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F O R E I G N A D V I S O R A S S E S S M E N T R E V I E W

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION BY

BANU RAMAZANOVA KUANDYKOVNA

‘TRANSFORMATION OF DOCUMENTARY FILM PRODUCTION IN THE DIGITAL AGE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN EMERGING PRACTICES AND DISTRIBUTION MODELS’

submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the
specialty 8D02184 Directing Film and TV
Temirbek Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts (Almaty, Kazakhstan)

Dear colleagues from the scientific community and the dissertation council, it is my great pleasure to present this review of the doctoral dissertation submitted by Ms. Ramazanova Banu Kuandykovna, entitled ‘Transformation of Documentary Film Production in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities in Emerging Practices and Distribution Models’.

Firstly, I would like to highlight the exceptional relevance of this issue. This work stands as a necessary and insightful exploration of a rapidly transforming field. In a time when documentary cinema is renegotiating its boundaries under the pressures of technological innovation, shifting audience expectations, and political turbulence, Ms. Ramazanova’s dissertation captures the complexity of this moment with both scholarly depth and an evident passion for the subject matter.

Her research is built on a strong theoretical foundation and is distinguished by an interdisciplinary approach that is particularly appropriate given the hybrid nature of contemporary documentary practices. The dissertation succeeds in balancing rigorous academic analysis with a sensitivity to the aesthetic, ethical, and industrial dimensions of nonfiction cinema. In particular, the candidate's inclusion of case studies from the United States, Europe, and Asia, alongside a dedicated and insightful chapter on the evolving Kazakhstani documentary sector, deserves special recognition. This regional focus not only fills a gap in international film scholarship but also echoes a broader trend: the rising prominence of voices from the so-called "peripheries" of the global cinematic map. Ms. Ramazanova's methodological design, combining archival research, comparative analysis, and qualitative content analysis, is carried out with precision and clarity. She demonstrates a firm grasp of the intellectual traditions underpinning her field, drawing thoughtfully from the legacy of documentary theorists while remaining attuned to the new epistemologies introduced by digital media and post-truth phenomena.

With my background as cinema scholar in film history and aesthetic, as well as my keen interest in Asian documentary cinema, I place great importance on scientific approach and research. This is even more true in the current age of technological revolution and ethical changes affecting cinema, such as artificial intelligence. I particularly appreciate the dissertation's capacity to engage with documentary film not simply as an academic object, but as a living, evolving artistic practice. Ms. Ramazanova recognises the political and ethical stakes inherent in nonfiction storytelling today — a recognition that anchors her work in contemporary debates about representation, authorship, and truth. Her reflections on emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and immersive environments are neither speculative nor alarmist; instead, they are grounded in a clear-sighted analysis of both the possibilities and dangers these tools present for the future of documentary practice.

The dissertation's structure is coherent, its argumentation persuasive, and its critical engagement with contemporary scholarship commendable. The candidate's integration of statistical data, visual evidence, and case study material is handled judiciously and enhances the depth of her analysis. Importantly, Ms. Ramazanova's work is not merely descriptive but carries a clear argumentative through-line: she articulates how technological and industrial shifts are reshaping the aesthetics, ethics, and infrastructures of documentary production and distribution. She does so with an independent critical voice, demonstrating intellectual maturity and academic integrity.

In the spirit of constructive professional recommendation, I would encourage Ms. Ramazanova in her future research to expand her focus beyond production and distribution frameworks and to critically explore the narrative transformations now taking place within Kazakhstani documentary storytelling itself. A deeper examination of emerging narrative structures, authorial perspectives, and aesthetic innovations among the new generation of filmmakers would further enrich her contribution to the field. Moreover, given the historical

and cultural interconnectedness of the Central Asian region, it would be valuable for her to broaden the comparative scope of her future research to neighbouring countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Assessing whether the technological, industrial, and narrative shifts identified in Kazakhstan are echoed - or challenged - across Central Asia would elevate her work to a major contribution within both regional and global documentary studies.

Furthermore, it is valuable to explore co-production models and conduct a comparative analysis between Central Asian and East Asian productions.

Based on the originality of the research, the sophistication of its analytical framework, the clarity of its argumentation, and the candidate's evident academic integrity and independent contribution, I am confident in stating that Ms. Ramazanova Banu Kuandykovna has fully met the academic requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Her dissertation, 'Transformation of Documentary Film Production in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities in Emerging Practices and Distribution Models', demonstrates scholarly excellence, methodological rigour, and relevance to contemporary debates in global media and documentary studies. Accordingly, the dissertation is deemed to be in full compliance with established academic standards and is hereby recommended for public defence and subsequent approval.

I recommend publishing this work as a monograph. I believe it will be quite interesting and useful to the academic community abroad.

Sincerely,


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