Features of the Islamic revival in the Republic of Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is a predominantly Muslim country, where, according to estimates, 70% of the population identify themselves as Muslims. However, the Muslim population was not always satisfied with the country's religious policy, especially during the Soviet era, when religious practice was severely restricted, and many religious places and mosques were destroyed or stopped their activities. With the acquisition of independence in Kazakhstan, a process is observed, which is called the "revival" of Islam. The revival of Islam in Kazakhstan can be traced back to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, there has been a growing interest in Islam among the population, and many new mosques and Islamic institutes have been established. Despite the growth of Islamic practice in Kazakhstan, the country has preserved a secular political system with a strong emphasis on the separation of religion from the state. In this article we will consider the features of the “Islamic” revival in the years of independence of our country, as well as the policy of our country to address this problem.

Keywords: Islam, “revival” of Islam, secular state, religion, religious policy, Independent Kazakhstan, SAMK.

Introduction

The Islamic revival in Central Asia began in the 19th century, when Sufi movements and new schools of Islamic thought began to penetrate this territory. During this time, many people in Central Asia rejected traditional forms of Islam and adhered to the Jadid movement, which advocated reforms in education and the modernization of society.

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, the Islamic religion again began to play an important role in the life of the peoples of Central Asia. This was due to the arrival of Turkish reformers to this territory and the creation of the Turkestan region as part of the Russian Empire.

During the period of Soviet rule, Islam was suppressed, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of independence by the states of Central Asia, Islam again became an important element in the identity of the peoples of the region. There are now various currents of Islam in Central Asia, including Sunnis, Shiites and Sufis, and Islam remains one of the most important aspects of culture and social life in this region. But today we want to talk about the revival of Islam in Kazakhstan, since the country is the leader of Central Asia, and also has its own model of religious policy.

In Kazakhstan, Islam is one of the dominant religions and there is a long history of Islam in this country. Over the past few decades, there has been a religious revival of Islam in Kazakhstan, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

During the Soviet era, religion was expelled from all spheres of national existence; An ideological ban was imposed on the scientific problem of Islam in the history of Kazakhstan. Traces of Islam, influence of the Arab-Persian factor, literary heritage, folklore, historical and ethnographic heritage were removed from the texts. The thesis about “religious syncretism” and “bad” and “negative” Islam among nomadic Kazakhs prevailed in the official historiography of Soviet Kazakhstan. At the same time, Islam was considered the religion of the “class elite” (khans and khojas), while shamanism remained a “popular faith”. All this led to a one-sided emergence of Muslim beliefs based on one-sided information. It was mainly expected that political changes and industrialization would throw the local people's religion into the “historical dustbin” [1; 13].

During the years of Independence, which contributed to the de-ideologization of science, this religion was radically revised in a comprehensive manner. However, the common denominator between modern re-Islamization and atheism in the post-modern period is the persistence of Islam among the people and the absence of complete atheism. The historical moment that led to the revival of Islam was Gorbachev's “reconstruction” policy, so we can consider this period as the beginning of re-Islamization [1; 13].

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The collapse of the USSR and the resurgence of world religions, including Islam, in the post-Soviet space gave an unprecedented impetus to the growth of interest in the study of this religion. The formation of new socio-political and socio-cultural realities caused by the collapse of the communist ideology and the collapse of the USSR led to the growth of national consciousness and changes in spiritual orientations. This is confirmed by the mass return of CIS citizens to religious values and traditions in the post-Soviet society. This process also affected Kazakhstan. The loss of communist ideology and the preservation of atheistic principles in Kazakhstani society left people in a moral and spiritual vacuum. Reevaluation of ethnic consciousness and values, ascension began. In this regard, the revival of religious ideology, which has become an important element of culture and lifestyle in a short period of time, took place. With the independence of Kazakhstan, the religious associations of the republic began to receive a powerful impetus for their development.

From the 1990s, Kazakhstan began to openly show interest in Islam, which had previously been banned in the Soviet Union. The state adopted a number of laws that guaranteed freedom of religion, making Islam more accessible to Kazakhs. Most Muslims in Kazakhstan belong to the Sunni direction of Islam.

The government of Kazakhstan has also played a role in promoting Islamic values and practices, while at the same time seeking to combat radicalism and extremism. In 1991, the government established the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK), which serves as the official governing body for Islamic affairs in the country. SAMK has worked to promote a moderate, tolerant form of Islam and has worked to counter extremist ideologies.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of Kazakhstan's independence in 1991, Islam began to receive a new impetus for development.

Experimental

During the writing of the article, we have used general scientific methods of research (analysis and synthesis, deduction and induction), methods of analogy, generalization, systematic approach, methods of empirical research (comparison, description), methods of historical typology, comparative analysis, etc. Special historical methods were applied, in particular, historical-systemic, problem-chronological and other methods that allowed us to systematize the available research on the topic and analyze the historiographic base of the article. Our topics are related, so there are methods and stories and religions that will help in our research work.

Results and Discussions

Kazakhstan is a predominantly Muslim country with a long history of Islamic traditions and practices. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan experienced a revival of Islamic identity and practice, with many people embracing Islam as a way to reconnect with their cultural and religious roots. This has allowed for the free expression of religious identity and the growth of Islamic institutions and organizations. Also, the religious policy in Kazakhstan can be characterized as one of tolerance and cooperation, with a focus on promoting interfaith dialogue and preventing the spread of extremism. The government recognizes the importance of religious diversity in Kazakhstan, and seeks to ensure that all religious groups are able to practice their faith freely and peacefully.

Before moving on to the core of our article, i.e. the revival of Islam in Kazakhstan, we want to separate the periods of “revival”.

The first stage of the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan (1991–2000): During this period, there was a revival of Islam in Kazakhstan. Many new mosques were opened, new Islamic schools, public organizations and media began to appear. In 1998, the Department of Muslim Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan was established, which became the basis for organizing new institutions of Islamic culture and education.

The second stage of the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan (2000–2010): During this period, the position of Islam in Kazakhstan was strengthened. Many new educational institutions, schools, universities and institutes of Islamic culture were created. One of the most important achievements of this period was the opening in 2001 of the Khoja Ahmed Yassaui International University in Turkestan. The second stage of the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan occurred between 2000 and 2010. During this period, there was a resurgence of interest in Islamic culture and values among the people of Kazakhstan.

One of the key factors that contributed to this revival was the end of Soviet rule in Kazakhstan. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the country experienced a period of political and cultural transition, during which people were free to express their religious beliefs and practices. Another factor that contributed to the
Features of the Islamic revival...

revival was the growing influence of Islamic movements throughout the world, including in neighboring Central Asian countries. This led to a renewed interest in Islam among young people in Kazakhstan, who were looking for a sense of identity and purpose in a rapidly changing world. The government of Kazakhstan also played a role in the revival by taking steps to promote and support Islamic culture and traditions. For example, in 2000, the government created the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan, which became the official body responsible for regulating Islamic affairs in the country. During this period, there was also an increase in the number of mosques and madrasas (Islamic schools) in Kazakhstan. Many of these institutions were supported by the government, which provided funding and resources for their construction and operation.

The third stage of the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan (2010–present): During this period, Islam began to develop even more actively in Kazakhstan. New Islamic public organizations, universities and schools were created. In 2016, the International Islamic Academy was opened in Astana, which has become the largest Islamic educational institution in Central Asia. Islam is currently one of the fastest growing religions in Kazakhstan The third stage of the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan began in 2010 and is ongoing. This period has been marked by continued growth and development of Islamic culture and institutions in the country.

One of the key features of this stage has been the government's efforts to promote moderate Islam as a counterforce to extremist ideologies. In 2014, the government launched the “Nurly Zhol” program, which aims to promote a moderate and tolerant form of Islam in Kazakhstan. This program has included efforts to improve the quality of Islamic education and to provide training for imams and other religious leaders.

At the same time, there has been a growing interest in Islamic finance and banking in Kazakhstan. Islamic banking is based on the principles of sharia law and prohibits charging interest on loans. In recent years, several banks in Kazakhstan have begun offering Islamic financial products and services, including mortgages, savings accounts, and investment funds. The number of mosques and Islamic institutions in Kazakhstan has also continued to grow during this period. In 2016, the government announced plans to build over 100 new mosques in the country over the next three years. This effort has been supported by private donations as well as government funding.

Islam is one of the most important factors in the cultural and social life of Kazakhstan. More than 70% of Muslims live in Kazakhstan, and this was the main reason for “Islamic revival”. Moreover, several factors have contributed to the resurgence of Islam in Kazakhstan during this period. These include the search for a new national identity, international influences, and the role of religious institutions.

Another important development in the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan was the emergence of new Islamic organizations and institutions. One of the most prominent of these is the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan, which was established in 1991 to oversee the country's Islamic institutions and promote Islamic education and culture. This non-state organization, which works together with the state, also helps to maintain a balance in the country: to promote the development of “correct Islam” in the country, and also not to forget about secular principles.

There are many varieties of Islam in the vast space from the Maghreb countries to Malacca, and 1.3 billion Muslims are very dissimilar to each other. Therefore, it is impossible to predict with certainty exactly how Islam will affect the daily and political situation in Central Asia. We can definitely say only that cultural and historical trends that should have been realized a long time ago will be realized in our time. In the XIX century Russia has conquered Central Asia and interrupted its interaction with the Islamic world. Now this process has resumed after the collapse of the Soviet Union and will go much faster than it was possible with the technological capabilities of the century before last, and therefore Islam will be one of the most important factors in the development of thought and behavior in Central Asia [2].

And exactly what form Islam will take will depend on the political circumstances and cultural characteristics of each country — for example, traditionally Islam plays an important role in those parts of Central Asia where the traditions of a settled rather than nomadic life prevailed — and on the results of rivalry between different forms of this religion. Nevertheless, Central Asians will develop “traditional” Islam, and the state will create its own “model” of policy towards Islam. Among the Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan, based on the experience of other countries and the peculiarities of our country, began to create its own model of religious policy [2].

The functions of relations with the denomination were transferred to the Department of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic for relations with public associations, which included a special sector. On February 7, 1992, the new Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Freedom of Religion and Religious Associations” came into effect, in the development of which representatives of all faiths carrying out their religious
missions actively participated on the territory of Kazakhstan. The Law guarantees equality of all freedoms and rights of citizens of the Republic before the law, as well as equality of all religious associations before the State. It lays a solid foundation for the worthy freedom of the individual of the faithful citizens of the republic and the mutually respectful relations of all religious associations, which provides material guarantees for ensuring the norms laid down in it.

In the report made at the republican meeting on ideological activity by President N. Nazarbayev called “Our guidelines are consolidation, social progress and social partnership”, it was emphasized that “Kazakhstan is a secular state, this principle is enshrined in the Constitution”. As the President noted, the long-term way of life shows that religion has never played a dominant role in the republic.

However, it should be taken into account that Kazakhstan is not only a multinational, but also a multi-confessional society, and here the huge moral potential of religion, its own religious tolerance can and should play a consolidating role in public life. Islam, Christianity, and other faiths are already doing a lot to establish high moral standards in society — mercy, humanity, kindness. The First President expressed confidence that all religious entities will understand the processes that are taking place on the territory of the republic now. But at the same time, he noted that “Kazakhstan will not be a state professing religious principles in domestic and foreign policy, and, moreover, there can be no question of creating parties on religious platforms”.

The benevolent position of the Government of Kazakhstan on the religious issue was again emphasized in the report of N. Nazarbayev at the first session of the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan, held in Almaty on March 24, 1995, on the topic “For peace and harmony in our common “home”, in which he notes that “...all religions are based on almost the same moral principles — love for people, condemnation of immorality and forgiveness of sincere errors, tolerance of dissent. In other words, regardless of religion, all parishioners in the republic are equally tolerant, moral and peaceful… [3].

The leadership of Kazakhstan has developed good, mutually respectful relations with the highest hierarchs of confessions. Without giving preference to any of them, we try to respond to the needs and requests of all believers”. The following data speak about the multi-confessional nature and the trend of growing religiosity of the population: if on January 1, 1989 there were 671 religious communities of 20 confessions in Kazakhstan, then on January 1, 1995 there were already 1180 of almost 30 confessions and denominations, i.e. over the past 6 years the total number of associations has grown almost 2 times, in Almaty — more than 3 times (the number of confessions and denominations has increased to 40 here) [3]. Based on these states, we would especially like to note the growth of Islamic associations, and the growth of their number and dynamics. This shows how serious the “Islamic renaissance” was and was not going to stop there. Their growth was based on representatives of the “right” Islam, and representatives of different currents that penetrated from the Middle East, Pakistan and Turkey during the collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The number of Muslim associations in Kazakhstan has been growing especially rapidly in recent years. By 1998 there were 483 of them in the republic (as of January 1, 1989 there were 44 communities), including 161 in the South Kazakhstan region, 47 in Almaty, 37 in Zhambyl, 33 in Kyzyl-Orda, 20 in Pavlodar, 18 in Kokshetau, 18 in Taldy-Kurgan, 18 in Semipalatinsk, Aktobe — 15, Zhezkazgan — 15, Torgay — 12, etc. [3] Dozens of new mosques are being built in almost all regions of the republic, many religious buildings confiscated from believers in previous years are being returned and restored. In addition to the Islamic Institute and training courses for Muslim ministers of worship in the village of Merk, believers are sent to study in Turkey, Egypt, and other Muslim countries. The situation with religious literature has significantly improved. The Koran was translated into Kazakh, a large number of its publications were imported annually from Muslim countries. Published religious newspaper of the Spiritual Administration “Iman” (“Faith”), organized pilgrimages of local Muslims to Mecca are organized. Religious enlightenment is expanding, Sunday schools and clubs are being created at mosques, course training of lower-level clerics is being conducted, the study of the basics of Islam, as well as Arabic writing.

The official Muslim clergy shows loyalty to the state and does not go beyond religious activities, in turn, the governing authorities treat their problems with understanding and goodwill.

At the same time, in the 1990s in the post-Soviet countries of Central Asia, a very intensive process of liberalization of spiritual life began, which caused significant structural shifts in the system of religious education and an increase in the number of adherents of world traditional and non-traditional religions. Contributed to religious activity, of course, and the state policy in the religious sphere, which at that time paid closer attention. These and other conditions influenced a kind of surge of interest in Islamic origins.
Unlike traditional Islamic societies, in which the “Islamic revival” meant the restoration of the values of the original Muslim community, in Kazakhstan the main emphasis was placed on the revival of the values of “folk Islam” associated with national traditions and customs. In the same period when interest began to re-emerge in the “classical” or “theoretical” form of religion (“great tradition”), the region began to actively single out the “small tradition” — folk religion, uncodified religious beliefs and practices of ordinary people in traditional society. The official support for the process of the revival of Islam was not accidental: the Islamic religion, being a heritage of the national culture, retained its influence on certain segments of the population, partly even on the leaders of social movements; it partially retained its character of “folk wisdom”. Its functional canons are consistent with the ideas and concepts that the leaders of the young independent states began to proclaim and put forward; the principle of zeal for the rise of the spirituality of the people does not contradict the rate of official power on the study of cultural heritage; the principle of a humane, fair attitude towards people does not contradict the policy of strengthening moral principles in society; the Islamic postulate of the development of a culture of relationships between people and knowledge is consistent with the policy of harmonization of interethnic and interreligious relations in society.

Fundamental changes in the socio-economic and socio-political situation in independent Kazakhstan determined the growing role of variability trends in the development of the religious sphere, created not only a completely new social field, but also new conditions and new opportunities for the revival of religion. “With the collapse of the Soviet Union, not only the political, legal and economic structures (related to the social system) underwent transformation, but, more significantly, the cultural and value system, which occupies a higher position in the hierarchy and therefore has a deeper influence and on the nature of the changes taking place in the social and personal systems” [4].

This process made its way in society, primarily through the transformation of worldviews, which eventually found its expression in a change in the forms of religiosity. Modern religious life in the country is an internally heterogeneous, up to opposite meanings, holistic education. On the one hand, this is determined by the fact that the process of religious revival coincided in time with such socio-economic and political reforms that contributed to the formation of a social structure and worldview that was not traditional for Kazakhstani society. On the other hand, the change in the information regime, the first steps towards the spiritual freedom of society forced people to re-evaluate the cultural heritage of the past. All these changes in the social and spiritual life of society influenced the religious orientation of people. At each of its levels there was a struggle of various criteria and assessments, there was a selection and selection of values, pictures of the religious worldview. The processes of religious revival in many respects have become for Kazakhstan, as they were, basic in the problem of the religiosity of the population. To a certain extent, they determine both the depth of this problem and its content. As practice has shown, the spiritual development of Kazakhstan and other countries of Central Asia is impossible without correlation with religious aspects, not only because religion is an integral part of development, but also because it is one of the most important elements of ethnic culture [5; 28]. Therefore, it seems to us, there is no reason to reduce this point of view to idealism. If we assume that ethnic culture covers many aspects of the life of the peoples of Central Asia, then it becomes clear that religion cannot be something that should be considered only as an ornament given by some aesthetes. Because the end of the twentieth century did not demonstrate the degradation of religious values in Kazakhstan, but, on the contrary, strengthened them even more (judging by the results of sociological studies), it is hardly possible to talk about a decline in interest in religious traditions at the present time.

As the trends in Central Asia testify, the religious factor continues to maintain its dynamism and influence the formation of the socio-political situation in the region. In addition, this factor is becoming more intense in some Central Asian states. The growing potential of this phenomenon in recent years is indicated by the very nature of domestic political development in countries such as Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

When dark events take place in the world, we know that the triumph of a quiet life in Kazakhstan is a pride for our people and an example for other countries. Consequently, in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation of Kazakhstan, under the chairmanship of the organization, the organization can offer member states a number of ways of world development and show an example of the formation of a peaceful life in the Universe.

International in the issue of strengthening global security. And Kazakhstan will call on the members of the organization and will lead the whole world through them to establish political stability and peace, to know its dignity. In this question lies the achievements of our state.

Under the management of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Kazakhstan intends to promote the strengthening of interaction between the West and the Islamic world. To this day, he makes an important
contribution to strengthening cooperation between peoples professing a variety of religions. And thanks to the personal authority and dignity of our presidents, our capital has become the center of such dialogue and mutual cooperation. Now on the planet “Earth” Kazakhstan on issues of interreligious consent will contribute to the solution of many world problems. This shows the high authority and recognition of other Muslim countries, it can also be said that it receives support in the form of the construction of new religious buildings in our country, as well as the strengthening of traditional values, which includes Islam. Our country, which has managed to strengthen interethnic cooperation, will now become an example for the West and the East. The policy of N.A. Nazarbayev, as well as K. Tokayev in preserving interethic peace also contributes to the rapprochement of civilizations. Thus, Kazakhstan will become a bridge of solidarity-unity connecting the West and the East.

In 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012 (four congresses in a row) Leaders of world and traditional religions were held in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. Today it has become a major meeting, paving the way for a global dialogue. Its goal is also to establish a peaceful dialogue between the various peoples who inhabited the Earth. We should regard this as the largest event on a global scale. The world community attaches great importance to its peaceful direction and conciliatory potential [6; 314].

Kazakhstan headed the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 2011. And before we come to the results of work in this organization, let's focus on this organization. The Organization of the Islamic Conference was established on September 25, 1969 on the initiative of Muslim States. During the opening years, it was known by such names as the “Forum of the Islamic Conference” World Islamic Conference”. Today, along with the countries of Africa, East Asia, the Middle East, and Central Asia, a number of Latin American countries are also members of the organization. Thus, their number reaches 57. 1.5-2 billion people around the world work hand in hand with the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as well as Russia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Thailand belong to the category of observer States for the organization.

The member countries of the organization occupy a fifth of the globe. The domestic product of these states already in 2009 amounted to 7.5 trillion US dollars. Their natural resources are also very rich. The member countries of the organization also enjoy great authority throughout the world in the extraction of minerals.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference today plays an active role in the international arena, exerting a positive impact on the global geopolitical situation. Now Kazakhstan, thanks to its “Islamic” model and a well-deserved authority on the world stage, is the current layer in this organization. It also shows our multi-vector policy towards Muslim countries and Muslims in our country [6; 314].

In general, the phenomenon of Islam in Kazakhstan is an important element of the culture and lifestyle of the Muslim population, as well as the process of Islamic revival, which is accompanied by the desire to create a modern Islamic culture.

Despite the growing interest in Islam, Kazakhstan remains a secular state, and the government has sought to maintain a balance between religious freedom and secular values. Islamic extremism and terrorism are also viewed as a threat, and the government has taken steps to counter these threats by promoting moderate Islam and cracking down on radical groups.

Conclusion

Now in Kazakhstan there are several Islamic communities that carry out various activities related to teaching and disseminating knowledge about religion, helping those in need, as well as holding various cultural events. In addition, Kazakhstan is one of the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and cooperates with other Muslim countries on various issues.

In general, the religious revival of Islam in Kazakhstan continues, and this indicates that the Muslim community in this country remains active and viable.

One notable development in the revival of Islam in Kazakhstan has been the emergence of a new generation of Islamic scholars and leaders. These scholars are working to reinterpret Islamic teachings in a way that is relevant to modern society and to promote a more moderate and tolerant version of Islam. They are also working to counter extremist ideologies that have gained a foothold in some parts of the Muslim world [7].

Overall, the revival of Islam in Kazakhstan is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, driven by a range of social, cultural, and political factors. While there are some concerns about the potential for extremism and radicalization, the majority of Kazakh Muslims are committed to a peaceful and moderate practice of their faith.
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Казахстан Республикасында исламның «қайта жандануының» ерекшеліктері

Казахстан негізінен мұсылман елі болып табылады, оңда халықтың 70%-ы озіндік мұсылманың деп санайды. Бірақ, Кенес укіметі тұсында мұсылман қалықтарды елдің діні сөздігін көрсетуде қаналы орналасады. Себебі, көп жерде діни-религиоздык қаттылықтар, орнындағы қалықтар жылуының ерекшеліктері орналасады. Немесе, орнындағы қалықтар жылуының ерекшеліктері жағдайында, мұсылман дінінің қызметкерлерінің қоғамдық құралындағы әйелдер болып табылады.

Ш.А. Садвокасов, Р.М. Жумашев

Особенности исламского «возрождения» в Республике Казахстан

Казахстан — преимущественно мусульманская страна, где, по оценкам, 70 % населения относят себя к мусульманам. Однако мусульманское население не всегда была довольной религиозной политикой страны, особенно это проявлялось в советское время, где религиозная практика была сильно ограничена, а многие религиозные места и мечети были разрушены либо останавливали свою деятельность.

С обретением независимости в Казахстане наблюдался процесс, который называется «возрождение» ислама. Возрождение ислама в Казахстане можно проследить с распада Советского Союза в 1991 году. С тех пор среди населения растет интерес к исламу, и было создано много новых мечетей и исламских институтов. Несмотря на рост исламской практики в Казахстане, в стране сохранилась светская политическая система с сильным акцентом на отделение религии от государства. Правительство стремилось сбалансировать пропаганду религиозных ценностей с необходимостью поддержания социальной и политической стабильности и это дало свои плоды. В этой статье мы рассмотрим особенности исламского «возрождения» в годы независимости Республики Казахстан, а также политику нашей страны по отношению к этой проблеме.

Ключевые слова: ислам, «возрождение» ислама, светское государство, религия, религиозная политика, Независимый Казахстан, ДУМК.

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