



Research Article



The Governments' Role in Preserving National Identity on Globalization

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Abstract: This study explores how governments play a pivotal role in safeguarding national identity amid the transformative forces of globalization, offering comparative insights from Asian and European nations. As globalization accelerates the flow of information, culture, and economy across borders, it challenges states to maintain and protect their national identity. In response, this research analyzes how governments in both regions design and implement policies to confront these challenges. Using a qualitative design with a comparative approach, the study examines academic literature, policy documents, and selected case studies. The findings fall into three key sections. First, cultural policy reveals that Asian governments preserve tradition through education and cultural festivals, while their European counterparts prioritize legal protections for cultural heritage. Second, political strategies show that Asian nations implement centralized, state-driven measures, whereas European countries pursue multilateral consensus. Third, the analysis of media and technology highlights a striking contrast: Asian governments actively regulate local media to shape cultural narratives, while European governments protect freedom of expression within democratic frameworks. The study concludes that, although their methods differ, both regions empower governments as central actors in preserving national identity. These findings underscore the importance of balanced policies that promote global integration without compromising cultural identity.

Keywords: Cultural; National Identity; Globalization, Policy;



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INTRODUCTION

International exchange through advancements in communication and transportation has accelerated globalization. As a result, countries have become interconnected and culturally interdependent, with borders becoming increasingly permeable due to rising immigration and advancements in information technology.¹ However, globalization as an ideology and process has reinforced the dominant politics, economy, and culture of the late 21st century. Therefore, globalization has become the primary driver of cultural change in all countries. This creates opportunities and challenges, including the emergence of cultural tourism, engagement with diverse cultures, and preserving and promoting a country's unique cultural heritage. However, there are also significant concerns about lifestyle changes

¹ Xin Li and others, 'Types of Relations between National Identity and Global Identity and Their Associated Factors: A Scoping Review', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 105.102142 (2025) <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2025.102142>



caused by industrialization, urbanization, and increasing influence, all of which tend to reduce cultural differences among countries.²

Globalization, which causes the blurring of borders between countries, demands the strengthening of nationalism to preserve culture, tradition, and national identity from the influence of an increasingly integrated world structure. In this context, nationalism plays an important role in preserving and strengthening national identity because, through nationalism, a country can maintain the uniqueness of its culture and the way of life of its people. Thus, national identity remains preserved and can continue to develop amidst the dynamics of the global world.³ National identity is initially and primarily a "shared individuality" developed, activated, and modified by social actors in social and historical interactions according to specific issues that direct them to act. National identity is a type of social identity that is dynamic and fluid. Is this identity the result of modern socio-economic and political dynamics or primarily based on ethnolinguistic and cultural similarities.⁴

In general, the issue of national identity is a very sensitive and complex matter, especially for countries with geographical territories in border areas. Border areas represent the physical territorial boundaries between one country and another and become ideological spaces rich with political, social, and cultural dynamics. National borders are essentially social and political constructs designed as legal institutions, administrative processes, and symbols of national sovereignty that play a strategic role in shaping and maintaining the integrity of a nation's identity and ideology.⁵ In this context, border areas can be likened to meeting points and friction points between national identities. Cross-border interactions involving the exchange of culture, economy, and human mobility can weaken the loyalty of border communities to their national identity. Therefore, border areas are often considered zones vulnerable to the erosion or degradation of national identity. This situation is further exacerbated when the state fails to provide fair public services, equitable development, and an inclusive national narrative in the region. Therefore, the state needs to strengthen cultural strategies and affirmative policies to ensure that communities in border areas maintain a strong attachment to national values and feel like an integral part of the nation.⁶ This can be seen in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, which are geographically located between two continents, namely Asia and Europe.

² Olha Mazurkevych and others, 'The Specifics of Preserving Cultural Identity in the Context of Globalization Processes', *Mankind Quarterly*, 64.4 (2024), 721–34 <https://doi.org/erpub.chnpu.edu.ua:8080/jspui/handle/123456789/10157>

³ Sarmini Sarmini and others, 'The Principal's Strategy for Strengthening National Identity in Globalization Era', *IJORE: International Journal of Recent Educational Research*, 4.1 (2023), 104–15 <https://doi.org/10.46245/ijorer.v4i1.284>

⁴ Halime Yücel, 'Cultural Identity in Turkish Advertisements', *Social Semiotics*, 31.2 (2021), 305–23 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2019.1631463>

⁵ Anssi Paasi, 'Examining the Persistence of Bounded Spaces: Remarks on Regions, Territories, and the Practices of Bordering', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 104.1 (2022), 9–26 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/04353684.2021.2023320>

⁶ Martono Martono and others, 'The National Identity on the Border: Indonesian Language Awareness and Attitudes through Multi-Ethnic Community Involvement', *Journal of Community Psychology*, 50.1 (2021), 111–25 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22505>



Table 1. Border Area of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

Neighboring Countries	Bordering Kazakhstan	Land border length (km)	Bordering Uzbekistan	Land border length (km)
Rusia	Yes (North and West)	7.591	No	-
China	Yes (East)	1.783	No	-
Kyrgyzstan	Yes (South)	1.242	Yes (East)	1.099
Uzbekistan	Yes (South)	2.351	-	-
Turkmenistan	Yes (South)	426	Yes (West)	1.621
Tajikistan	No	-	Yes (East)	1.161
Afghanistan	No	-	Yes (South)	137

Source: WorldData

Based on the available data, the geographical location of the border area between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan holds importance not only as a physical and administrative-territorial boundary but also as a broader space where diverse cultural identities and ideologies interact across two major world regions, namely Central Asia and Eastern Europe. This strategic location turns the border area into a socio-political arena that is rich in symbolic, historical, and ideological exchanges which contribute to shaping both local and national identities. The ongoing changes in international migration patterns, particularly in the context of globalization and the growing movement of labor and refugees, influence the transformation of identity within the region. These developments also lead to a rethinking of national identity, which may undergo expansion, shifts, or resistance in response to new values introduced by migrants and other transnational actors. Communities living in the border regions of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan often experience tension as they try to preserve their traditional identity while also encountering external influences from ideologies, cultures, and values that come from outside, including those from European societies. As a result, the perception and construction of national identity in this area are constantly evolving over time, shaped by power relations, regional political and economic conditions, and government policies related to borders and migration. It is therefore important to understand this region not simply as an administrative space but as a complex and dynamic social environment where identity and citizenship are continuously negotiated within a changing geopolitical landscape.⁷

The government plays a very strategic role in maintaining and strengthening national identity, which is the primary foundation for building the character of a nation.⁸ This role can be carried out through various policies such as improving the quality of education based on national values, preserving national and regional languages as symbols of unity, strengthening various cultural symbols like traditional arts, music, dance, and traditional attire, as well as full support for the production of local content that reflects the nation's cultural heritage. In this case, the state acts as the

⁷ Aigul Sadvokassova, Aziz Burkhanov and Dina Sharipova, 'In Search for Kazakhstani Identity: Societal Perceptions of Kazakhstan's Nation-Building', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 31.1 (2025), 114–37 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2024.2422198>

⁸ Pauline Daly, Álvaro Dias and Mafalda Patuleia, 'The Impacts of Tourism on Cultural Identity on Lisbon Historic Neighbourhoods', *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 8.1 (2021), 1–25 <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/516>



leading actor playing an active role in addressing the relentless tide of globalization and cultural assimilation that risks eroding the nation's authentic values.⁹ More than just a regulator, the state also functions as a facilitator that opens up spaces for expressing the people's culture through support for literary works, folklore, and local humor, such as anecdotes rich in moral values and collective identity. Anecdotes with precedent characters that contain humor are a means of entertainment and a tool for social learning and constructing a strong identity. Therefore, the state's involvement in designing responsive cultural policies based on local traditional roots becomes key in maintaining the continuity of national identity amidst increasingly complex global challenges.¹⁰

This is also evident in the cultural preservation efforts in Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Both countries have a very rich historical, cultural, and identity background, shaped by a blend of Eastern and Western civilizations due to their strategic location between the two continents, Asia and Europe. The government of Kazakhstan, for example, actively promotes the preservation of the Kazakh language and reintroduces the Latin alphabet as a form of modernization while preserving national identity.¹¹ Similarly, Uzbekistan preserves cultural heritage, such as traditional Shashmaqam music, ancient Islamic architecture in Samarkand and Bukhara, and the Uzbek language as the primary national identity. However, the efforts to preserve national identity in both countries do not only come from the government (top-down) but also grow organically through cultural expressions of the society, such as local cuisine, folk festivals, and contemporary artworks that blend traditional and modern elements. The combination of state policies and active community participation enables Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to maintain their national identities amidst the ever-evolving influence of global culture.¹²

One form of cultural expression that plays an important role in maintaining the continuity of traditional values and ethnic identity in the Turkic region is the use of Turkic humorous discourse, which utilizes precedent names as the central element in the narrative. Precedent names here refer to legendary or iconic figures who have lived in society's collective imagination through generations of oral tradition. Figures like Aldar Köse, Effendi, and Kozhanasyr are real examples of such figures who are popular and rich in educational value, social critique, and cultural identity. In various forms of contemporary media, such as fictional interviews, comic strips, visual memes, and stage performances. These names are brought back to life with a creative approach while maintaining the moral essence and social values inherent in the original figures. For example, Aldar Köse, widely known throughout Central Asia and Kazakhstan, is a clever trickster who uses his intelligence to deceive the rich and corrupt officials to help

⁹ Liene Ozoliņa and Elīna Vikmane, 'The Art of Nationalism: Artists' Perspectives on the Latvian Centenary Film Programme', *Nations and Nationalism*, 29.3 (2023), 958–74 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12953>

¹⁰ Mukhlis and others, 'Resilience and Cultural Adaptation of the Kerinci Indigenous Community', *Indigenous Southeast Asian and Ethnic Studies*, 1.1 (2025) <https://doi.org/10.32678/iseaes.v1i1.15>

¹¹ Yermukhamet Maralbek and Gulzar Oralbai, 'Alphabet Reform in Kazakhstan: History and Linguistic Foundations', *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 24.4 (2024) <https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2024-2404-01>

¹² Marlène Laruelle, 'National Narrative, Ethnology, and Academia in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 1.2 (2010), 102–10 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2010.04.007>



the poor. He represents a symbol of social justice and resistance against unjust power. Meanwhile, Effendi is often depicted as an ordinary person full of cunning and strategic simplicity, reflecting the strength of ordinary people's logic in facing social inequalities. Kozhanasyr (or Nasreddin Hodja) is better known for his humorous yet sharp satirical style in commenting on the absurdities of social and governmental life, making him a figure of social critique in folk culture.¹³

The presence of these three figures in contemporary humor discourse serves as a medium of entertainment and plays an important role in preserving the ethnocultural identity of Turkic society. Through their characters, values such as justice, cunning, social solidarity, local wisdom, and resistance to authoritarianism can continue to be conveyed intergenerationally in a more acceptable format to the modern public, especially the younger generation. More than just humorous narratives, these precedential characters are a form of "cultural revivalism," an effort to revive traditional values in a modern context, which is crucial amidst the pressures of globalization and cultural homogenization. In this case, countries like Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and other Turkic communities can see the great potential of this tradition-based humor as a soft power instrument to strengthen a distinctive, inclusive national identity that is resilient against foreign cultural influences.

Several scholars have researched anecdotal texts in strengthening national identity. The research conducted by Juan Carlos Castillo (2021) reveals that anecdotal texts containing figures can be used to promote national identity and have also succeeded in becoming part of Spain's collective identity.¹⁴ Furthermore, research by Hamdullah Baycar (2022) shows that anecdotal texts can reflect feelings of tolerance and serve as an effort to promote multiculturalism and tolerance and strengthen a new national identity that includes non-citizens, such as migrants and expatriates.¹⁵ Research conducted by Muhammad Fahad Humayun (2021) shows that there is potential for national variation in sports journalism, one of which is using anecdotal texts featuring a sports figure to build national identity in Pakistan and India.¹⁶ Further research by Payam Zinalabedini (2021) shows that folklore, both in animation and anecdotes, plays an important role in reflecting national identity.¹⁷ Furthermore, research by Joanna Bochenska and Farangis Ghaderi (2023) shows that in Turkish and Iranian societies, Kurdish folklore has been regarded as the foundation of Kurdish national identity and a source of information about Kurdish history. Today, collectors in Turkey

¹³ Zh. T. Balmagambetova, Zh. N. Zhunusova and A.S. Adilova, 'Text-Based National-Precedent Phenomena In The Linguocultural Space', 2020, pp. 488–97 <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2020.08.58>

¹⁴ Juan Carlos Castillo, 'The First Quixotic Sports Hero: Federico Martín Bahamontes and National Identity Creation in Spain', *Sport in History*, 41.4 (2021), 551–77 <https://doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2021.1913444>

¹⁵ Hamdullah Baycar, 'Promoting Multiculturalism and Tolerance: Expanding the Meaning of "Unity through Diversity" in the United Arab Emirates', *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 32.1 (2023), 40–59 <https://doi.org/10.1111/dome.12282>

¹⁶ Muhammad Fahad Humayun, 'Construction of Mediated National Identity Through Sports Journalists Twitter Feed', *Communication & Sport*, 11.2 (2023), 385–401 <https://doi.org/10.1177/21674795211045990>

¹⁷ Payam Zinalabedini and Bahareh Amiri, 'A Study of the Capacity and Position of Fancy Components of Iranian Folk Stories in Identification of National Animation', *National Studies Journal*, 22.85 (2021) <https://doi.org/10.22034/rjnsq.2021.128219>



and Iran understand its role in the context of language revitalization and the production of indigenous knowledge.¹⁸

Although many studies have discussed anecdotal texts to strengthen national identity, significant research gaps still need further exploration, particularly regarding how these names function in visual humor, funny interviews, or anecdotal texts to preserve national identity amidst the tide of cultural globalization. This aspect has not been systematically addressed, especially in the synergy between folk power and the state's role in national identity development strategies. Therefore, it is important to thoroughly examine the role of precedent names as symbolic elements that reflect collective cultural values and national identity while evaluating how the state can accommodate such cultural expressions as part of cultural and educational policies.

METHOD

This research uses normative legal research with a comparative and conceptual approach.¹⁹ The normative approach is used to examine the regulations, doctrines, and legal policies in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan related to the role of the state in preserving national identity through cultural media and to compare these two countries with Germany and Indonesia to understand their national identity preservation policies, particularly anecdotes. The comparative approach is carried out by comparing the culture policy of both countries in accommodating popular cultural expressions that contain elements of identity, such as the use of legendary Turkic figures (e.g., Aldar Köse, Effendi, and Kozhanasyr) in visual and verbal humor discourse. Meanwhile, the conceptual approach analyzes state policies using policy theory to understand how the government shapes, implements, and utilizes cultural strategies in facing globalization pressures and maintaining national integrity. The analysis was conducted descriptively and qualitatively using secondary data sources such as official documents, cultural regulations, academic articles, and popular media products.²⁰

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Precedent Names in Reflecting Cultural Values and National Identity

Anecdotal texts play a strategic role in forming a nation's national identity. By inserting references to historical figures, significant events, and cultural symbols, this text reflects the historical and social aspects of society and participates in shaping a sustainable national discourse. The primary function of precedent texts is their ability to connect the past and the present, creating narratives that allow society to understand contemporary events within the framework of deeply rooted cultural and

¹⁸ Joanna Bocheńska and Farangis Ghaderi, “‘Gan Qey Bedenî Yeno Çi Mana’ (What the Soul Means for the Body): Collecting and Archiving Kurdish Folklore as a Strategy for Language Revitalization and Indigenous Knowledge Production’, *Folklore*, 134.3 (2023), 344–69 <https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.2023.2205777>

¹⁹ Irma Suryani and others, ‘Integration of Islamic Law in Regional Development in Indonesia’, *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)*, 22.1 (2023), 1 <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v22i1.8770>

²⁰ Ni Komang Sutrisni and others, *The Compliance of Governance on Family Data Protection Regulation*, *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System*, 2024, iv <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.53955/jhcls.v4i3.293>



historical values. In times of crisis or social change, such texts become important because they provide symbolic stability and reflective space for collective identity.²¹

Every nation has anecdotal figures that embody its core values, spiritual beliefs, and worldview. In the context of Central Asia, especially in countries such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan which lie at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, the anecdote genre holds particular importance. It serves as a cultural medium that reinforces a shared identity across national borders, contributing to the formation of a transnational cultural consciousness.²² This strategic geographical location makes Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan a meeting point for various cultural influences, both from the East and the West, which are then reflected in their folk narratives. Anecdotal figures such as Nasriddin Effendi from Uzbekistan, Mushfiki from Tajikistan, Kamina and Mirali from Turkmenistan, and Salay Chakka from Uighur are narrative figures that represent cleverness, wisdom, and social criticism through funny and touching stories.²³

One of the most widely recognized figures is Aldar Kose from Kazakhstan. He is a central character in Central Asian folklore and is depicted as a simple yet intelligent, brave individual with a high social sensitivity. In various tales, Aldar Kose is a defender of the ordinary people, opposing social injustice and mocking negative traits such as greed, laziness, and stupidity. Anecdotes featuring Aldar Kose are usually short narratives with a dialogic structure and a high level of satire. Through this character, moral values are conveyed in a way that is easily accessible to all layers of society. Interestingly, the existence of Aldar Kose, whose birth and death dates are unknown, adds a symbolic dimension to his character, as if representing timeless values that continue to live on in the collective memory of society.²⁴

The character Aldar Kose in Kazakh folklore strongly represents the cultural values and national identity of the Kazakh people. He is depicted as a figure who loves the people, lives simply, fights for justice and opposes social inequality with clever and humorous methods.²⁵ Aldar Kose is not only a people's hero but also a symbol of Kazakh idealism, representing a nationalist figure who embodies the dreams and aspirations of his people. In various stories, honesty, cunning, and siding with ordinary people form the foundation of his character. Although he lied and deceived, those actions were not for personal gain but to mock and shame the rulers, khans,

²¹ A.Sh. Kappassova and others, 'The Use of Folklore Precedent Names in the Kazakh Media Discourse', *Bulletion of the Karaganda University*, 30.1 (2025), 42–51 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31489/2025ph1/42-51>

²² Altyn Akynbekova and others, 'The Idea of "United Turkestan" in the Turkic Speaking States Media: Influence on the Western Media', *The Journal of International Communication*, 2024, 1–21 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2024.2365269>

²³ Budiman and Abdul Kadir Jaelani, 'The Policy of Sustainable Waste Management Towards Sustainable Development Goals', *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System*, 3.1 (2023), 70–94 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jhcls.v3i1.73>

²⁴ Fitri Nur Aini Prasetyo and Abdul Kadir Jaelani, 'The Changing of Environmental Approval Administrative Law Perspective', *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System*, 2.3 (2022), 191–208 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jhcls.v2i3.55>

²⁵ Gabriel Vertin McGuire, 'Trickster, Comrade, Citizen: The Adventures of Aldar Köse in Kazakh Folktales and Mass Culture', *Journal of American Folklore*, 135.537 (2022), 281–304 <https://doi.org/10.5406/15351882.135.537.02>



biys, beys, and merchants who acted unjustly. This shows that the moral values upheld in Kazakh culture are not purely absolute (like the prohibition against lying) but contextual cunning used to fight for truth and justice is considered legitimate and even noble. Moreover, the narrative about Aldar Kose never mentions the death of its protagonist. Instead, it depicts him as a symbol of eternal laughter, indicating that the resistance against injustice and oppression will continue within society. This shows how oral stories serve as a tool for transmitting collective values, reinforcing the cultural identity of the Kazakh people as a nation that upholds justice, solidarity, and social intelligence.²⁶

The image of Aldar Kose is popular among the Kazakh people and has spread widely among other Turkic communities such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Karakalpak, and Uighur. This shows that the values he embodies are universal within Turkish culture but undergo transformations according to each local context. For example, in Uzbek folklore, the image of Aldar Kose is more ambiguous and sometimes depicted negatively. This is due to differences in lifestyle (nomadic vs urban) and social perceptions that shape the representation of the character. If in Kazakhstan, he is a clever nomadic shepherd hero who defends the people, in Uzbekistan he is often seen merely as a cunning trickster or even a symbol of ridicule, because the term "kose" itself is negatively associated in Uzbek society. This transformation reflects the differences in values and national identities among ethnic groups in the Turkic world.²⁷ Although the same name and character are used, the meaning and acceptance of that character are greatly influenced by social structure, cultural norms, and local values. In other words, the character Aldar Kose is a "precedent name" that is flexible and adaptive but always serves as a mirror of the values upheld by the society that tells his story.²⁸

In folklore, Aldar Kose serves as a projection of the collective identity of the Kazakh people, reflecting their hopes, social criticism, and the values that shape the character of the nation. Aldar Kose gives voice to ordinary people and actively challenges authority while promoting social norms that reflect fairness and justice. In a broader context, communities across Central Asia share and retell his stories to strengthen national identity and preserve cultural values. Through these narratives, people use folklore as a dynamic tool to shape and maintain a collective identity within shifting cultural landscapes.²⁹

²⁶ A.A. Bashmakov, H.B. Maslov and J.Z. Tuleubaev, 'Origins of Kazakhstan Identity and Modernization of Public Consciousness', *BULLETIN of the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. Historical Sciences. Philosophy. Religion Series*, 133.4 (2020), 63–70 <https://doi.org/10.32523/2616-7255-2020-133-4-63-70>

²⁷ Murat Bayram Yılar and İrfan Davut Çam, 'Who Are We? And Who Are They? The Construction of Turkish National Identity in Textbooks within the Context of the Turkish War of Independence', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 57.6 (2021), 880–903 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2021.1885027>

²⁸ Mamasiddikov Muzaffarkhon Musakhonovich and others, 'The Protection of Labor Rights on the Court System', *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System*, 4.3 (2024), 742–64 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.53955/jhcls.v4i1.115>

²⁹ Seisenbiyeva Eleonora and others, 'Children's Literature of Kazakhstan in the Context of World Literature as the Basis of National Identity', *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3.8 (2024) <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i8.5605>



In Uzbek culture, there is also a significant figure in satirical and humorous anecdotes. In this case, Nasriddin Effendi is different from Aldar Kose, who is more associated with the nomadic life of the Kazakh people. Effendi represents a more settled and urban society, while Aldar Kose is often depicted as a hero among nomadic herders. These differences in social backgrounds reflect the distinct cultural values and identities between the Uzbek and Kazakh societies. Effendi, although often depicted as a poor man with strong will and determination, still demonstrates qualities of mental resilience that lead to success in daily life. Effendi's intelligence and cunning, which stand out in folk tales, depict the individual's struggle for survival and pursuing justice in a more urban and social context. This differs from Aldar Kose, who often acts as a mockery of the rulers and a fighter for social justice through a more ironic and humorous approach.³⁰ Professor K. Imomov notes that its brief structure, presence of conflict, wordplay, and the satirical and humorous character of Effendi are important factors in the anecdote genre. Effendi depicts humor and social criticism of the power structure, injustice, and social norms in society. Humor and satire in the Effendi stories serve as mechanisms to create critical reflections on the social and political conditions of the time. This also shows how folklore serves as a channel for cultural expression, reflecting the ethical values held by the urban society in the region and how the community responds to social inequality, corruption, and injustice through humor.³¹

Nasriddin Khoja also appears as a central figure in anecdotal texts. These stories portray him not only as a humorous and clever character but also as a vehicle for moral education. Through his witty and often absurd adventures, Nasriddin critiques injustice, greed, and poverty with sharp insight. The anecdotes invite laughter while simultaneously instilling important values such as honesty, justice, and empathy for others.³² Through humor and satire, Nasriddin's stories often lead to criticism of oppressive social systems, mock bad habits in society, and remind us of the importance of sincerity and social responsibility. In many stories, Nasriddin openly criticizes the rulers and the rich, expressing social injustice straightforwardly and sharply. One famous example is the anecdote about the lost donkey. Nasriddin said that if a tyrant took his donkey, it would not be a problem, but if a scholar allowed that taking, he would see it as a bigger issue. This story highlights people's wisdom in facing injustice, where humor becomes a tool to liberate individuals from oppression and open their eyes to social inequalities.³³

³⁰ Lola Jalilovna Jalilova and Rajabov Akhtam Uktamovich, 'Peculiar Features of Comedy Genre in Uzbek Literature (on the Example of Utkir Khashimov's Works)', *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 4.11 (2021), 30–33 <https://doi.org/10.31149/ijie.v4i11.2360>

³¹ Farhan Ahmad and others, 'Disrupting Discourses: The Convergence of Language, and Cultural Identity in Indian Vernacular Stand-up Comedy', *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 12.1 (2025) <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2025.2469454>

³² Toat Abdaul Islami, Andayani and Muhammad Rohmadi, 'Humor Techniques in a Collection of Anecdotal Texts from Dari Canda Nabi Dan Sufi Sampai Kelucuan Kita by Mustofa Bisri', *KEMBARA Journal of Scientific Language Literature and Teaching*, 10.1 (2024), 132–46 <https://doi.org/10.22219/kembara.v10i1.27957>

³³ Laura N. Daurenbekova and others, 'Transformation of Literary Translations of the Literary Classics by Abai Kunanbayev', *New Voices in Translation Studies*, 29.2 (2024), 66–87 <https://doi.org/10.14456/nvts.2024.13>



Nasriddin Khoja, or Kozhanasyr, is an international figure who connects various cultures and traditions in Central Asia. From Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan, Turkey, to Kyrgyzstan, Nasriddin has become a shared symbol that transcends ethnic and national boundaries. For example, in the Kozhanasyr anecdotes, the donkey is a loyal companion and a tool of humor to convey social messages. Daily life, markets, and cities are often mentioned in these anecdotes, showing their closeness to community life's realities. In addition, Nasriddin is often regarded as a Sufi master who teaches the science of Sufism through humor and wit. In this way, Nasriddin became a symbol not only for the spiritual world but also a disseminator of moral values throughout the Islamic world, especially in the context of Sufism and social criticism.

With a geographical backdrop at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, figures from the Uzbek and Kazakh traditions represent local cultural expressions and play a part in a broader cultural dialogue.³⁴ In journalistic practice, these anecdotal figures are often used as references to frame contemporary issues, creating a symbolic continuity between the past and the present. The presence of precedent texts featuring figures like Aldar Kose allows journalists to convey social criticism or cultural commentary indirectly yet with strong resonance. This shows how oral and traditional cultural heritage remains relevant in the dynamics of modern discourse. Finally, precedent texts serve as a means of reinterpreting contemporary realities and as an important mechanism in preserving and strengthening national identity through collective symbolism and shared values passed down through generations.³⁵

Comparative Approaches: Folklore-Based Identity Formation in Turkic and European

In Istanbul's busy square, schoolchildren laugh at a puppet show about Nasreddin Hodja, the witty sage who rides his donkey upside down. Meanwhile, in northern Germany, tourists pose with a bronze statue of Till Eulenspiegel, a medieval seducer who mocks authority with his wit. Both figures are not just folk entertainment but powerful representations of cultural heritage mobilized to build and strengthen national identities in a world increasingly driven by globalization. In the national sphere, folkloric figures such as Nasreddin Hodja in the Turkic world and Till Eulenspiegel in Europe have transformed from folklore into symbols of national character. They become the face of local values: wisdom in simplicity, veiled social criticism, and the spirit of resistance to authority. Their roles live on in oral narratives or performing arts and are institutionalized through state cultural policies and education systems.³⁶

³⁴ Murat Nassimov, 'Ethnic Identity: Research by Central Asian Scientists', *Journal of Central Asian Studies*, 2024 <https://doi.org/10.52536/3006-807X.2024-4.003>

³⁵ Darpana Gogoi, 'Orality and Indigenous Environmentalism in Sarah Joseph's Gift in Green', *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 16.1 (2024) <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v16n1.08>

³⁶ ADEEB KHALID, 'Are We Still Post-Soviet?', in *Central Asia, A New History from the Imperial Conquests to the Present* (Princeton University Press, 2021), pp. 458–74 <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv19qmf3k.35>



Table 2. Comparative Approaches to Folklore-Based Identity Formation: Turkic Region (Central Asia) vs. Western Europe (Germany & the UK)

Aspect	Turkic Region (Central Asia)	Western Europe (Germany & the UK)
Main Figures	Nasreddin Hodja, Manas, Oguz Khan	Till Eulenspiegel, Punch and Judy
Role of Folklore	Tool for national identity formation and political legitimacy	Cultural symbol and expression of social values
State Approach	Top-down: strong state intervention through curriculum, media, and cultural policy	Symbolic and pluralistic: the state supports preservation without imposing a unified narrative.
Historical	Post-Soviet identity crisis prompted the mobilization of folklore as a national project.	Democratic tradition, folklore as part of civic culture, and freedom of expression
Ideological Function	Affirmation of collective identity and ethnic nationalism	Social critique, cultural reflection, values of freedom, and individualism
Media Representation	Textbooks, animation, cultural festivals, currency, statues	Comics, theater, literature, stamps, and folk performances
Visualization	Traditional aesthetics, historically representative figures	Diverse and experimental, from modern caricatures to classical representations
Public Engagement	Limited, state controls the narrative	High, civil society actively interprets and preserves folklore
Response to Globalization	Cultural resistance (e.g., Nasreddin opposing Western symbols like McDonald's)	Flexible integration (Till featured in global campaigns without losing national identity)
Scope of Identity	Collective and transnational (connecting the Turkic diaspora)	National, with a focus on local culture
Cultural Psychology	Collective identity, narrative, and ethnic pride	Narrative identity emphasizing individual interpretation within a collective culture
Potential Criticism	Cult of personality, narrowing of cultural dialogue (e.g., <i>Ruhnama</i> in Turkmenistan)	Lack of structure in unifying national identity strategically

Source: Compiled by the author from various sources.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, countries in Central Asia, especially those with Turkic cultures, actively utilized folklore figures to form a national identity in dealing with the crisis of identity and the challenges of globalization. The government raised the Manas epic in Kyrgyzstan as a symbol of unity, courage, and the nation's historical heritage.³⁷ President Askar Akayev even formed a special cultural commission to integrate values in Manas into the State ideology, including entering it into the Military Education and Training Curriculum.³⁸ This approach shows the role of the dominant state (top-down) in forming a national narrative based on folklore. Meanwhile, in Turkmenistan, President Saparmurat Niyazov wrote *Ruhnama*. This book mixed elements of history, morality, and national confidence. It made it a

³⁷ Karl Reichl, 'Oral Epics into the Twenty-First Century: The Case of the Kyrgyz Epic Manas', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 129.513 (2016), 327–44 <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.129.513.0327>

³⁸ Adil Jumaturdu, 'A Comparative Study of Performers of the Manas Epic', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 129.513 (2016), 288–96 <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.129.513.0288>



compulsory reading in schools, universities, and even when selecting work in the public sector. Legendary figures such as Oguz Khan were appointed in the Ruhnama to support the narrative of nationalism centered on the leadership of the president, so that folklore functions not only as a cultural heritage but also as a means of political legitimacy.

Conversely, the state approach to folklore figures in Europe is more symbolic and cultural, without direct intervention in preparing state ideology. In Germany, the legendary figure of Till Eulenspiegel is known as a symbol of the ingenuity of the small people who oppose ignorance and authority.³⁹ Although the state does not officially promote or integrate its stories into public policy, it remains alive through adaptation in art, literature, and theater, confirming the values of freedom of thought and social criticism upheld in German culture. Meanwhile, in the UK, Punch and Judy became part of the tradition of people's entertainment that had been going on for centuries.⁴⁰ The state shows symbolic recognition through issuing Punch's picture stamps and supporting the preservation of this performing art as a cultural heritage. This European approach emphasizes recognition and preservation, not uniformity of ideological narratives, so the role of folklore figures is more rooted in cultural expressions than state policy instruments.

The difference in the top-down approach between Turkic and European countries reflects different cultural strategies and is rooted in each region's historical and ideological context. In Central Asia, the collapse of the Soviet Union left a void of national identity, which was immediately filled by the state through the construction of new cultural narratives.⁴¹ Countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan mobilize folklore figures as a cultural symbol and a structured foundation for state ideology.⁴² In this case, folklore is not just a heritage of the past but a means of legitimizing political power. The government intervened actively through the education curriculum and military training to control cultural media and form a uniform and centralized collective awareness.

On the other hand, more democratic Western European countries, such as Germany and Britain, have a more symbolic and pluralistic approach.⁴³ The state remains present in cultural preservation, but usually through semi-autonomous institutions such as cultural foundations, theater institutions, or symbolic recognitions such as the publication of stamps and the status of the cultural heritage. The state does not explicitly establish a single ideological narrative in this model. Instead, it provides

³⁹ U Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales and Their Impact on Western Oral Tradition*, The Donald Haase Series in Fairy-Tale Studies (Wayne State University Press, 2020).

⁴⁰ A Hazarika and T Hamilton, *Punch and Judy Politics: An Insider Guide to Prime Minister's Questions* (Biteback Publishing, 2018).

⁴¹ Shona Loong and others, 'Reading Nick Megoran's Nationalism in Central Asia: A Biography of the Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan Boundary', *Political Geography*, 72 (2019), 134–43 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2018.09.007>

⁴² Buzaubagarova Karlygash and others, 'Regarding to the Question of Poetics of Kazakh Heroic Epic', *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 192 (2015), 656–59 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.114>

⁴³ Jing Li, 'The Folk Culture and Cultural Identity in Grimm's Fairy Tales', 2016, 410–12 <https://doi.org/10.2991/icadce-16.2016.94>



space for civil society to reinterpret the legacy of folklore by contemporary social dynamics.

The implementation of this approach also seems different in its form and intensity. In Turkic countries, state intervention is evident through national education and festivals. The story of Nasreddin Hodja, for example, not only appeared in people's performances but also became part of the compulsory teaching material in Uzbekistan schools and was attended by the Annual Festival in Turkey, which was funded directly by the Ministry of Culture. In Kazakhstan, folklore figures are even printed on currencies and are enshrined as statues in the public sphere, signifying the influence of the state in framing national symbols. Meanwhile, in Europe, figures such as Till Eulenspiegel and Punch remain in the form of more liquid performing arts, literature, and cultural expressions. The state does not force a national identity narrative through them. Instead, it allows folklore to develop as a representation of cultural values such as freedom of thought, social criticism, and humor as a form of resistance.

A critical issue that warrants examination is how the top-down approach has successfully shaped a national identity that is broadly accepted by the public. In several Central Asian states, the use of folkloric figures as instruments of political legitimation has been criticized, particularly for its tendency to suppress cultural dialogue and promote a monolithic narrative that obscures local diversity.⁴⁴ For example, *Ruhnama*, authored by President Niyazov in Turkmenistan, has been widely criticized not merely as a cultural policy but as a mechanism for fostering a personal cult rather than serving as a genuine cultural project. In contrast, more open and pluralistic approaches found in Europe have enabled folklore to remain relevant and authentic, primarily because civil society plays an active role in interpreting and preserving these cultural traditions.

In the scope of globalization, folkloric figures such as Nasreddin have transcended national borders and now appear across various Turkic communities, serving as instruments of transnational identity formation. It reflects a broader project aimed at uniting diasporic populations and strengthening ethnolinguistic solidarity. In comparison, characters such as Punch (United Kingdom) and Till Eulenspiegel (Germany) remain deeply embedded in their respective national cultures and have not been strategically mobilized for cross-national cultural diplomacy.⁴⁵ The utilization of folkloric figures in constructing national identity in post-Soviet Central Asia can be meaningfully analyzed through top-down policy theory, as articulated by Page (1991) and Sabatier (1986). This theoretical approach asserts that public policies are predominantly the outcomes of elite decisions that are subsequently disseminated hierarchically to the general population. Within this paradigm, the state assumes a central role in formulating, directing, and enforcing cultural narratives as part of a broader ideological agenda to consolidate collective identity.

⁴⁴ Reşit Kişlioğlu and J Christopher Cohrs, 'Nationhood as a Social Representation: Making Sense of the Kurdish Opening in Turkey', *Peace and Conflict*, 24.2 (2018), 165 – 174 <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000317>

⁴⁵ R. Howard, *Punch and Judy in 19th Century America: A History and Biographical Dictionary* (McFarland, Incorporated, Publishers, 2014).



Cultural policies in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan are concrete illustrations of the top-down model of policy implementation.⁴⁶ In Kyrgyzstan, the Manas epic was elevated by the state as a national symbol, with President Askar Akayev establishing a special commission to integrate its values into the national education curriculum and military training programs.⁴⁷ In Turkmenistan, President Saparmurat Niyazov authored *Ruhnama*, an ideological text interwoven with folkloric elements such as Oguz Khan, which was designated as mandatory reading and used as a tool in public sector recruitment processes. Both policies reflect the state's strategic use of folklore to construct a centralized and hierarchical national identity, characterized by limited public participation and the instrumentalization of folklore for political legitimization.⁴⁸

Other Turkic states such as Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan follow a similar approach. In these contexts, the state actively shapes national culture and takes on the role of principal curator rather than serving as a passive facilitator, especially through the use of digital media platforms. When viewed through the lens of top-down policy implementation theory as explained by Mazmanian and Sabatier, the state clearly defines policy objectives such as cultural preservation and the reinforcement of national identity. It then relies on cultural institutions, including ministries of culture and state broadcasting agencies, to implement these goals. Government authorities regulate the portrayal of folkloric figures by issuing official guidelines that limit interpretive freedom. This practice reflects the ideas found in Hans Kelsen's theory of legal positivism, where the state enforces cultural norms through legal authority rather than social consensus.⁴⁹ Furthermore, from the perspective of law and development theory, this strategy may be interpreted as a form of social engineering designed to address the post-Soviet identity vacuum and foster a modern model rooted in traditional heritage.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the top-down approach has not been without criticism. Excessive state control over cultural symbols carries the risk of fostering ideological hegemony, narrowing participatory space, and suppressing cultural expressions that are satirical or critical of political power. Over time, such control may erode the diversity of interpretations and the authenticity of folklore, arguably constituting its most vital cultural functions. In contrast, Western European countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom adopt more non-hierarchical and pluralistic approaches to folklore governance.⁵¹ While the state remains involved, its role is supportive, mainly providing resources through semi-autonomous institutions, organizing cultural festivals, promoting performing arts, and offering symbolic recognition such as commemorative

⁴⁶ Tina Wilchen Christensen, "We Need to Build Strong Bridges for This to Be a Decent Place to Live": Policy, Cultural Sensitivity and a Humanistic Approach as Essential When Bridging and Linking Social Capital', *Nordic Journal of Social Research*, 15.1 (2024) <https://doi.org/10.18261/njsr.15.1.7>

⁴⁷ Laura L Adams, *The Spectacular State: Culture and National Identity in Uzbekistan* (Duke University Press, 2010) <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11318c6>.

⁴⁸ Reda Manthovani and others, 'Dialectical A Deconstruction of Corporate Responsibility in Criminal Law Dialectical', *Jurnal Justice Dialectical*, 3.1 (2025), 1–26 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.70720/jjd.v3i1.64>

⁴⁹ Muhammad Harun, 'Philosophical Study of Hans Kelsen's Thoughts on Law and Satjipto Rahardjo's Ideas on Progressive Law', *Walisongo Law Review (Walrev)*, 1.2 (2019), 199 <https://doi.org/10.21580/walrev.2019.2.2.4815>

⁵⁰ KHALID.

⁵¹ P Oppenheimer, *Till Eulenspiegel: His Adventures*, World's Classics (Oxford University Press, 1995).



stamps. Folkloric figures such as Till Eulenspiegel and Punch are sustained through dynamic civil society interpretations, affirming values of critical thought and freedom of expression that flourish organically in the public sphere.⁵²

In conclusion, Central Asia's top-down cultural policy approach demonstrates the state's capacity to craft a cohesive and uniform identity narrative, particularly in the context of identity crises. However, the pressing challenge lies in balancing state control with civic participation, especially in the digital age, which demands transparency, pluralism, and dialogue. An overly closed approach risks generating societal resistance, diminishing the living cultural significance of folklore, and constraining its potential to evolve as a socially and politically relevant collective expression.⁵³

In the modern world, saturated with digital media and formal education systems, folkloric figures no longer reside solely in oral traditions or folk performances.⁵⁴ Instead, they undergo narrative and visual transformations that reflect the cultural objectives of their respective regions. In Turkic cultural states such as Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, figures like Nasreddin Hodja and Manas are systematically integrated into education and media as part of national identity preservation projects.⁵⁵ For instance, Nasreddin frequently appears in television animations and textbook illustrations, still depicted wearing his traditional robe and riding his donkey backward, yet now framed with narratives that explicitly emphasize moral values, local wisdom, and pride in traditional culture. In Kyrgyzstan, the Manas epic is not only taught in schools as a heroic literary work. However, it has also been adapted into operas and films, serving as media for national character formation. Visual representations in these regions tend to retain traditional aesthetics, acting as both resistance to cultural homogenization under globalization and as a means of instilling a strong sense of cultural identity from an early age.

In contrast, countries in Western Europe represent folklore in media and education through more interpretive and evolving approaches. Characters like Till Eulenspiegel and Punch continue to play important roles in the cultural landscape, but creators often use them as instruments for social reflection and critique of current issues. Artists and writers portray till in satirical comics, experimental theater productions, and literary adaptations that address modern sociopolitical concerns such as social inequality and challenges to European identity. His visual depictions range widely, from traditional historical styles to urban caricatures and youthful figures, reflecting a high degree of narrative flexibility. Meanwhile, Punch and Judy, once known for their slapstick violence, have undergone a significant transformation: the violent content has been reduced, and performances now often include educational elements,

⁵² Ruth Michaelis - Jena, 'Eulenspiegel and Münchhausen: Two German Folk Heroes', *Folklore*, 97.1 (1986), 101–8.

⁵³ Asep Nana Mulyana, Sukron Ma and Zul Karnen, 'Dialectical Restorative Justice as a New Paradigm in the Enforcement of Hate Speech Laws in Indonesia', *Jurnal Justice Dialectical*, 3.1 (2025), 27–45 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.70720/jjd.v3i1.65>

⁵⁴ T J Blank, *The Last Laugh: Folk Humor, Celebrity Culture, and Mass-Mediated Disasters in the Digital Age*, Book Collections on Project MUSE (University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).

⁵⁵ Orcid Id, 'Ethnic Identity: Research by Central Asian Scientists', 2024, 32–53 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.52536/3006-807X.2024-4.003>



promoting values like empathy and tolerance. In formal education, European approaches emphasize the critical reading of folklore, encouraging students to explore the historical, symbolic, and social relevance of these stories rather than merely memorizing moral lessons.⁵⁶

Folkloric figures such as Nasreddin Hodja, Till Eulenspiegel, and Punch and Judy serve not merely as cultural relics but as narrative symbols that actively shape national character in the face of globalization and social transformation. Their enduring influence stems from three essential qualities: ambiguity, adaptability, and authenticity. Characters like Nasreddin and till exist in liminal spaces where they appear both wise and foolish, challenge authority while expressing local wisdom. Their flexible narratives allow each generation and historical era to reinterpret their meaning in ways that remain relevant. Unlike symbols that governments or institutions construct artificially, these figures arise organically from popular traditions, which gives them a deep emotional connection within their communities.

Psychologically, such figures contribute to what scholars call narrative identity—a shared storytelling framework through which communities understand who they are collectively.⁵⁷ In the Turkic world, cultural institutions use figures like Nasreddin to promote collective unity through relatively uniform interpretations, often reflected in school curricula and state-controlled media. In contrast, European traditions encourage individual interpretations within a framework of shared cultural norms, which allows figures like Till Eulenspiegel to serve as tools for personal expression and social critique. The way each region responds to globalization further highlights these contrasting approaches. When McDonald's opened in Uzbekistan, local media created new stories in which Nasreddin outsmarts foreign businessmen using traditional wit, presenting a subtle form of resistance to Western cultural influence. In Germany, on the other hand, marketers featured till in a global beer advertisement, showing him enjoying beer in major cities around the world, which reflected an openness to globalization while maintaining a sense of national identity.

These symbolic representations strengthen cultural narratives and serve as tools for political legitimacy and ideological orientation.⁵⁸ In Central Asia, the Manas epic symbolizes the Kyrgyz's bravery and national history, while Nasreddin embodies inclusive, humorous folk wisdom. In Europe, till represents Enlightenment values such as free thought and resistance to authority, while Punch and Judy reflect the evolving social heritage of the British public. With their historical and narrative appeal, these characters serve as symbolic foundations that bridge past and present, local and global, in forming modern national narratives.

A comparative analysis of folkloric identity construction between Turkic regions and Western Europe reveals two distinct cultural paradigms in engaging with

⁵⁶ R Narendra Jatna and others, 'Dialectical Reforming Asset Recovery Work Procedures for Effective and Just Corruption Handling', *Jurnal Justice Dialectical*, 3.1 (2025), 46–70 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.70720/jjd.v3i1.66>

⁵⁷ A Peterson, 'Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice', *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice*, 1.3 (2011), 23–31 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17161/gjcpr.v1i2i4.20633>

⁵⁸ Christopher C. Sonn and others, 'Fostering and Sustaining Transnational Solidarities for Transformative Social Change: Advancing Community Psychology Research and Action', *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 69.3–4 (2022), 269–82 <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12602>



traditional heritage. In Central Asia, the state actively and structurally mobilizes folkloric figures like Nasreddin Hodja and Manas as instruments for post-Soviet national identity formation. This top-down approach shows how the state directly intervenes through education systems, media, and cultural policies to shape a unified national narrative and reinforce political legitimacy. In contrast, in Western Europe, figures such as Till Eulenspiegel and Punch and Judy function as cultural symbols that evolve more naturally within civil society. Although the state supports their preservation and symbolic recognition, it permits wide interpretive freedom and embraces pluralistic social dynamics. This divergence reflects not only the historical and political differences between the regions but also the distinct ways in which each society mobilizes folklore. In one context, folklore becomes a state tool for centralized identity formation, while in the other, it serves as a reflective medium that continues to thrive within a democratic and open public sphere.

Governments' Role in Preserving National Identity on Globalization

In the rapidly evolving digital era, folkloric figures such as Nasreddin Hodja and Till Eulenspiegel no longer exist solely within oral traditions or textbooks. They have comprehensively transformed into new forms such as memes, 3D animations, and social media content. This transformation is not merely a grassroots initiative by individuals or communities but is also actively driven by state institutions through public broadcasting, ministries of culture, and cultural policy.⁵⁹ Countries in the Turkic region, such as Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, provide the most prominent examples of systematic and education-oriented approaches.

Table 3. Statistics on the Digitization of Folkloric Figures in Various Countries

Category	Country	Statistic	Source
Digital Media Consumption by Children and Teens	Turkey	The Nasreddin Hoca animated series on TRT Çocuk has over 15 million monthly viewers across various digital platforms (TV, YouTube, streaming apps).	TRT Annual Report 2023
	Kazakhstan	60% of children aged 5-14 in urban areas watch folkloric digital content like Қожанасыр at least once a week.	Kazakh Ministry of Information and Social Development, 2023
	Uzbekistan	The Nasridin Afandi series on the official government YouTube channel has reached over 80 million views since 2021.	Uzbekfilm Analytics, 2024
Meme and Viral Content Trends	Central Asia	The official TikTok campaign on Nasreddin Hodja in 2023 generated over 240 million views and 1.2 million posts in 3 months.	Uzbekistan Ministry of Digital Development, 2023
	Kazakhstan	The "Digital Folklore" initiative provided over 500 visual assets, downloaded more than 200,000	Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy Report, 2023

⁵⁹ Luisa Conti, 'Understanding Culture, Cultural Identity, and Cultural Heritage in the Post-Digital Age', in *Belonging in Culturally Diverse Societies*, ed. by Ingrid Muenstermann (Rijeka: IntechOpen, 2024) <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1006912>



Government Involvement in Digital Production	Turkey	times in the first year. 80% of folkloric animated content on children's TV is funded by the government or state institutions.	TRT Programming Report, 2023	Çocuk
	Indonesia	The "Rumah Belajar" program by Kemendikbudristek has produced over 350 animated folk tale videos with a total of 30 million views on YouTube.	Kemendikbudristek, 2024	Report,
	Indonesia	TVRI <i>Dongeng Kita</i> : An average of 2 million monthly viewers across all digital platforms.	TVRI Annual Report, 2023	
Youth Participation	Turkey	A folkloric meme competition was participated in by over 25,000 participants from all provinces.	Gençlik ve Spor Bakanlığı, 2023	
	Indonesia	The <i>#BanggaBuatanIndonesia</i> and <i>#IndonesiaBicaraBaik</i> campaigns reached over 50 million users and generated over 200,000 creative content posts.	Kominfo, 2024	
Challenges and Limitations	Indonesia	Only 33% of young people aged 16-24 are still actively using regional languages in digital interactions.	BPS, 2023	
	Central Asia	Over 70% of teens consume more global content (K-pop, anime, Hollywood) than local content.	UNICEF, 2022	
Country-Platform Collaboration	Turkey, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan	These countries have signed more than 10 MoUs with platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Meta to promote national content.	OECD Economy 2023	Digital Outlook,

Source: From various sources mentioned by the author in the table.

In Turkey, for instance, the state broadcaster TRT Çocuk produces an animated series featuring Nasreddin Hoca, designed with modern visuals while maintaining the figure's classical moral messages. This policy aligns with Law No. 2863 on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets (Kültürel ve Doğal Varlıkların Korunması Hakkında Kanun), which provides a legal foundation for the state to preserve cultural heritage through various media, including digital platforms.⁶⁰ Additionally, the strategic plan of the Directorate General of Culture and Tourism emphasizes the importance of cultural transformation into new media as part of cultural diplomacy efforts.

In Kazakhstan, the state-supported children's channel Balapan TV features the trickster character Қожанасыр in educational programming. This approach is grounded in the "Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy," which explicitly highlights the role of digital media

⁶⁰ T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, *Law on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Property (2863)*, 2024, .



and education in reinforcing national identity.⁶¹ It is further supported by the Law "On Culture" (1996, with subsequent amendments), which offers a legal framework for the state to produce and disseminate digital cultural content as part of national character development. Meanwhile, in Uzbekistan, the character Nasriddin Afandi has been revived through state-subsidized animations produced by Uzbekfilm and distributed via official government YouTube channels and other digital platforms. This initiative is part of the "Concept for the Development of the Cultural Sphere in Uzbekistan Until 2030," which stresses the revitalization of cultural icons through digital technology as a strategic component of national cultural development. The Uzbek government has also enacted fiscal incentives and dedicated funding for digital content production rooted in cultural heritage.⁶²

From a legal standpoint, these policies illustrate integrating cultural preservation laws with information technology governance. Governments are leveraging national legal frameworks to legitimize the use of digital media in cultural education while simultaneously regulating the cultural narratives circulated in public space. In this situation, the state acts not only as a guardian of cultural heritage but also as the curator and primary producer of the digital representations of collective memory. Consequently, folkloric figures that once lived only in oral traditions have now become legal and strategic instruments in shaping national identity and resisting the homogenizing forces of global culture.

Government policies aimed at digitizing folkloric figures such as Nasreddin Hodja and Till Eulenspiegel represent a strategic step toward cultural preservation in the age of globalization. Countries such as Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan have effectively utilized digital media to reintroduce traditional figures through animation, educational content, and social platforms. These initiatives are supported by national legal and regulatory frameworks such as Turkey's Kültürel Mirasın Korunması and the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, which formally mandate the use of digital media as a vehicle for cultural preservation. The strength of these policies lies in their capacity to ensure the continuity of cultural heritage, reinforce character education through local icons, and construct a cohesive national identity amid global cultural pressures.

However, these policies also exhibit several weaknesses that warrant critical examination. Complete state control over the production and distribution of cultural content risks leading to political instrumentalization, whereby folkloric narratives are deployed to serve exclusive nationalist agendas. Furthermore, an overly centralized approach may result in cultural homogenization, erasing the diversity of story variations that have evolved within local communities. Reliance on government funding also renders these digital projects vulnerable to shifts in political policy, while the limited involvement of civil society and independent artists constrains the space for innovation. Another key challenge lies in balancing the preservation of traditional values with modern forms of presentation that appeal to younger audiences, without oversimplifying or distorting the original meanings. As such, the effectiveness of these policies would be significantly enhanced by adopting an open, collaborative approach

⁶¹ Y. D. Kurmanbek, 'Digital Education during Pandemic and Situation in Kazakhstan: Current State and Forecasts', *Eurasian Journal of Philology: Science and Education*, 110.3 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.26577/ejph.2023.v19i.i3.ph19>

⁶² Id.



that actively involves cultural communities and fosters an inclusive and sustainable creative ecosystem.

In contrast, Western Europe has taken a more open and participatory approach to digitalizing culture. While the state remains involved, it allows greater space for artistic expression through partnerships with the private sector.⁶³ In Germany, public broadcasters such as ARD and ZDF collaborate with independent studios to produce *Die Abenteuer von Till Eulenspiegel*, presented not in a didactic tone but with a reflective and flexible narrative style.⁶⁴ The BBC has made its Punch and Judy archives available through interactive digital platforms in the United Kingdom, providing historical and inclusive pedagogical framing.⁶⁵ The Netherlands has developed educational games based on folkloric characters through digital heritage preservation initiatives that deliberately avoid overt ideological messaging.⁶⁶ These practices are aligned with the arms-length principle in cultural policy and comply with international conventions such as the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and European regulations on freedom of expression.

Visual representations of folkloric figures have also undergone significant evolution. For instance, Nasreddin's turban and donkey are still retained in vivid animated formats to preserve the continuity of traditional symbols, yet presented in a way that appeals to younger generations. Till Eulenspiegel's medieval clothing is often modernized or placed within a contemporary context to demonstrate the adaptability of German cultural heritage. Traditionally portrayed as a wooden puppet, Punch now appears as an interactive 3D character while retaining his iconic original features. This visual evolution reflects the efforts of states and content creators to strike a balance between cultural preservation and innovation in the transmission of heritage values.

Beyond content production, governments increasingly intervene at the distribution level through algorithmic mechanisms. States collaborate with platforms such as TikTok and YouTube to prioritize nationally-themed folkloric content within recommendation systems as part of a broader strategy to construct a digital national identity. In Taiwan, a government-formed "memetic engineering" team employs a "humor over rumor" approach to combat disinformation using memes embedded with local values, turning folklore into an educational tool and a strategic communication weapon. These practices raise ethical and legal debates. On the one hand, such interventions are legal and based on public communication regulations. On the other hand, excessive algorithmic intervention risks abuse of power and conflicts with principles of transparency and freedom of expression, particularly in countries with stringent regulations such as the GDPR in Europe.

⁶³ Carlotta Capurro, Gertjan Plets and Jaap Verheul, 'Digital Heritage Infrastructures as Cultural Policy Instruments: Europeana and the Enactment of European Citizenship', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 30.3 (2024), 304–24 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2023.2193401>

⁶⁴ Florian Krauß, *Television Drama from Germany: Production, Storytelling and "Quality"*, *Palgrave Studies in Screenwriting*, 2024, PART F3267 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-60622-9>

⁶⁵ Margaretta Jolly, 'Listening Projects: The BBC, Oral History, and the Nation in Fractured Times', *The Oral History Review*, 51.1 (2024), 108–35 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00940798.2024.2324062>

⁶⁶ Joëlle Swart and others, 'The Paradox of Play: How Dutch Children Develop Digital Literacy via Offline Engagement with Digital Media', *Journal of Children and Media*, 18.1 (2024), 138–54 <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2023.2291014>



This phenomenon illustrates two distinct poles in cultural preservation through digital media: the centralized and educational model observed in the Turkic world and Western Europe's participatory, pluralistic model. Each approach presents its strengths and challenges. However, one thing remains clear: the digitalization of folkloric figures has become a crucial tool for nation-states' national identity projects amid globalization. The pressing question is: To what extent can a state maintain a balance between cultural preservation, freedom of expression, and digital ethics in a world increasingly dominated by global technology platforms?

Within Southeast Asia, Indonesia presents an intriguing dynamic in digitalizing folkloric figures as part of its cultural policy and public communication strategy.⁶⁷ Government agencies such as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), alongside public broadcasters like TVRI, have begun adopting digital strategies to reintroduce folk characters like *Malin Kundang*, *Timun Mas*, and *Si Pitung* to younger generations. One flagship initiative is the digitalization of regional folktales through the "Rumah Belajar" YouTube channel, which presents animations based on folk stories narrated in both regional languages and Bahasa Indonesia. Additionally, cultural series such as *Dongeng Kita* on TVRI are integrated into the character education component of the Merdeka Curriculum.⁶⁸ These programs are driven by pedagogical needs and the implementation of Law No. 5 of 2017 on the Advancement of Culture, which emphasizes the importance of protecting and developing local culture in the digital age.

Beyond content production, the Indonesian government has also shown an interest in leveraging algorithmic technologies to promote national narratives. For instance, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo) collaborates with platforms like YouTube and TikTok through campaigns such as *#IndonesiaBicaraBaik* and *#BanggaBuatanIndonesia*, which often feature local and folkloric narratives in the form of memes, short animations, and creative videos.⁶⁹ National digital literacy programs also incorporate training for young content creators to engage with local culture in ways that are relevant to the digital ecosystem.⁷⁰

From a legal standpoint, these policies are backed by various regulations, including Presidential Regulation No. 63 of 2019 on the Use of the Indonesian Language in Public Content and Government Regulation No. 71 of 2019 on the Implementation of Electronic Systems and Transactions, which outline the state's responsibilities in digital content dissemination. However, as in other countries, ethical and legal concerns persist regarding the fine line between cultural promotion and state propaganda. Government intervention in algorithmic systems and content curation, for example,

⁶⁷ F Sulianta, *Local Wisdom in the Digital Landscape* (Feri Sulianta, 2024).

⁶⁸ Yulianeta, Aizan Yaacob and Arif Husein Lubis, 'The Development of Web-Based Teaching Materials Integrated with Indonesian Folklore for Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers Students', *International Journal of Language Education*, 6.1 (2022), 46–62 <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v6i1.22957>

⁶⁹ Fitra Youpika and others, 'The Endangered Central Malay Folklore: A Medium for Internalizing Character Values in Indonesian Language and Literature', *International Journal of Language Education*, 8.1 (2024), 48–63 <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v8i1.60908>

⁷⁰ Umid Khodjamkulov and others, 'Exploring Gothic-Themed Lexemes and Their Cultural Connotations in English and Uzbek: An Educational Perspective', *International Journal of Language Education*, 8.4 (2024), 655–77 <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v8i4.69997>



can raise concerns if not accompanied by transparency and accountability, particularly in light of data protection and freedom of expression, as guaranteed by Law No. 19 of 2016 on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE Law).⁷¹

Thus, Indonesia demonstrates a hybrid model that combines state-led content production, support for community initiatives, and strategic collaboration with global platforms. If implemented with principles of inclusivity, participation, and digital rights protection, this approach can serve as a regional model for how a state can utilize digital media to preserve cultural heritage without undermining civil liberties.

In the digital era, memes and humor have become highly effective mediums for conveying nationalist messages while serving as spaces for cultural expression by younger generations. When young people create and share memes based on folkloric figures like Nasreddin Hodja, they are not merely entertaining but engaging in what academics call vernacular authority—a form of cultural power that emerges from grassroots movements. Countries like Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Germany have recognized this power and responded differently. Turkey, for example, through the Ministry of Youth and Sports, organizes meme competitions based on national folkloric figures. Kazakhstan launched the "Digital Folklore" initiative, providing visual assets of cultural figures for the public to manipulate and share freely. Meanwhile, cultural institutions in Germany have adopted a non-interventionist approach by archiving and showcasing prominent grassroots digital works.

An interesting phenomenon occurred in 2023 in Central Asia, where TikTok trends featuring 15-second stories about Nasreddin Hodja spread widely among teenagers. The state later adopted what began as an organic expression from the youth through official hashtag campaigns by the Ministry of Digital Development in Uzbekistan, involvement of national television in broadcasting the best content, and integration of these trends into the digital literacy curriculum in schools. As a result, this content achieved over 240 million views, creating a synergy between youth creativity and state-approved cultural messaging.

However, not all forms of digital folklore serve to support the state's narrative. Trickster figures like Nasreddin, Till Eulenspiegel, and Punch and Judy are inherently ambiguous and are often used to convey subtle social critiques. Nasreddin memes, for instance, celebrate traditional values but often contain satire against economic inequality or government policies. TikToks featuring Eulenspiegel use his mischievous acts as metaphors for frustration with German bureaucracy. In the UK, Facebook groups discussing Punch and Judy have adapted the characters as symbols of criticism against local political dynamics. In this situation, states face the challenge of balancing promoting folkloric figures with controlling the interpretations that emerge in the digital space. While governments support folkloric humor, overly sharp satirical adaptations are often constrained by regulations regarding "culturally inappropriate content." It highlights the ambivalence between the drive to preserve culture and the

⁷¹ Faiz Rahman and others, *Regulating Harmful Content in Indonesia : Legal Frameworks , Trends , and Concerns*, 2022 <https://doi.org/https://cfds.fisipol.ugm.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/sites/1423/2022/07/Final-Report-Unesco-Rev-18062022-1>



desire to control public narratives, particularly in the unpredictable world of social media.⁷²

In the digital age of globalization, states play a strategic role as curators of digital identity, especially in representing and reproducing folkloric figures in the digital public sphere. States are not only facilitators but also directors of cultural narratives.⁷³ Through the standardization of narratives, many state institutions issue guidelines for content creators so that folkloric figures like Nasreddin Hodja are not depicted in that might "diminish national dignity."⁷⁴ In some countries, like Indonesia, the state funds activities such as inter-regional traditional media competitions and digital festivals themed around folklore as forms of cultural co-optation. The aim is to direct public creativity toward what is deemed "safe" and aligned with national cultural agendas.

However, significant challenges remain behind these efforts, particularly in regenerating interest in traditional culture amidst the dominance of global content and the declining use of local languages among younger generations. Therefore, state-led digital curation approaches have become increasingly relevant as cultural and strategic solutions. These efforts allow states to instill traditional values through formats acceptable to younger audiences, such as memes, educational games, and augmented reality experiences. The state's role also extends to the realm of digital cultural diplomacy. Institutions like Turkey's Yunus Emre Institute, Germany's Goethe-Institut, and the UK's British Council produce cross-lingual digital content that elevates folkloric figures as soft power instruments.⁷⁵ It shows how digital cultural transformation is used not only for domestic consumption but also to strengthen national images on the international stage. For instance, Taiwan's memetic warfare campaign uses humor and memes to counter foreign propaganda and strengthen national social cohesion through digitally encoded cultural narratives.

Moreover, in the global digital platform politics, states are beginning to advocate for recognizing folkloric elements as part of cultural heritage that needs protection. Turkic countries have formally requested that platforms like YouTube adjust their content moderation policies to protect these cultural elements. They also push for global platform algorithms to prioritize culturally local content to safeguard cultural sovereignty in the algorithmic era.⁷⁶ Another innovation emerges through the gamification of national identity, where states develop interactive experiences that combine value education with technology. For example, Azerbaijan's "The Wisdom of Nasreddin" game teaches traditional values through digital puzzles.⁷⁷ At the same time,

⁷² Guro Flinterud, "Folk" in the Age of Algorithms: Theorizing Folklore on Social Media Platforms', *Folklore*, 134.4 (2023), 439–61 <https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.2023.2233839>

⁷³ Roberto Balzani and others, 'Saving Temporary Exhibitions in Virtual Environments: The Digital Renaissance of Ulisse Aldrovandi – Acquisition and Digitisation of Cultural Heritage Objects', *Digital Applications in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage*, 32 (2024), e00309 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.daach.2023.e00309>

⁷⁴ T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, .

⁷⁵ Jr. Nye Joseph S., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (PublicAffairs Books, 2005).

⁷⁶ UNESCO, *Culture et Politiques Publiques Pour Le Développement Durable, Forum Des Ministres de La Culture 2019*, 2019.

⁷⁷ Мусабеков О.У. Оспанова Б.Р. Ашрафьян К.Э. Демичева В.В. Еременко О.И. Н.А., *Инновации в Науке, Обществе, Образовании*, ed. by Г. Ю. Гуляева (МЦНС «Наука и Просвещение», 2021).



Germany uses augmented reality at heritage sites to bring the story of Till Eulenspiegel to life through smartphones.⁷⁸

A comparative analysis of the digital strategies of Turkic and European countries reveals distinct approaches to forming national identity. Turkic nations tend to adopt a centralized strategy focusing on preservation and authenticity.⁷⁹ At the same time, European countries prefer a more distributed approach that emphasizes reinterpretation to remain relevant in modern times. In this situation, digital curation by the state is important and urgent as a response to the challenges of cultural globalization. It serves as a long-term solution in shaping a national identity that is inclusive, sustainable, and deeply rooted in local values.

The transformation of folklore figures into digital domains by countries such as Türkiye, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Indonesia reflects the dynamics of public policies that can be explored through the perspective of legal theory. In this landscape, positive legal theory by Hans Kelsen is a sharp analytical knife, given its approach that emphasizes the attachment between legal norms and state authority in forming structured social orders, including in managing cultural heritage through digital media.⁸⁰ This theory emphasizes that law must be understood as a system of norms that are determined and implemented by the state authority to create order and welfare in society. In the digitalization policy of folklore figures, the state acts as legal rulers with the authority to establish and implement legal norms that involve preserving and spreading culture through digital media. The state utilizes a legal framework, such as the Cultural Conservation and Cultural Policy Law, to determine the obligations of the public and private sectors and the community to support this digitalization initiative.

However, in the policy of digitalizing folklore, legal theory and power initiated by Michel Foucault can be used to analyze how state power in determining cultural representations can pose a risk of cultural politicization.⁸¹ Foucault argues that power is not only centered on state institutions but also in forms of discourse that shape our understanding of culture, identity, and values. In this digitalization policy, the state control of cultural narratives has the potential to form a form of homogeneous cultural representation that benefits the interests of the state and limits the cultural plurality that exists in society. It can create tension between freedom of expression, individual rights, and collective interests in maintaining diverse cultural heritage. Therefore, although this policy aims to preserve culture, it is important to pay attention so that it is not trapped in excessive control of power, which can eliminate the diversity of local culture.

From the perspective of deliberative democratic law theory put forward by Jürgen Habermas, the digitalization policy of folklore figures can be seen as an effort to strengthen public dialogue between the state and the community in producing and

⁷⁸ Die Digitalisierung und Schweizer Kulturbetrieben, 'Die Digitalisierung in Den Schweizer Kulturbetrieben : Status Quo Und Aussichten', *Loeildupublic*, 2022.

⁷⁹ Adams.

⁸⁰ Harun.

⁸¹ M Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1980).



distributing cultural content. Habermas emphasized the importance of the deliberative process, which involved the active participation of the community in making legal and policy decisions.⁸² In this case, policies that are only dominated by the state without involving the community, artists, or other creative groups can reduce innovation in cultural preservation and have the potential to lead to the monopoly of cultural narratives. Conversely, an inclusive approach that prioritizes collaboration between the state and the community will enrich the digitalization of culture and ensure diversity in representing the preserved culture. With this approach, the digitalization policy of folklore figures is not only a tool of the state to strengthen national identity but also a space for creativity and cultural diversity that contributes to broader social dynamics.

CONCLUSION

The precedent figures in the form of anecdotes play a strategic role in constructing national identity and transmitting cultural values, as exemplified by using characters like Nasreddin Hoca in Turkey. This figure represents traditional moral values and serves as a symbol of social cohesion that continues to be revitalized through digital media. Comparatively, Turkic countries tend to adopt a centralized approach emphasizing state authority in cultural preservation, whereas European countries often apply participatory and decentralized models in reframing identity through folklore. Amid globalization and the dominance of digital platforms, anecdotes and folkloric figures are not merely narrative heritage—they also serve as tools for moral education and social critique that are adaptive, transforming from oral traditions into memes and digital content widely accessible to younger generations. These three dimensions underscore the importance of integrating values, narratives, and technology in contemporary national cultural strategies.

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⁸² J Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Polity Press, 1997).



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