JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF HISTORIANS
ISSN: 3105-0042. eISSN: 3105-0050

NATIONAL HISTORY – ОТАН ТАРИХЫ – ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННАЯ ИСТОРИЯ

Research Article
МРНТИ / IRSTI 03.20.00

https://doi.org/10.65076/3105-0042.2026.2.38.50

Historical consciousness of the population of Kazakhstan (based on an expert survey of 2021)

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Abstract. The article presents the results of sociological research conducted within the framework of the project "Development of scientifically grounded concept of formation of modern historical science of Kazakhstan". One hundred Kazakhstani experts-historians specializing in various aspects of the development of domestic historical science were surveyed by means of in-depth interviews and questionnaire methods. Historiographical analysis of works of Kazakhstani and foreign scientists determined that conducting sociological surveys in Kazakhstan in the field of history is a very rare phenomenon. They were mainly related to the study of the state of historical consciousness. The conducted survey addressed the problem of formation and the state of historical memory of modern Kazakhstanis, as it was assessed by the experts themselves. The issues studied included attitude and interest in history, the level of historical literacy, and many others. An important issue was the opinion of experts on the demand of the scientific community to create a new concept of historical consciousness to replace the one that was adopted in the mid-1990s. Another significant part of this study was to identify the most effective, in the opinion of experts, tools for the formation of historical memory: cinema, books, mass media, school, etc., as well as to assess their role and degree of influence. A survey conducted among Kazakhstani experts–professional historians–allowed us to draw a number of conclusions regarding the content, nature, and prospects for the formation, development, and current level of historical consciousness among Kazakhstanis during the survey period. Despite some differences in assessments, the experts surveyed were fairly unanimous in their conclusions about the citizens of Kazakhstan's sustained and regular interest in the country's history. However, despite the demonstrated interest in history, they consider its level to be insufficiently high. A factor that may at least partially explain this result is the state's insufficient or ineffective efforts to foster historical consciousness among citizens. Therefore, they noted the need for consolidated efforts by both professional historians and government agencies to raise public interest in history in general and improve historical literacy in particular. Another important result of the survey was the need, voiced by the majority of experts, to revise and update the "Concept of Historical Consciousness" in line with current realities. However, as the survey results show, many experts were unable to clearly articulate which points in the current Concept should be excluded or amended, limiting themselves to simply stating the need for changes. Furthermore, the survey revealed that professional historians believe that information and communication tools (mass media, internet) remain the most effective tools for influencing the formation of historical consciousness in modern Kazakhstan, and that communicating historical information through cinema is also effective. The results of the study laid a certain foundation for further work on the study of both the historical consciousness of Kazakhstanis and historical science as a whole.
Keywords: historical memory; historical consciousness; memory research; history of Kazakhstan; questionnaires; in-depth interview; national idea; national code

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For citation: Lapin N. Historical consciousness of the population of Kazakhstan (based on an expert survey of 2021). *Journal of the National Congress of Historians.* 2026. Vol.6, no.2, pp.38-50. https://doi.org/10.65076/3105-0042.2026.2.38.50

Қазақстан халқының тарихи санасы (2021 ж. сарапшылық сауалнама материалдары бойынша)

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Аңдатпа. МАңдатпа. Мақалада «Қазақстанның заманауи тарихи ғылымын қалыптастырудың ғылыми негізделген тұжырымдамасын әзірлеу» жобасын іске асыру шеңберінде жүргізілген әлеуметтік зеттерулердің нәтижелері ұсынылған. Тереңдетілген сұхбат және сауалнама алу әдістері арқылы, отандық тарих ғылымын дамытудың әртүрлі аспектілері бойынша маманданған қазақстандық жүз сарапшы-тарихшыдан жауап алынған. Қазақстандық және шетелдік ғалымдардың жұмыстарына жасалған тарихнамалық талдау, Қазақстанда тарих саласына әлеуметтік сауалнама өте сирек жүргізілгенін көрсетті. Олар негізінен, тарихи сана сұрақтарының жай-күйін зерттеумен байланысты болыпты. Жүргізілген сауалнама қазіргі заманғы қазақстандықтардың тарихи жадының жағдайы мен оны қалыптастыру мәселелеріне қатысты болды, сарапшылардың өздері осылай деп бағалады. Зерттелген сұрақтардың ішінде мыналар бар: тарихқа көзқарасы және қызығушылығы, тарихи сауаттылық деңгейі және тағы басқалар. Маңызды сұрақтардың ішінде, 1990 жылдардың ортасында қабылданғанның орнына, жаңадан тарихи сана тұжырымдамасын құруға деген ғылыми қоғамдастық қойған сауалдың қажеттілігі туралы сарапшылардың пікірі болды. Сарапшылардың пікірінше, аталған зерттеудің маңызды бөлігінің бірі кино, кітаптар, БАҚ, мектеп және т.б. сияқты тарихи сананы қалыптастырудың барынша пәрменді құралдарын және олардың рөлі мен адамға ықпал ету дәрежесін анықтау еді. Қазақстандық сарапшылар – кәсіби тарихшылар - арасында жүргізілген сауалнама бізге сауалнама кезеңінде қазақстандықтар арасындағы тарихи сананың қалыптасуының, дамуының және қазіргі деңгейінің мазмұны, сипаты және болашағы туралы бірқатар қорытындылар жасауға мүмкіндік берді. Бағалаудағы кейбір айырмашылықтарға қарамастан, сауалнамаға қатысқан сарапшылар Қазақстан азаматтарының ел тарихына деген тұрақты және тұрақты қызығушылығы туралы қорытындыларында бірауыздан болды. Дегенмен, тарихқа деген қызығушылықтың көрсетілгеніне қарамастан, олар оның деңгейін жеткіліксіз жоғары деп санайды. Бұл нәтижені кем дегенде ішінара түсіндіретін фактор - мемлекеттің азаматтар арасында тарихи сананы қалыптастыруға бағытталған жеткіліксіз немесе тиімсіз күш-жігері. Сондықтан олар кәсіби тарихшылардың да, мемлекеттік органдардың да жалпы тарихқа деген қоғамдық қызығушылықты арттыру және тарихи сауаттылықты жақсарту үшін біріктірілген күш-жігер жұмсау қажеттілігін атап өтті. Сауалнаманың тағы бір маңызды нәтижесі - сарапшылардың көпшілігінің қазіргі шындыққа сәйкес «Тарихи сана тұжырымдамасын» қайта қарау және жаңарту қажеттілігі. Дегенмен, сауалнама нәтижелері көрсеткендей, көптеген сарапшылар қазіргі Тұжырымдамадағы қай тармақтарды алып тастау немесе түзету керектігін нақты айта алмады, тек өзгерістер енгізу қажеттілігін айтумен шектелді. Сонымен қатар, сауалнама кәсіби тарихшылардың ақпараттық және коммуникациялық құралдар (БАҚ, интернет) қазіргі Қазақстанда тарихи сананың қалыптасуына әсер етудің ең тиімді құралы болып қала береді деп санайтынын және тарихи ақпаратты кино арқылы жеткізу де тиімді екенін көрсетті.

Зерттеу нәтижелері қазақстандықтардың тарихи санасын ғана емес, сонымен бірге жалпы алғанда, тарихи ғылымды зерттеу жөніндегі жұмыстарды одан әрі жүргізуге нақты негіздеме болды.
Түйін сөздер: тарихи жады; тарихи сана; тарихты зерттеу; Қазақстан тарихы; сауалнама; терең-детілген сұхбат; ұлттық идея; ұлттық код

Сілтеме жасау үшін: Лапин Н. Қазақстан халқының тарихи санасы (2021 ж. сарапшылық сауалнама материалдары бойынша). *Journal of the National Congress of Historians.* 2026. Vol.6, no.2, pp.38-50. https://doi.org/10.65076/3105-0042.2026.2.38.50

Историческое сознание населения Казахстана (по материалам экспертного опроса 2021 г.)

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Аннотация. В статье представлены результаты социологического исследования проведенного в рамках реализации проекта «Разработка научно обоснованной концепции формирования современной исторической науки Казахстана». Посредством методов глубинного интервью и анкетирования было опрошено сто казахстанских экспертов-историков, специализирующихся по различным аспектам развития отечественной исторической науки. Историографический анализ работ казахстанских и зарубежных ученых определил, что проведение социологических опросов в Казахстане в области истории являются весьма редким явлением. В основном они были связаны с изучением вопросов развития исторического сознания. Проведенный опрос касался проблемы формирования и состояние исторической памяти современных казахстанцев, так как это оценивали сами эксперты. В числе исследуемых вопросов были: отношение и интерес к истории, уровень исторической грамотности и многие другие. Важным вопросом являлось мнение экспертов о востребованности запроса научного сообщества на создание новой концепции исторического сознания на смену той, что была принята еще в середине 1990-х годов. Еще одной значимой частью данного исследования являлось выявление наиболее действенных, по мнению экспертов, инструментов формирования исторической памяти: кино, книги, СМИ, школа и др., а также оценка их роли и степени влияния. Поведенный среди казахстанских экспертов – профессиональных историков опрос позволил предложить ряд выводов относительно содержания, характера и перспектив формирования, развития и современного уровня исторического сознания казахстанцев на период проведения опроса. Несмотря на отдельные отличия в оценках опрошенные эксперты довольно однозначно делают заключение об устойчивом и регулярном интересе граждан Казахстана к истории страны. При этом эксперты заключают что несмотря на проявляемый интерес к истории его уровень они оценивают как недостаточно невысокий. В качестве причины, которая может объяснить хотя бы отчасти данный результат, являются недостаточные или малоэффективные усилия государства по формированию исторического сознания граждан. В связи с этим были отмечена необходимость консолидированных усилий как профессиональных историков, так и государственных структур для поднятия уровня интереса населения к истории в целом, так и повышения исторической грамотности в частности. Другим важным результатом опроса стало озвученная большинством опрошенных экспертов необходимость переработки и

обновления в соответствии с сегодняшними реалиями «Концепции исторического сознания». Однако как показывают результаты опроса многие эксперты фактически не смогли ясно сформулировать какие пункты действующей Концепции необходимо исключить или изменить, ограничившись просто необходимостью изменений. Кроме того, опрос показал, что что по мнению профессиональных историков наиболее действенном инструментом воздействия на формирование исторического сознания в условиях современного Казахстана остаются средства информационного и коммуникационного воздействия (СМИ, интернет), а также эффективным является донесение исторической информации посредством кинематографа. Результаты исследования заложили определенную основу для проведения дальнейших работ по изучению как собственно исторического сознания казахстанцев, так и исторической науки в целом
Ключевые слова: историческая память; историческое сознание; исследование памяти; история Казахстана; анкетирование; глубинное интервью; национальная идея; национальный код

Introduction

One of the key aspects of the successful, modern development of a state and society is the ongoing process of modernization – not only in the economic, political, and cultural spheres. Equally important is the process of changing public consciousness, which enables the population to adapt to current events while also laying the groundwork for further development.

One form of public consciousness is historical consciousness, which is also subject to change and modernization and thus influences public consciousness as a whole.

All of this accounts for the ongoing interest in and relevance of researching various aspects of citizens' historical consciousness. This is particularly relevant in modern Kazakhstan, where modernization processes have significantly intensified, and politicians and experts are even speaking of the creation of a "New Kazakhstan" – a goal that is impossible without changes in citizens' public consciousness.

However, studying a phenomenon such as historical consciousness without conducting sociological research is extremely difficult. As a review of studies conducted in the context of examining the historical consciousness of Kazakhstan's citizens shows, such research is carried out rather rarely and is irregular in nature. The lack of a significant body of sociological findings noticeably hinders the scientific analysis of the phenomenon of historical consciousness among the population of Kazakhstan.

These factors, in turn, highlight the need to collect and introduce new data into the scientific community – a goal that this article partially fulfills.

Materials and Methods

As part of the research project "Development of a Scientifically Grounded Concept for the Formation of Modern Historical Science in Kazakhstan," a working group that included the authors carried out a sociological research program aimed at identifying expert opinions on the current state and future prospects of historical science in Kazakhstan. One of the study's objectives was to "analyze expert opinions on the formation of historical consciousness among the country's population and on the need to develop a new concept for it."

In-depth interviews with experts served as the primary method for collecting sociological data. The expert interviews were conducted between July and October 2021 using a combination of methods, including both in-person meetings between the interviewer and the expert and online communication (via Zoom, etc.). In addition to the interviews, a survey of experts was conducted.

Given the specific nature of the problem at hand, the experts were citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan over the age of 18 who had earned a degree (Doctor of Sciences, Candidate of Sciences, or PhD) in the field of historical sciences, or historians who, although lacking a degree, had published works on historical topics in academic journals included in the Scopus and/or Web of Science databases. In accordance with the requirements of the project, the sample size was set at 100 experts.

Literature Review

Research on historical consciousness has seen significant development in global and national academia – in philosophy, history, sociology, and political science.

Among the scholars who have addressed the issue of historical consciousness over the years, the following deserve mention: M.A. Barg, I.D. Kovalchenko, O.A. Medushevskaya, Yu.A. Levada, Zh.T. Toshchenko, O.I. Sgibneva, M.K. Gorshkov, N.M. Davydov, and L.I. Zuev. Also worth noting are the English-speaking scholars Jörn Rüsen, Peter C. Seixas, Jiri Subrt, Zheng Wang, Sirkka Ahonen, and Andrew Glencross. Historiography already includes overviews of the emergence and development of the concepts of "historical consciousness" and "historical memory" in scholarship, as well as classifications of historiographical approaches to this issue, as found in the works of M.A. Barg (Barg 1982: 61–69), L.P. Repina (Repina 2003; Repina: 191–201), B.M. Satershinov (Satershinov 2011: 34), and D.S. Zhukov (Zhukov 2013: 6–16).

Among Kazakhstani scholars, the following have addressed the issue of historical consciousness: B.M. Satershinov, A.N. Nysanbayev, K.N. Burkhanov, E.A. Abil, S.F. Mazhitov, A.N. Kashkimbayev, E.S. Omarov, and others. A historiographical analysis of the works of Kazakhstani scholars was previously conducted by N.S. Lapin (Lapin 2017: 33–58).

In Kazakhstan, conducting sociological surveys related to history is not a common practice. Over the past 30 years of modern history, the total number of studies barely exceeds ten, and most of them addressed only specific issues, often only indirectly related to the study of historical consciousness. Among them are the works of: E.S. Omarova, I.V. Zadorina, S.V. Barinova, D.G. Zaitseva, G. Ileuva, A.P. Konovalova, and others (Lapin 2017: 169–187).

In Kazakhstan, specialized sociological studies of historical consciousness are conducted extremely rarely. G. Ileuova, one of Kazakhstan's leading sociologists, described the state of the database on the historical consciousness of Kazakhstani citizens, noting that "sociological research on historical topics [in Kazakhstan] is not very widespread, and in recent years we have not had the opportunity to conduct such studies" (Ileuova 2015).

All this underscores the importance of conducting sociological research focused on various aspects related to history, one example of which is the study carried out as part of the project "Development of a Scientifically Grounded Concept for the Formation of Modern Historical Science in Kazakhstan." Its implementation marked a practical step toward studying not only the level and nature of historical consciousness among Kazakhstani citizens but also the further course of the modernization of national history.

Results

Below, we will present the specific findings obtained by our working group during the sociological study conducted in 2021; in particular, we will highlight those findings that are directly related to the development of historical consciousness among the citizens of Kazakhstan.

Regarding interest in history, we note that most of the experts surveyed expressed the belief that the population of Kazakhstan is interested in studying history. The combined percentage of responses for "High interest" and "There is interest, but it is not high" reached a staggering 97%. However, if we break down these results by individual responses to each question, we see a significant distinction. Only 30% of experts were certain that the level of interest in studying history is high, while the remaining experts (67%) selected a response that clearly indicates that interest exists but is not high.

Responses regarding the public's interest in studying history vary significantly depending on age group (Table 1). Older experts are more likely to report that the public has a high level of interest in studying history, while middle-aged experts find that such interest is low.

Table 1

"How would you assess the level of public interest in studying history?", broken down by the experts' age, in %

	On average, based on the sample	Ages 30-45	Ages 46-60	Ages 61 and older
High interest	30,0	16,7	34,2	37,5
There is some interest, but not a lot	67,0	80,0	63,2	59,4
No interest at all	1,0	0,0	2,6	0,0

The prevailing view among experts, as revealed during in-depth expert interviews, is that there is a high demand for historical information among the population of Kazakhstan, coupled with a comparatively low level of historical knowledge. Apparently, this high demand for historical knowledge stems from the population's lack of a comprehensive system of historical knowledge, which prevents them from finding answers to all the questions arising in the modern world regarding their people's past.

While the experts agreed regarding the public's demand for historical information, their opinions diverged when it came to assessing the level of historical literacy. The expert opinions received regarding the level of historical knowledge can be broadly divided into three groups: high, medium, and low.

Experts whose assessments fall into the first group (high level of historical knowledge) rate the level of historical literacy among Kazakhstani citizens highly, emphasizing the significant role and contribution of several government programs in this regard, as well as the high level of interest among citizens in studying the history of their ancestors.

Among the opinions expressed by experts in this group were, for example, the following responses: "The level of historical literacy is high. After all, a tremendous amount of work has

been done to foster historical awareness. State programs on national history have been adopted and implemented. Kazakhs are well-versed in their country's history. The history of Kazakhstan is taught in schools and universities." Another expert expressed confidence that "Kazakhstani citizens take an active interest in history. They read a lot and know the history of their ancestors and their country." The experts note interest not only among the older generation but also among young people: "There is a high demand [for history]. Even in elementary school, children know about their ancestors. History is simply essential for everyone. I see interest among the older generation, those in their 40s and 50s. Young people are keenly interested in history and want to learn about it".

Some experts describe the population's level of historical knowledge as average. They believe that the public's interest in history is generally spontaneous, and systematic knowledge is lacking. For example, one expert described it this way: "There is a demand [for history], but it is more spontaneous than conscious. Everyone wants to know their family history going back seven generations, but there are a lack of systematic knowledge and a systematic approach."

Experts cite the flawed Unified National Test (UNT) system as one of the reasons for the fragmented nature of historical knowledge among today's youth; according to those surveyed, education is primarily geared toward passing this test.

For example, one expert had this to say about the ENT: "The problem here lies not in the curriculum but in the UNT. If the questions on the UBT and the topics covered in the curriculum do not align with one another, then what is the point? Either the UNT questions should be based directly on the curriculum, or the textbooks should be written to align with it." Another expert also highlighted the negative impact of the UBT on the development of solid historical knowledge: "The younger generation knows it [i.e., history] better, but not well enough–their knowledge is superficial–because school instruction is geared toward passing the Unified National Test, which is administered in a test format. This results in a fragmented understanding based on isolated figures and facts."

Experts cite another reason for the public's lack of systematic knowledge of history: the public's preference for unverified sources of historical information, primarily obtained from the internet and social media. According to experts, "the public draws information mainly from the internet, where there is a flood of information that does not correspond to historical truth."

Some of the experts' responses were classified into the third group, which characterizes the level of historical knowledge as low. The experts in this group are convinced that the citizens of Kazakhstan have a rather weak level of historical knowledge. Usually, according to the experts, this trend aligns with global patterns. For example, one response reads: "Kazakhstani citizens know their country's history quite poorly. I don't think they differ much in this regard from Russians, Americans, Filipinos, or Indians. This is a general trend for everyone." Another response highlights the link between the general population's historical knowledge and low educational attainment: "The level of historical literacy among the average, ordinary population of Kazakhstan is very low. Their narrow outlook prevents them from appreciating our rather rich history".

Experts in this group attribute the low level of historical knowledge to the age of the population. This stems from the practice of teaching history in Kazakhstan's educational institutions during the Soviet period and in the years following independence. Thus, the experts believe that "there is a generation that did not study the history of Kazakhstan in schools or

universities. Their knowledge is piecemeal and fragmented, and at times they harbor a latent resistance to the need-to-know history." At the same time, "people over the age of 40 know almost nothing about history because, as far as I know, the history of Kazakhstan was not taught at all during the Soviet era. Thus, a huge segment of the population is completely unaware of the history of Kazakhstan."

One of the key questions posed to the experts concerned the need to develop a new concept of historical consciousness.

In assessing the need to develop a new concept of historical consciousness, the experts' opinions were divided into two groups.

The experts in the first group believe that there is now an urgent need for a new concept of historical consciousness, based on which all other materials (textbooks, media programs, film themes, etc.) will be developed. For example, one expert responded to a question about the need to develop a new concept as follows: "A new concept of historical consciousness is essential. Therefore, we must first develop the concept itself. Then, based on that concept, we must develop and prepare new textbooks, publish new historical literature, create programs for children on the internet and on YouTube, produce films, and so on."

Another expert also confirms the need to develop a new concept, noting the significant amount of time that has passed since the adoption of the previous concept of historical consciousness (Kontseptsiia … 1995), which was adopted at the very beginning of independence: "It is necessary to comprehensively examine and address all aspects. According to M. Kozybaev, the first concept of independent Kazakhstan from 1995 raised many issues. A lot of time has passed since then, so it is a very important document for historians today. For these historians, it should be like the Constitution".

Experts note the potential unifying role of the new concept of historical consciousness, which will contribute to the process of nation-building: "A new concept is necessary. We need to develop a national idea for the Republic of Kazakhstan that would unite the more than one hundred ethnic groups of Kazakhstan into a single entity. As historians, we must unite all ethnic groups into a single nation, which will subsequently provide a major impetus for the development of Kazakhstan as a whole." At the same time, as we can see from this excerpt, the expert effectively equates the concept with the national idea, thereby implying a special role for history in the national consolidation of Kazakhstan's population.

A second, smaller group of experts tends to take the view that creating a new concept is unnecessary. More precisely, they believe it is unnecessary to deliberately influence the process of shaping public consciousness; this process should follow its own evolutionary course.

One expert from this group believes: "I don't think we need a new concept of historical consciousness, because that would imply artificially creating historical consciousness. It cannot be created artificially. The state should provide the conditions for historical research and the study of history; then we need collaboration among various historians in conjunction with television. But to create a concept of historical consciousness, in my opinion, is fundamentally impossible." The experts believe that a concept of historical consciousness cannot be created; "everything must develop naturally through the education of the younger generation, as part of the normal teaching of history in schools and universities."

An important aspect of the formation of historical consciousness is the tools through which this consciousness is shaped and developed.

According to survey data, experts identified historical films (49%), history textbooks, and popular science television programs (39% each) as the top three most effective tools for shaping the historical consciousness of the population.

Experts also attributed a significant role in this process to government policy—including the adoption of various programs, laws, and the like (36%)—the work of professional historians (34%), school education (33%), and social media (29%). Family upbringing (13%), the media (6%), and NGOs (1%) were cited as less effective tools for shaping historical consciousness.

It is worth noting the role of the media. When, during in-depth interviews, experts were asked to assess in more detail the role of such important tools for shaping the population's historical consciousness as information technology, the media, and historical films, the experts agreed that the role of the media and information technology in this process is significant. At the same time, it was noted that the extent of this source's positive influence on the public depends largely on the professional qualities of the journalists presenting the information. Otherwise, society experiences a "backfire," where citizens are presented with fragmented, unverified, and often pseudoscientific facts instead of a coherent system of historical consciousness. Furthermore, the experts point out that the media, after all, have their own goals and objectives.

One expert note that "the role of information technology and the media is quite significant here. But the problem is that journalists' incompetence leads to pseudo-historical conclusions, which mislead the public." Another expert also highlights the significant role of the media: "The role of mass media outlets, information technologies, and today's social media platforms is extremely important. Through these social media platforms and by utilizing various information technologies via mass media outlets, we can help foster a new generation's historical literacy."

Experts emphasize the importance of professionalism among those who disseminate historical information: "The media plays a significant role in enhancing historical literacy, and this role largely depends on the professional ethics of journalists, bloggers, and others. Their work must be systematic, rather than fragmented and ad hoc; only then will their contribution to the development of historical consciousness in society be beneficial".

At the same time, the experts interviewed emphasize that when creating historical content, it is not only the professionalism of journalists that matters, but also their close collaboration with scholars: "The media should convey objective scientific knowledge, be closer to academia, and seek assistance and advice from professional historians." In their interviews, the historians surveyed provide specific examples of their own and their colleagues' collaboration with various media outlets, which, through information technology, helps shape the historical consciousness of citizens: "Staff members of our Institute have begun to appear frequently in the media, on radio programs on 'Shalkar' and 'Kazakhstan,' and on television. This helps to improve the historical literacy of the population".

Experts note that today, when shaping the historical consciousness of citizens–especially young people–and enhancing their historical literacy, it is necessary to focus on modern electronic media, social networks, and new information platforms, which have become particularly popular among the country's youth, surpassing traditional media (television, radio, and print media) in significance. As one expert notes: "Today, the role of the media is very important. This is especially true for digital media; young people now mainly use tablets, phones, and smartphones. They get all their information from the internet. They don't watch TV news." Another expert also commented on the relevance and effectiveness of internet resources: "Information technologies

and mass media play a significant role in enhancing the public's historical literacy, and the role of the Internet is particularly significant. Ordinary people, especially young people, no longer watch TV or follow the news; they get everything from the internet. Therefore, it is advisable to encourage website owners–especially those under state control–to introduce history-related programs, such as 'History Corner,' '5 Minutes of History,' and so on".

Experts note the growing importance of information technology in fostering historical literacy among the public during the pandemic, when a significant part of people's lives (including work, study, leisure, and recreation) takes place in the virtual space: "Now, during the pandemic, the role of information technology in enhancing historical literacy among the public is undoubtedly significant."

The experts surveyed emphasize the need for more active use of the Internet, which is currently the most rapidly developing source of information; its historical content must be simple, clear, and easy to understand. In this regard, one expert believes that "the concepts and ideas promoted to shape a new historical consciousness must be quite simple to understand, standard, and easy to absorb."

Specific proposals were made in this regard: "We need to create appropriate programs and produce short videos–5, 7, or 10 minutes long–in a specific, popular format and distribute them to the public".

That said, while acknowledging the great potential of modern information technology and the Internet, experts note that the presentation of historical content lacks systematicity, consistency, and clear organization. The available historical materials do not cover all target groups (particularly children), are not tailored to specific audiences, and are methodologically weak. Experts also point out "the very low quality of organized work; there is virtually no logic or consistency in online resources. There are no methodological or scholarly materials tailored for children."

Reflecting on the role of film in shaping the public's historical consciousness, experts are convinced that its role is significant at any time; however, in the modern world–where visualization is one of the dominant trends–it is difficult to overestimate its importance.

As one expert notes: "I believe that cinema plays very important role today–through films, we come to understand our cultural visual code. We need to focus on cinema because the visualization of history is in high demand right now. Cinema is one of the ways to engage the younger generation with their own history".

Another expert, also addressing the role of cinema in shaping the historical consciousness of Kazakhstani people, emphasized its significant role: "The role [of cinema] is great, truly great. A single good film can bring about a breakthrough in historical consciousness. Its role is great. We are not yet making full use of our cinema."

While noting cinema's significant role in improving historical literacy and shaping historical consciousness, the experts believe that a broader range of topics is necessary: "The role of historical cinema is significant. There's a trend toward batyrs now; films about batyrs are being made. Yes, that's good, and it's necessary, but we also need to broaden the range of topics. Why not make a good film about Manshuk Mametova or Aliya Moldagulova?"

On the one hand, experts – while acknowledging cinema's ability to influence citizens' historical literacy – highlight film as a powerful tool for shaping public consciousness; on the other hand, they emphasize the need for a responsible approach. The experts interviewed note

that "historical cinema cannot be separated from any other genre of film. Historical films must also meet the criteria of high artistic merit, accuracy, and historical value – and, importantly, they must not be propagandistic." As with online and television content, experts emphasize the need for scholarly oversight of the historical filmmaking process: "We must invest in historical films. But we need quality control for historical films. This requires good historical consultants and directors who understand the essence of that era's history".

Discussions

A distinctive feature of the study of various aspects of the formation and development of historical consciousness is that it is often disconnected from the actual data obtained through sociological methods – the very methods on which the identification and demonstration of this phenomenon's characteristics depend.

However, even the collection of some data, in turn, faces yet another problem. In Kazakhstan, efforts to collect various types of empirical data are still insufficient and, more importantly, not conducted on a regular basis. The studies that do exist–and whose data have been incorporated into scholarly discourse–are often not always comparable with one another. That is, they often address only specific issues that may sometimes complement one another–and even then, only partially–but almost always, or very often, fail to reveal the dynamics–that is, changes in various characteristics of historical consciousness–over a significant period. The only solution is to conduct regular research.

A study conducted in 2021 contributes to the collection of new data. Some of the findings have already been published by the author and other members of the research team (Lapin et al. 2022: 259-268). That article focused primarily on expert assessments of problematic aspects of the development of historical science at the present stage (low salaries for professional historians, the low prestige of the field of history, the unsatisfactory socioeconomic status of scholars, an insufficient number of grants, etc.). Therefore, this article serves as a logical continuation of that earlier publication and explores other aspects directly related to experts' assessments of certain characteristics of the level of historical consciousness.

Conclusions

A survey of Kazakhstani historians allows us to draw quite specific conclusions about a number of aspects of the development and level of historical consciousness among the population of Kazakhstan at the present time.

First, a key finding is that experts note the country's citizens' interest in history and its study. However, while this interest is evident, its level is generally assessed as low, requiring additional efforts–both from the historical community and government agencies–to develop historical consciousness and raise the level of historical literacy. This finding regarding the low level of interest in history may partly explain the ineffectiveness or limited results of the "historical policy" being implemented in the country.

Second, according to most experts, the Concept of Historical Consciousness requires updating, given the changes that have taken place since the adoption of the previous concept. At the same time, it is noteworthy that experts often merely declare the need for a new concept, yet its specific content is, in fact, rarely elaborated upon.

Third, the experts clearly identified specific factors or tools for shaping the historical consciousness of Kazakhstani citizens. At the same time, grouping these factors by social institutions of influence shows that, according to the experts, the most effective institutions are modern information and communication media, including the dissemination of historical information through film, the internet, the media, and so on.

Acknowledgements

The authors express their gratitude for the scholarly and editorial support provided during the preparation of this article.

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Disclosure of conflict of interest information. The author claims no conflict of interest / ***Мүдделер қақтығысы туралы ақпаратты ашу.*** Автор мүдделер қақтығысының жоқтығын мәлімдейді. / ***Раскрытие информации о конфликте интересов.*** Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Мақала туралы ақпарат / Информация о статье / Information about the article.
Редакцияға түсті / Поступила в редакцию / Entered the editorial office: 11.03.2026
Рецензенттер мақұлдаған / Одобрена рецензентами / Approved by reviewers: 11.04.2026.
Жариялауға қабылданды / Принята к публикации / Accepted for publication: 20.06.2026