės vietos, įtraukdamos vietos simbolių, ornamentiką, religinius motyvus ir istorinius naratyvus, prisideda prie nacionalinio identiteto bei kultūrinės atminties išsaugojimo. Šiems kompleksams būdinga simbolika sujungia istorinį tęstinumą ir kultūrinę tradicijas, formuodama unikalią kolektyvinę atminties erdvę. Su memorialinėmis praktikomis susiję ritualai, pabrėžiantys bendras vertybes ir istorinę patirtį, atspindi socialinės sanglaudos siekį. Šis regionas išsiskiria tuo, kad priešingai nei daugelyje kitų posovietinių valstybių, sovietmečio paminklai čia retai demontuojami. Jie pritaikomi prie naujos tikrovės transformuojant simboliką ir interpretacinį kontekstą ar įtraukiant nacionalinius elementus. Toks požiūris leidžia formuoti Centrinės Azijos šalyse vientisą nacionalinės atminties naratyvą, kuriame istorinė praeitis natūraliai sujungiama su šiuolaikinėmis tapatybės ir kultūrinio paveldo koncepcijomis.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** kolektyvinė atmintis, postkolonializmas, nacionalinė tapatybė, memorialinis kompleksas, istorinis naratyvas