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ARTICLE

THE DIRECTORIAL VISION IN THE NATIONAL DOCUMENTARY CINEMA OF INDEPENDENT KAZAKHSTAN

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KEYWORDS

Directorial vision, national documentary cinema, period of independence, Vladimir Tyulkin, Katerina Suvorova, Kanat Beisekeyev, interview, textual analysis, auteur theory, strategies of the directorial vision.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

In preparing this article, the artificial intelligence model ChatGPT (GPT-5.6 Sol, OpenAI) was used as an auxiliary tool. AI was used for linguistic and stylistic editing of selected parts of the manuscript, refinement of academic wording, structuring of the material, and assistance with the translation of selected elements of the article into English and Kazakh. The research concept, formulation of the research question, selection of the theoretical and methodological framework and empirical material, textual analysis of the films and individual scenes, interpretation of cinematic choices, argumentation, and research conclusions were developed independently by the author. The use of AI did not replace the author's research or analytical work. All AI-assisted formulations were reviewed and edited by the author. The author assumes full responsibility for the content and accuracy of the submitted material.

ABSTRACT. During the period of independence, national documentary cinema in Kazakhstan has emerged as a key domain for the artistic conceptualization of historical memory, social processes, and cultural transformations. Contemporary film theory demonstrates that documentality is not reducible to a mere recording of reality; rather, it functions as a means of constructing its semantic framework, where the director's authorial vision plays a vital role — the study of which is the focus of this paper.

The purpose of the article is to examine how the directors' conceptualizations of Kazakhstan's national documentary cinema, as articulated in interviews, are embodied in consistent directorial strategies and reveal the specific features of this vision based on the analysis of their films.

The theoretical framework of the study is grounded in Andrew Sarris's auteur theory, which defines the director as the bearer of a consistent creative position manifested in recurrent thematic, aesthetic, and ethical decisions. Taking into account the specifics of documentary cinema, the auteur theory is complemented by the approaches of Bill Nichols and Jaimie Baron, who view the documentary voice as an expression of the director's viewpoint through rhetorical, visual, editing, and ethical means and techniques. The empirical base of the study comprises interviews with film directors and textual analysis of selected films and episodes: Vladimir Tyulkin's *Povelitel' mukh* (*Lord of the Flies*, 1991) and *13 kilometrov* (*13 Kilometers*, 2018); Katerina Suvorova's *Zavtra more* (*Sea Tomorrow*, 2016) and *Pet' svoi pesni / MEN SEN EMES* (*Sing Your Songs*, 2019); and Kanat Beisekeyev's *Bala* (*Child*, 2017) and *Zhena* (*Wife*, 2021). A comparison of the directors' statements with the analysis of specific cinematic solutions demonstrates that their conceptualizations of documentary cinema find consistent embodiment in character selection, observational framework, camera work, editing, sound design, the nature of authorial presence, and modes of audience engagement. The analysis identifies three distinct strategies of the directorial vision: Vladimir Tyulkin's exploration of the human inner world, Katerina Suvorova's examination of social reality through the interaction between humans and their environment, and Kanat Beisekeyev's ethically responsible storytelling of individual experiences. The findings demonstrate the analytical effectiveness of the author's vision category in examining Kazakhstan's national documentary cinema and uncovering different artistic approaches to interpreting the country's social and cultural experience.

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МАҚАЛА

Тәуелсіз Қазақстанның ұлттық деректі киносындағы режиссердің авторлық ұстанымы

Автор қолжазбаның соңғы нұсқасын оқып, мақұлдады және мүдделер қақтығысы жоқ деп мәлімдейді.

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© 2026 Автор(лар). Құрманғазы атындағы Қазақ ұлттық консерваториясы жариялаған. Осы мақала Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) лицензиясының шарттарына сәйкес таратылады (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Лицензия түпнұсқа еңбекке тиісті түрде сілтеме жасалған жағдайда материалды коммерциялық емес мақсатта пайдалануға, таратуға және кез келген тасымалдағышта көшіруге рұқсат береді. Сонымен қатар материалға өзгерістер енгізуге, оны өңдеуге немесе туынды шығармалар жасауға жол берілмейді.

Дәйексөз үшін

Сейітжан, Айдос. «Тәуелсіз Қазақстанның ұлттық деректі киносындағы режиссердің авторлық ұстанымы». *Saryn*, т. 14, № 3, 2026, 73–92 б., DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59850/SARYN.3.14.2026.388>. (Ағылшынша)

Тірек сөздер

Авторлық ұстаным, Қазақстанның ұлттық деректі киносы, тәуелсіздік кезеңі, Владимир Тюлькин, Катерина Суворова, Қанат Бейсекеев, сұхбат, мәтіндік талдау, авторлық теория, режиссерлік стратегиялар.

Жасанды интеллект құралдарын пайдалану туралы мәлімдеме

Мақаланы дайындау барысында көмекші құрал ретінде ChatGPT (GPT-5.6 Sol, OpenAI) жасанды интеллект моделі пайдаланылды. Жасанды интеллект мәтіннің жекелеген бөліктерін тілдік және стилистикалық редакциялау, академиялық тұжырымдарды нақтылау, материалды құрылымдау, сондай-ақ мақаланың жекелеген элементтерін ағылшын және қазақ тілдеріне аударуға көмектесу мақсатында қолданылды. Зерттеу тұжырымдамасы, зерттеу мәселесін қалыптастыру, теориялық-әдіснамалық негіз бен эмпирикалық материалды таңдау, фильмдер мен жекелеген эпизодтарға мәтіндік талдау жасау, кинематографиялық шешімдерді интерпретациялау, зерттеудің дәлелдері мен қорытындылары автор тарапынан дербес орындалды. Жасанды интеллектіні пайдалану автордың зерттеушілік және аналитикалық жұмысын алмастырған жоқ. Жасанды интеллект көмегімен ұсынылған барлық тұжырымдар автор тарапынан тексеріліп, редакцияланды. Ұсынылған материалдың мазмұны мен дұрыстығына автор толық жауап береді.

Аңдатпа. Тәуелсіздік кезеңінде Қазақстанның деректі киносы тарихи жадты, қоғамдық үдерістер мен мәдени өзгерістерді көркемдік тұрғыдан пайымдайтын кеңістіктердің біріне айналды. Қазіргі кино теориясы деректіліктің шынайылықты жай ғана тіркеумен шектелмей, оны мағыналық тұрғыдан пайымдау тәсілі ретінде көрінетінін айғақтайды. Бұл ретте режиссердің авторлық ұстанымы маңызды мәнге ие, ал осы ұстанымды зерттеу жұмыстың негізгі бағытын құрайды. Мақаланың мақсаты – режиссерлердің сұхбаттарында тұжырымдалған Қазақстанның ұлттық деректі киносы туралы авторлық көзқарастарының тұрақты режиссерлік стратегияларда қалай жүзеге асатынын анықтау және олар түсірген фильмдер негізінде авторлық ұстанымның ерекшеліктерін ашу.

Зерттеудің теориялық негізін Эндрю Сарристің авторлық теориясы құрайды. Бұл теория режиссерді қайталанатын тақырыптық, эстетикалық және этикалық шешімдерден көрінетін тұрақты шығармашылық ұстанымның иесі ретінде сипаттауға мүмкіндік береді. Деректі фильмнің ерекшелігін ескеру үшін авторлық теория Билл Николс пен Джейми Баронның риторикалық, визуалды, монтаждық және этикалық құралдар мен әдістер арқылы режиссердің көзқарасының көрінісі ретінде деректі дауысты қарастыратын тәсілімен толықтырылған. Зерттеудің эмпирикалық базасын кинорежиссерлермен жүргізілген сұхбаттар, сондай-ақ фильмдер мен олардың жекелеген эпизодтарына жасалған мәтіндік талдау құрайды: Владимир Тюлькиннің «Шыбындар әміршісі» («Повелитель мух», 1991), «13 шақырым» («13 километров», 2018); Катерина Суворованың «Ертең теңіз» («Завтра море», 2016), «Men sen emes» (2019) және Қанат Бейсекеевтің «Бала» (2017), «Әйел» («Жена», 2021) фильмдері. Режиссерлердің пікірлерін нақты кинематографиялық шешімдерді талдаумен салыстыру олардың деректі кино туралы тұжырымдарының кейіпкерді таңдауда, бақылауды ұйымдастыруда, камерамен жұмыс істеуде, монтажда, дыбыста, автордың фильмдегі қатысу сипатында және көрерменмен өзара әрекеттесу тәсілдерінде тұрақты түрде көрініс табатынын көрсетеді. Талдау авторлық ұстанымның үш түрлі стратегиясын айқындауға мүмкіндік береді: Владимир Тюлькиннің шығармашылығында адамның ішкі әлемін зерттеу, Катерина Суворованың фильмдерінде адам мен қоршаған ортаның өзара байланысы арқылы қоғамдық шындықты зерделеу және Қанат Бейсекеевтің шығармашылығында жеке оқиғаны этикалық жауапкершілік тұрғысынан баяндау. Алынған нәтижелер авторлық ұстаным категориясының Қазақстанның ұлттық деректі киносын зерттеудегі және елдің қоғамдық әрі мәдени тәжірибесін көркемдік тұрғыдан пайымдаудың түрлі тәсілдерін анықтаудағы аналитикалық әлеуетін көрсетеді.

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СТАТЬЯ

АВТОРСКАЯ ПОЗИЦИЯ РЕЖИССЕРА В НАЦИОНАЛЬНОМ ДОКУМЕНТАЛЬНОМ КИНО НЕЗАВИСИМОГО КАЗАХСТАНА

Автор прочитал и одобрил окончательный вариант рукописи и заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

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Ключевые слова

Авторская позиция, национальное документальное кино Казахстана, период независимости, Владимир Тюлькин, Катерина Суворова, Канат Бейсекеев, интервью, текстуальный анализ, теория авторства, режиссерские стратегии.

Заявление об использовании инструментов искусственного интеллекта

При подготовке статьи использовалась модель искусственного интеллекта ChatGPT (GPT-5.6 Sol, OpenAI) в качестве вспомогательного инструмента. ИИ применялся для языкового и стилистического редактирования отдельных фрагментов текста, уточнения академических формулировок, структурирования материала и помощи при переводе отдельных элементов статьи на английский и казахский языки. Исследовательская концепция, постановка исследовательского вопроса, выбор теоретико-методологической основы и эмпирического материала, текстуальный анализ фильмов и отдельных эпизодов, интерпретация кинематографических решений, аргументация и выводы исследования выполнены автором самостоятельно. Использование ИИ не заменяло исследовательскую и аналитическую работу автора. Все предложенные с использованием ИИ формулировки были проверены и отредактированы автором. Автор несет полную ответственность за содержание и достоверность представленного материала.

Аннотация. В период независимости документальное кино Казахстана становится одним из пространств художественного осмысления исторической памяти, общественных процессов и культурных изменений. Современная теория кино показывает, что документальность не сводится к простой фиксации реальности, а выступает способом ее смыслового оформления, в котором существенное значение приобретает авторская позиция режиссера, изучению которой посвящена данная работа.

Цель статьи – выявить, каким образом авторские представления о национальном документальном кино Казахстана, сформулированные режиссерами в интервью, воплощаются в устойчивых режиссерских стратегиях и раскрывают особенности авторской позиции на материале созданных ими фильмов.

Теоретической основой исследования выступает теория авторства Эндрю Сарриса, позволяющая характеризовать режиссера как носителя устойчивой творческой позиции, которая проявляется в повторяющихся тематических, эстетических и этических решениях. Для учета специфики документального кино теория авторства дополняется подходом Билла Николса и Джейми Барона, рассматривающим документальный голос как выражение точки зрения режиссера посредством риторических, визуальных, монтажных и этических средств и приемов. Эмпирическую базу исследования составляют интервью с кинорежиссерами и текстуальный анализ фильмов и эпизодов: Владимиром Тюлькиным – «Повелитель мух» (1991), «13 километров» (2018); Катериной Суворовой – «Завтра море» (2016), «Men sen emes» (2019) и Канатом Бейсекеевым – «Бала» (2017), «Жена» (2021). Сопоставление высказываний режиссеров с анализом конкретных кинематографических решений показывает, что сформулированные ими представления о документальном кино получают устойчивое воплощение в выборе героя, организации наблюдения, работе камеры, монтаже, звуке, характере авторского присутствия и способах взаимодействия со зрителем. Анализ позволяет выделить три различные стратегии авторской позиции: исследование внутреннего мира человека у Владимира Тюлькина, изучение общественной реальности через взаимодействие человека и окружающей среды у Катерины Суворовой и этически ответственное рассказывание индивидуальной истории у Каната Бейсекеева. Полученные результаты показывают аналитическую продуктивность категории авторской позиции для исследования национального документального кино Казахстана и выявления различных способов художественного осмысления общественного и культурного опыта страны.

During the period of independence, national documentary cinema in Kazakhstan has emerged as a key domain for the artistic conceptualization of historical memory, social processes, and cultural transformations. In this study, the concept of “national documentary cinema” is not used as a genre or thematic category, nor is it reduced to the mere presence of Kazakhstan-related subject matter. Instead, it is understood as documentary filmmaking that has formed within the cultural and historical space of Kazakhstan and participates in the artistic reflection of its social experience, cultural changes, and processes of identity formation. Here, the “national” is viewed not as a fixed set of ethnocultural traits, but as a shifting space where various representations of contemporary Kazakhstan interact.

For a long time, the question of documentary cinema was framed through the opposition of truth and fiction. In this logic, a documentary film was understood primarily as a form of access to reality, and the director — as a mediator between the fact and the viewer. However, contemporary film and documentality theory demonstrates that screen reality is not merely recorded, but organized through the choice of viewpoint, distance, duration of observation, editing, rhetoric, and the mode of authorial presence. In other words, documentality is not reducible to the registration of reality, but functions as a means of constructing its semantic framework, wherein the directorial vision plays a crucial role.

Precisely for this reason, it is productive to examine a documentary statement not only as the final form of a film, but also as an attitude — a stable authorial orientation toward reality, the subject, and the spectator. “Attitude” here is understood not as a psychological characteristic of the director, but as a set of professional and ethical premises that determine what is deemed worthy of depiction, how to establish contact with the subject, where the boundary of intervention lies, how viewer trust is fostered, and what type of truth the film offers. In this sense, the directorial vision manifests itself not only in their individual statements, but also in consistent methods of material selection, the organization of observation, the shaping of relationships with the subject, and the mode of address to the viewer.

In the context of Kazakhstan’s documentary cinema during the period of independence, this perspective acquires special significance. After 1991, not only social themes, production conditions, and exhibition platforms changed, but also the modes of authorial conceptualization of historical, social, and cultural reality. Directors increasingly speak not on behalf of an institution, but in their own voice; they do not assert a ready-made truth, but present a method of searching for it; they do not conceal subjectivity, but integrate it into the structure of the documentary statement. Therefore, analyzing the directorial vision makes it possible to see documentary cinema not merely as a reflection of an era, but as diverse modalities of its artistic interpretation.

The research question of the article addresses how the directors’ conceptualizations of documentary cinema, as expressed in interviews, resonate with their practical approaches. Accordingly, the purpose of the study is to examine how these conceptualizations are embodied in consistent directorial strategies and reveal the specific features of their vision through the analysis of films by Vladimir Tyulkin, Katerina Suvorova, and Kanat Beisekeyev.

The study of the directorial vision in Kazakhstan's documentary cinema lies at the intersection of scholarship on national cinema, cultural identity, and historical memory. The interconnection between cinema and the processes of cultural self-determination and nation-building has been consistently examined by Gulnara Abikeyeva. Her research allows national cinema to be understood not as a passive reflection of a pre-existing identity, but as a space for its formation and revision. Analyzing shifts in the production system, Abikeyeva links the development of Kazakh cinema to digitalization, the expansion of private studios, and the emergence of new auteur models (Abikeyeva 54–66). Highlighting ethno-cultural, civic, religious, and socio-economic narratives of national belonging, Rico Isaacs likewise views cinema as a domain of interaction among diverse representations of Kazakhstan. From this perspective, national culture is revealed not only through tradition and the historical past, but also through social vulnerability, environmental issues, migration, and contemporary urban culture (Isaacs 1–39, 150–210, 241–308). The heterogeneity of national identity is further emphasized by Nurken Aitymbetov, Yermek Toktarov, and Yenlik Ormakhanova, who analyze the interplay between Kazakh ethno-cultural and Kazakhstan's civic models of identity (Aitymbetov, et al. 1–20).

A separate direction of research is associated with the role of documentary cinema in conceptualizing historical memory and collective trauma. Banu Ramazanova demonstrates that screen representation not only records traumatic experience, but also introduces it into the space of public discussion (Ramazanova 67–79). Based on films about the 1932–1933 famine, Yegor Varfolomeyev views documentary cinema as a "significant tool in the struggle for collective memory," participating in the formation of competing interpretations of the past (Varfolomeyev 11–34). Research by Banu Ramazanova and Gulnara Abikeyeva dedicated to the digitalization and hybridization of the documentary form reveals the expansion of the expressive possibilities of the authorial statement (Ramazanova and Abikeyeva 67–77). A specialized study of Vladimir Tyulkin's oeuvre traces the evolution of his approach to the selection and portrayal of subjects: from conflict-driven antiheroes of the early period to a more tolerant and humanistic tone in his later works (Seitzhan 95–111).

At the same time, existing scholarship virtually overlooks the correlation between how directors articulate the principles of documentary cinema and how these principles are implemented in specific directorial solutions. The work of Katerina Suvorova and Kanat Beisekeyev also remains considerably less studied. This paper addresses this gap by juxtaposing the directors' statements regarding their own method with a textual analysis of specific films and episodes.

The theoretical and methodological foundation of the study lies in Andrew Sarris's auteur theory. Sarris identifies three premises of authorship: technical competence, the distinguishable personality of the director, and the interior meaning arising from the body of work (Sarris 561–564). In this article, these concepts are used not to construct a hierarchy of directors, but to identify recurrent thematic, aesthetic, and ethical solutions. This approach makes it possible to examine individual films in relation to more stable authorial principles manifested in the choice of themes and subjects, the methods of organizing material, and the nature of authorial presence.

When applied to documentary cinema, this model requires refinement. In fiction film, authorial individuality is traditionally associated with mise-en-scène, dramaturgical structure, and visual style, whereas in documentary filmmaking it also manifests in the director's attitude toward pre-existing reality and people. The organization of observation, the distance between the camera and the subject, the permissible degree of intervention, the method of working with testimonies, and the editing interpretation of the footage become essential. Therefore, the directorial vision in documentary cinema encompasses not only stylistic individuality, but also the director's cognitive and ethical attitude.

To account for this specificity, the auteur theory is complemented by the approaches of Bill Nichols and Jaimie Baron. They emphasize that "a distinct point of view, or voice, shapes the film" (Nichols and Baron 128). The concept of the documentary voice makes it possible to examine the directorial vision as a set of rhetorical, visual, editing, and ethical decisions through which the film establishes a specific attitude toward the represented reality. The research considers not only the recurrence of themes and motifs, but also the mode of observation, the nature of interaction with subjects, the degree of authorial intervention, the emotional distance, and the mode of trust offered to the viewer.

The research material comprises interviews with Vladimir Tyulkin, Katerina Suvorova, and Kanat Beisekeyev, alongside six of their films: Tyulkin's *Povelitel' mukh* (*Lord of the Flies*, 1991) and *13 kilometrov* (*13 Kilometers*, 2018); Suvorova's *Zavtra more* (*Sea Tomorrow*, 2016) and *Pet' svoi pesni / MEN SEN EMES* (*Sing Your Songs*, 2019); and Beisekeyev's *Bala* (*Child*, 2017) and *Zhena* (*Wife*, 2021). The selection of these three directors does not claim to be representative of the entire documentary cinema of Kazakhstan during the period of independence. They were selected for comparative analysis as authors of different generations who emerged in diverse production and media environments — ranging from late Soviet and post-Soviet auteur documentary filmmaking to independent festival and digital production — and who turn to various types of documentary subjects and social issues. Choosing two films by each director makes it possible to test whether the authorial principles articulated in the interviews find consistent embodiment across different thematic material and, in Tyulkin's case, across a significant temporal span.

Methodologically, the study is built upon the comparison of two levels. At the first stage, an interview analysis is conducted, aimed at identifying the directors' conceptualizations of documentality, the role of the author, the subject, the boundaries of intervention, and the tasks of the documentary statement. At the second stage, a textual analysis of specific films and individual episodes is carried out. The study examines the organization of image and screen space, camera work, editing and sound, the nature of authorial presence, the modes of interaction with the subject, and the correlation between individual experience and the social and cultural context. Comparing these two levels makes it possible to determine how the principles articulated by the directors in interviews are implemented in specific cinematic solutions and to what extent their consistent repetition in the analyzed films allows to speak of a stable directorial strategy and the manifestation of the directorial vision.

Vladimir Tyulkin: The Directorial vision as an Exploration of the Human Inner World

The documentary statement as an authorial attitude is most distinctly traced in the oeuvre of Vladimir Tyulkin. In an interview, the director defines documentary cinema as an "exploration of life and the human inner world," adding: "When you explore a person's soul... you try to understand yourself through them" (Rakhimova). At the same time, Tyulkin emphasizes the subjective nature of documentality: a film represents "the truth of the artist's inner world," since "there is no objectivity in documentary cinema; everything depends on the artist" (Rakhimova). Thus, a documentary film is understood by him not so much as the recording of an event, but as an authorial exploration of the human being. This attitude defines Tyulkin's directorial method as well. The preliminary script serves merely as a starting point: "I explore a theme... Then I begin to explore the person, to explore the situation, forgetting about this script... Exploration is a must" (Rakhimova). Consequently, the film emerges as the result of the interaction between the initial concept and the gradual understanding of the subject and the material.

These ideas are most consistently embodied in the film *Lord of the Flies* (1991). From the very exposition, the director demonstrates a rejection of neutral external recording of events. Utilizing a subjective camera with wide-angle optics simulating the flight of a fly, Tyulkin organizes the movement of the gaze across the protagonist's courtyard. To a variation of the "Internationale" motif, the camera approaches the seated old man and ends its movement on his gray head. This is followed by a close-up of the fly, cutting directly to the protagonist's face. The sequence of these shots creates the impression of a peculiar penetration into the character's consciousness. From the opening minutes, the film's space is organized not around an external event, but around the protagonist's inner world, which directly corresponds to Tyulkin's own definition of documentary cinema as the exploration of the human being.

The next editing structure reveals the other side of his authorial attitude: the subjectivity of the documentary statement. The protagonist attempts to swat a fly, and his hand strikes the camera lens directly. Following this, the musical theme of the Soviet television program *Vremya* (*Time*) begins to play, and the protagonist's name and the film's title appear against the backdrop of fragments from Hieronymus Bosch's paintings. Documentary footage, Soviet television symbolism, and religious-allegorical painting are merged into a unified figurative system. The director thereby does not seek to eliminate his own presence from the documentary material, but consciously sets the direction for its interpretation. Reality acquires additional meaning through editing, music, and cultural associations, which corresponds to Tyulkin's expressed idea regarding the impossibility of objective documentary cinema.

Of particular importance is the next staged scene. In a static frontal composition, an empty armchair is placed on a slight elevation. Accompanied by a sharp sound, the protagonist appears in it, followed by the appearance of a headwear and a long staff in the same manner. After a strike of the staff, the frame's space is filled with dogs, and an eagle's wings unfold behind the protagonist's back, visually perceived as his own. The staged organization of the space is not concealed, but rather emphasized by a recurring sound motif and the sequential appearance of compositional elements.

In this case, staging does not replace documentary reality, but concentrates the author's understanding of the character, transforming him into a symbolic figure of power (see Fig. 1). This aligns with Tyulkin's position, which permits staged elements in documentary cinema if they become a method for a deeper exploration of the human being (Rakhimova).



Figure 1. Staged construction of the image of power in V. Tyulkin's *Lord of the Flies* (1991): a – the empty chair; b – the final composition with the protagonist. Film stills.

This strategy receives further development in the episode where the protagonist discusses how the state system should be structured. A close-up of his face against a dark background is gradually replaced by a camera pull-out, revealing two more synchronously speaking images of the same person on the right and left. Reddish lighting and the threefold duplication of the figure disrupt the integrity of the realistic portrait and translate the monologue into a symbolic register. The resulting image allows for various readings — as a fragmentation of personality, a claim to speak on behalf of a multitude, or the symbolic self-deification of the protagonist. It is significant, however, that Tyulkin does not spell out these meanings through authorial commentary: the protagonist's inner conflict is revealed through the organization of the image itself.

The examined episodes show that Tyulkin's authorial attitude is implemented directly through the organization of cinematic language: the subjective camera, editing, cultural associations, staged elements, and the symbolic transformation of the image. This aligns with Bill Nichols and Jaimie Baron's proposition that a distinct point of view, or the director's voice, shapes the film (Nichols and Baron 128). In *Lord of the Flies*, the author's voice manifests primarily through the figurative organization of documentary material, transforming the story of a specific individual into a reflection on power and the desire for control.

The stability of the identified authorial attitude is tested on the material of Tyulkin's considerably later work, *13 Kilometers* (2018), filmed twenty-seven years after *Lord of the Flies*. The film traces the journey of a blind farmer from a wintering hut to *aul* (village), during which the protagonist returns to significant episodes of his own life. The very physical movement across the steppe gradually acquires the character of an inner journey, once again embodying the director's conception of documentary cinema as an exploration of the human being.

Already at the beginning of the film, the protagonist steps out into the boundless steppe. His small figure is visually correlated with the scale of the surrounding space, while off-screen words are heard: "My century, probably, has passed. I was born later than my century. That is probably why I am not like others." From the opening frames, the external route acquires an inner dimension: the road becomes not only a physical movement, but also a space for the protagonist's reflection on his own life and otherness. If in *Lord of the Flies* the penetration into the character's inner world was indicated through a subjective camera and an active symbolic construction, here Tyulkin resolves the same task through the correlation of the human figure, space, and off-screen monologue. Following the credits, the film directly turns to the protagonist's memory. Blurred footage of the past shows him approximately twenty years earlier, when he was grazing a flock of sheep alongside his wife. These images alternate with the present time: the protagonist, continuing his journey, smiles at his own memories. He then steps out of the frame, followed by three landscape shots already devoid of human presence. The editing juxtaposition of memory, the walking man, and the nature that remains after his departure makes it possible to read the steppe landscape as an image of a different temporal duration, in relation to which human life turns out to be finite and transient. The documentary landscape thereby ceases to perform an exclusively descriptive function and becomes part of an artistic exploration of the protagonist's inner world.

The semantic culmination of the inner journey occurs at the film's finale. During the celebration of Independence Day, the protagonist performs a song about the homeland, after which he states: "I am an ordinary person. Ordinary, like everyone else. Just a blind man who wants to live." This statement compositionally correlates with the beginning of the film, where he defines himself through his difference from others: "That is probably why I am not like others." The protagonist's physical journey thus acquires an internal dimension — moving from the experience of his own otherness to the realization of a commonality with other people.

The comparison of *Lord of the Flies* and *13 Kilometers* reveals not the repetition of specific techniques, but the stability of the authorial attitude amidst a noticeable evolution of cinematic language. In the early film, a person's inner world is explored through an active authorial construction — deforming optics, staging, cultural quotations, and visual metaphors; in *13 Kilometers*, through the road, landscape, memory, and off-screen monologue. At the same time, in both cases, external reality becomes the starting point of a movement toward the protagonist's inner experience, through which Tyulkin addresses broader social and historical issues. Thus, the understanding of documentary cinema as an exploration of the human being remains the stable foundation of his directorial vision.

Katerina Suvorova: The Exploration of Man within the Space of Social and Cultural Processes

Katerina Suvorova represents a different model of the documentary statement. While for Tyulkin the starting point is the exploration of an individual's inner world, the Suvorova's directorial vision is formed around the immersion of man into a broader

social, cultural, and spatial context. In an interview regarding the film *MEN SEN EMES* (2019), the director directly defines her own method: "Our film is an exploration," emphasizing that the authors "had no desire to expose anyone"; it was more important to understand "the root causes of the conflict" (Khodzhayeva). Discussing her work on *Sea Tomorrow* (2016), Suvorova also noted the necessity of finding a precise form for discussing a place that demands respect and resists simplification. Thus, a documentary film is understood by her as an exploration that involves immersion into a specific environment and a rejection of straightforward explanations of what is happening.

These principles are most consistently implemented in the film *Sea Tomorrow* (2016). Already in the exposition, instead of explaining the causes of the Aral Sea disaster, Suvorova immerses the viewer into the space of its consequences: the camera moves through a dry steppe, where human figures and grazing animals appear against the backdrop of gathering storm clouds, yet the expected rain does not happen. Then a ship unexpectedly begins to move across the dried-up steppe; only later does the viewer discover a truck pulling it overland. Suvorova does not construct a metaphor through staging, but discovers it within the observed reality itself and organizes the sequence of its perception. The space thereby ceases to be a background for human history and becomes an independent part of the exploration of the consequences of the ecological disaster (see Fig. 2).



Figure 2. A ship in the landscape of the dried-up Aral Sea.
Film still from K. Suvorova's *Sea Tomorrow* (2016).

The rejection of a simplified explanation of the problem is manifested in the episode featuring the female ecologist. A daily life scene in which a woman is whitewashing walls cuts to her close-up and her discourse on the sea's reaction to human intervention. According to her, the reduction of water inflow leads to an increase in salinity and the disappearance of fish, whereas the return of water contributes to the restoration of some organisms while altering the living conditions of others. She contrasts human and natural time: "People are in a hurry. But everything must be done slowly. Compared

to the sea, a person's life is very short..." Instead of a simple cause-and-effect scheme, the film offers a representation of the complexity of the interaction between man and the natural environment, with this perspective emerging from the protagonist's own experience rather than from authorial commentary.

Another side of this attitude is revealed by the episode featuring the old gardener working on saline soil. The soundscape is dominated by the sounds of a shovel and the steppe wind; the director does not accompany the action with an explanatory commentary, allowing the protagonist's daily routine to exist in its own duration. This correlates with Suvorova's statement that the film is dedicated not so much to the ecological disaster itself as to people's lives in its "aftermath," and the characters demonstrate that "there is no death where there is action." The consequences of the disaster are revealed here not only as a history of loss, but also as a space of ongoing human life.

The stability of this strategy is manifested in *MEN SEN EMES* (2019), where the subject of exploration becomes the social and cultural conflict surrounding the group Ninety One. The film begins with a dynamic montage of short fragments of television news and music videos, in which the political and social history of independent Kazakhstan alternates with the history of Kazakhstani popular culture. This sequence leads to reports of cancelled Ninety One concerts and protests against the group in various cities across the country, placing a private conflict into a broader historical and cultural context. A street fight following the footage appears to be accidental documentary shooting, yet it is later revealed to be a staged episode of a music video. Just like in the scene with the ship in *Sea Tomorrow*, Suvorova first provides the viewer with incomplete visual information and then introduces additional context that alters the initial perception of what was seen.

The desire to understand the "root causes of the conflict" without denouncing either side is especially distinct in the juxtaposition of public voices. A participant in the protests in Karaganda talks about organizing supporters of the concert cancellation while simultaneously expressing sympathy for the group's fans. The next protagonist admits that he previously held more nationalist views, but it was precisely the protests that prompted him to take an interest in Ninety One and subsequently become a fan. The film then transitions to an English-language panel discussion on Generation Z, where the private conflict acquires a broader sociological context. Such a movement from individual stories to social analysis does not eliminate contradictions, but preserves the complexity of the cultural environment.

The comparison of *Sea Tomorrow* and *MEN SEN EMES* demonstrates the stability of Suvorova's authorial attitude amidst a changing subject of research. In the first film, the complexity of reality is revealed through the interaction between man and space, everyday action, and ecological memory; in the second, through historical context and the juxtaposition of various public voices. In both cases, meaning is not communicated to the viewer as a ready-made authorial judgment, but emerges from the observation and comparison of elements of reality. In this way, directorial vision can be defined as an attitude toward exploring complex social reality through the interaction between man and environment, accompanied by a rejection of unambiguous explanations of what is happening.

Kanat Beisekeyev: Ethical Responsibility and the Priority of Human Story

A third model of the documentary statement is demonstrated by Kanat Beisekeyev. While for Tyulkin the psychological and moral exploration of man becomes central, and for Suvorova — the immersion of man into the social and cultural environment, Beisekeyev's directorial vision is built around the ethical responsibility to the subject and the priority of their personal story. In an interview with Informburo, the director explicitly formulates the principle: "I try not to harm the subject"; if a person feels uncomfortable, Beisekeyev is ready to abandon the use of the footage. Discussing his motivation for creating the film *Bala* (2017), he notes that a television report on adopted children seemed untruthful and unethical to him, which is why he decided to shoot "his own version," emphasizing: "I tried not to lie" (Bodrova). In another public appearance, the director formulates yet another principle: "the story must be put first," whereas technique is important only insofar as it helps tell it and "does not constrain the subjects" ("Kanat Beisekeyev rasskazal"). These statements allow us to view ethical responsibility and the priority of the human story as interrelated foundations of his directorial vision.

Bala begins with statistical data on the international adoption of Kazakhstani children, but following this, Beisekeyev shifts the narrative from depersonalized figures to individual stories. In Chicago, eighteen-year-old Jordan/Rustem shows family photographs and talks about himself in his own voice; ten-year-old Milo/Damir is introduced through the observation of his daily communication with his father — games, jokes, and family scenes. In both cases, the status of an adopted child appears only after the viewer has met the subject as a specific individual and a family member. The social problem is consequently not eliminated, yet it does not replace the individual human experience.

Especially indicative is the scene in which Damir recalls his life in the orphanage and his biological mother. He says that he remembers her name — Akmaral — and would like to meet her someday. To Beisekeyev's question about what he would say to her upon meeting, the boy, after some hesitation, answers: "Hello." The camera remains on a close-up of the subject, yet the director does not continue the interrogation and, after a pause, shifts the narrative to the next character. The principle of "not harming the subject" does not mean avoiding painful questions here: the director enters the space of personal memory, but does not demand from the child a more definite or emotionally expressive reaction than the one he is ready to give. At the same time, memories of Kazakhstan are accompanied by nationally marked musical motifs, hence the interviewer's restraint is combined with the author's organization of the story through the means of imagery, editing, and music.

The stability of this ethical attitude is also manifested in the film *Wife* (2021), dedicated to domestic violence. As in *Bala*, the film begins with statistical data, after which the narrative shifts to individual testimonies. One of the female protagonists, staying at a crisis center, responds to the director's quietly voiced off-screen question about the reason for her consent to the interview: "I simply have nowhere to go." Another woman refuses to give her name; the film preserves her anonymity visually as well — her face is concealed by dark glasses and a protective mask. In the first woman's account

of the most severe episodes of violence, the camera periodically shifts attention from her face to close-ups of her hands. Beisekeyev does not avoid traumatic testimony, consequently regulating the degree of visual intrusion during moments of the heroines' emotional vulnerability and respecting the boundaries designated by them (see Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Ethical strategies in the visual representation of women in K. Beisekeyev's *Wife* (2021): preserving anonymity and regulating visual distance. Film stills.

In this regard, Beisekeyev's directorial practice aligns with Kate Nash's proposition regarding the direct connection between documentary ethics and aesthetics (Nash 224). In the films under review, the ethical attitude is implemented through specific formal solutions: the transition from statistics to individual testimony, the subject's opportunity to speak in their own name, the preservation of anonymity, the choice of framing scale, and the shift of the camera's object of attention during emotionally vulnerable moments. Ethical responsibility consequently turns out, as a result, to be not an external limitation of the documentary image, but a principle governing the organization of cinematic language.

The comparison of *Bala* and *Wife* makes it possible to define Beisekeyev's stable strategy: a socially significant problem is translated from the language of statistics into the space of individual testimony, where specific human experience is given priority. Addressing potentially sensational and traumatic themes, the director strives not to reduce the subject to an illustration of a social problem, preserving their right to their own voice and regulating the degree of authorial intervention. Thus, the principles formulated

by Beisekeyev — “not to lie,” “not to harm the subject,” and “to put the story first” — receive concrete embodiment in his directorial practice.

The results of the comparative analysis of the three directorial practices are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The ratio of the directors’ conceptions about documentary cinema and the identified directorial strategies

Director	Conception Formulated in Interviews	Identified Directorial Strategy	Primary Means of Realization
Vladimir Tyulkin	Documentary cinema as an “exploration of life and the human inner world”; recognition of the subjectivity of the documentary gaze	Psychological and moral exploration of the human inner world	Subjective camera; allegory; staged elements; symbolic organization of the image; landscape; memory; off-screen monologue
Katerina Suvorova	Film as an “exploration”; the desire to understand the “root causes of the conflict” without denouncing	Exploration of complex social reality through the interaction between man and environment	Observation; spatial organization; duration; contextualization; juxtaposition of various public voices
Kanat Beisekeyev	“Not to lie”; “not to harm the subject”; “to put the story first”	Ethically responsible narration of the individual story	Transition from statistics to the individual; direct speech; preservation of anonymity; regulation of visual distance; respecting the subject’s boundaries

The conducted analysis makes it possible to answer the research question regarding the correlation between the directors’ authorial conceptions of documentary cinema and the specific features of their directorial practice. The comparison of interviews by Tyulkin, Suvorova, and Beisekeyev with a textual analysis of specific films and episodes demonstrates that the conceptions of documentality formulated by them receive consistent embodiment in their directorial strategies. At the same time, this does not imply a literal correspondence between the stated method and each individual cinematic decision, but rather the consistency of principles recurring across the analyzed films.

The comparative analysis reveals three distinct strategies of the authorial position. In Tyulkin’s work, the exploration of the human inner world remains a consistent principle amidst a noticeable evolution of cinematic language — shifting from the active symbolic construction of *Lord of the Flies* to the contemplative intonation of *13 Kilometers*. In Suvorova’s case, the authorial position is realized through the exploration of social reality via the interaction between man and environment, coupled with the aspiration to avoid an unambiguous evaluation of what is happening. For Beisekeyev, ethical responsibility toward the subject becomes a principle governing the organization of individual testimony and cinematic language itself. As a result, the differences among

the three directorial practices manifest not only in subject matter, but also in the nature of authorial presence, the organization of observation, and the relationship with the subject and the viewer.

The obtained results indicate that directors' interviews serve as a significant yet non-self-sufficient source for studying the authorial position. Statements regarding one's own method acquire analytical value when compared with concrete cinematographic practice. The authorial position is discovered precisely in the relationship between the director's formulated conceptions of documentary cinema and their consistent embodiment in the formal and ethical solutions of the film.

The study is limited to the analysis of three directors and six films and does not claim to describe the entirety of Kazakhstan's documentary cinema of the independence period. At the same time, the proposed approach can be applied to a broader corpus of Kazakhstan's documentary filmmaking to investigate how individual directors' visions of documentality are transformed into consistent artistic and ethical strategies.

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