**THE ROLE AND PLACE OF ISLAM IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE MODERN KAZAKHSTAN SOCIETY**

**Kurmanaliyeva Аinura**

*Al-Farabi Kazakh National University,*

*Al-Farabi Avenue 71, 050040, Almaty, Kazakhstan*

*ainur.kurmanalieva@kaznu.kz*

**Begalinova Kalimash**

*Al-Farabi Kazakh National University,*

*Al-Farabi Avenue 71, 050040, Almaty, Kazakhstan*

*Almaty, Kazakhstan*

*kalmia910@mail.ru*

**Israilova** А**ssel**

*Al-Farabi Kazakh National University,*

*Al-Farabi Avenue 71, 050040, Almaty, Kazakhstan*

*assel.1994.n.i.4@mail.ru*

***ABSTRACT***

*Kazakhstan is the country, where 70% of the population is Muslim. The Islam has become an integral part of the Kazakh culture, politics, economics, and law. Still, Islamic cultural component keeps the first place standing out in the process of interaction of different traditions that characterized the entire pre-Islamic society. Being united with Islam, the diverse cultural forms formed the basis for the traditional lifestyle of the Kazakh nation. Kazakhstan has assumed a role of a guarantor of peace in Central Asia. Promoting peaceful dialogue in the spirit of Eurasianism, acting as a regional stabilizer, and leading in the process of economic reforms in the region help Kazakhstan to play a significant role in all Eurasian global affairs. The country heads in such essential systems of cooperation and security as SCO, CST, and Common Economic Space.*

***Keywords:*** *Common economic space, Euraniasims, geoeconomics, Islam, Kazakhstan, Muslim, politics, religion, terrorism*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Kazakhstan is part of a vast area of Islamic culture. At the same time, historical belonging of the Steppe to any religious tradition has never been explicitly expressed. By the time of the penetration of Islam into the territory of Kazakhstan, it was inhabited by ancient Turkic nomadic tribes, whose spiritual and religious life was very diverse, based on the worship to nature and veneration of ancestors, the deification of the sky (Tengrism). These beliefs underwent a significant East Iranian influence by Zoroastrianism. Turkic society has always been characterized by the importance of personal relationships, which outweigh any economic relations. Such a culture is marked by those values that have an enduring significance for all its members. The society is interwoven with unique spiritual interrelations, which are natural and constitute a kind of communication code and the language of communication, as well as a form of transmitting the symbols that are relevant for the given society. Here spiritual production has overwhelming importance. Therefore, culture becomes a leading component in contrast with economy and politics. Invisible spiritual ties wrap around the whole construction of the Turkic civilization, making it unique. That is why the Turks oppose both individualism of the West and corporatism of the East giving rise to a kind of synthesis, the rudiments of which will be called later 'Eurasianism.' Lev Gumilyov wrote, "Bordering with the ancient civilization of 27th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development – Rome, 1-2 March 2018

627

China in the East, and with the equally ancient culture of the Western European in the West, this geographical area included diverse peoples, with different economic skills, religions, social institutions, and customs. Nevertheless, all neighbors experienced special unity» [1].

**2. CHAPTER**

Interaction of different cultural traditions inevitably led to a syncretistic mixture so much typical for a pre-Islamic cultural layer. Being united by Islam, those different traditions subsequently formed the cultural basis for the lifestyle of the Kazakh society. Also, the central role in the conversion of nomads to Islam at an early stage was played by the Sufi missionaries of such brotherhoods as Naqshbandiya, Yassauiya, Kadaria, who were heading to the Steppes from the urban centers of Maverannahr, mainly from Bukhara. In the 16th century process of the Kazakh nation formation, Islam contributed to the political history of Kazakhstan. It made a significant influence on establishing and strengthening the Khans' power, becoming a religion that unites disparate Kazakh tribes into a single unit. This vital and immense role of Islam was highly appreciated by the Kazakh khans. Subsequently, the Muslim religion became an inseparable part of Kazakh culture, politics, economics, and law. Among the features of Islam in Kazakhstan, one can single out its inextricable link with the ancient Türkic beliefs, and after the Mongol invasion - with the Mongolian beliefs. Various religious views closely intertwined with each other, passed a complicated and lengthy process of adaptation and acculturation, before becoming an integral part of Kazakh culture. Thus, talks about «pure» Islam on the territory of Kazakhstan have no groundsit,. To the contrary, Kazakhstan has its version of Islam. By the 16th century, the Kazakhs had already a relatively clear Muslim religious identity, considering themselves the Sunnis and Hanifis.

**2.1. Islamization of the Kazakh steppes and Islamic features in Kazakhstan during the colonial period**

In the 17th and 18th centuries when Kazakhstan became a part of the Russia Empire, a new stage of the Islamization of the Kazakh steppes began. The Khans lost their political power and authority, giving way to the district volost' chiefs appointed by the Russian government. When khans lose their control, the same happens with the Sufi leaders, ish'hans. The role of Sufi brotherhoods is rapidly declining, and the Muslim clergy of Kazakhstan lose their independence becoming an integral part of the Orenburg Muftiate. The Islam of Kazakhstan in the colonial period found itself in a new ethno-social situation. In the late 70s and the early 80s of the 19 century, two large Muslim communities - the Uighurs and the Dungans - moved to the territory of South-Eastern Kazakhstan from the border regions of China. It happened due to another stage in the development of Russian-Chinese relations when large Muslim groups living in the Ili region of China accepted Russian citizenship. They decided to relocate and not be the minority in the cultural environment of China. Recognising Islam as a dominant religion that has a direct impact on people of Central Asia, the Soviet government during the first years of its existence established in the territories a joint body or the Regional Bureau of Muslim Communist Organizations. The chairman of this authoritative organization was Turar Ryskulov, a famous representative of Kazakh peopleTurarRyskulov. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Muslim Spiritual Directorate of the USSR functioned in Moscow. With the attainment of independence, religion was recognized as one of the components of the cultural heritage and served as a powerful stimulus for the revival of the spirituality of the Kazakh nation. Islam contributed to the self-identification of the Kazakh ethnos serving as a spiritual and cultural factor in the formation. 27th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development – Rome, 1-2 March 2018

628

*2.1.1. The place of Kazakhstan in the Islamic world*

The majority of the population of Kazakhstan consider themselves Muslims. But the society is built on respect for the rights of believers of all faiths. Islam and Orthodox Christianity formed long-standing, good relations as main religions of the region. Kurban-ayt and Christmas are official holidays indicating the recognition of the role of Islam and Christianity in the formation of the local culture. There are no manifestations of antagonism between representatives of other religions. Currently, the total number of religious associations is more than 3,600 representing 18 denominations. There are 3,464 religious buildings in the republic, including 2,550 mosques, 294 Orthodox and 109 Catholic churches, 495 Protestant churches and prayer houses, seven Jewish synagogues, two Buddhist temples, seven prayer houses of the Society for Krishna Consciousness and the Bahá'ís. In contrast, 16 years ago there were only 46 religious organizations [2]. The mainstream current of Islam in the republic is Sunnism of the Hanafi madhhab, characterized by tolerance to dissenters, the use of the local customs of people, analogy (qiyas), and juristic preference (istihsan) in legal matters. The madhhab is professed by Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Uighurs, Tatars, and other nations. Shiism in Kazakhstan is represented by Azerbaijanis and Tajiks. Being a secular state, Kazakhstan historically, geographically, politically, and spiritually has connections with the Islamic world through various international channels and Muslim organizations. Numerous Muslim publishing houses, radio stations, television, forums, conferences, delegations, etc. play an active role in the communication process. The establishment of the Council of Muftis of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in 2007 with the participation of Grand Muftis of Turkey, Russia, Tatarstan, and Kyrgyzstan was a significant step in increasing the authority of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK). During the first meeting of the Council on October 29-31, 2007 in Almaty Grand Mufti of the SAMK Absattar Hajji Derbisali was elected as Chairman of the Council. In 2007 the SAMK and Turkey concluded an Agreement on the theological training of scholars for the SAMK in Turkey and publication of methodological literature. The visit to Kazakhstan in November 2007 of Sheikh Saleh bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al ash-Sheikh, the Minister of Religious Affairs, Vacuums and Islamic Call of Saudi Arabia, prompted a high interest among practicing Muslims. During his visit, Sheikh Saleh attended several mosques in Astana and gave a lecture in the Palace of Peace and Agreement on the topic« 'Islamic values and relationships between people.' Sheikh Saleh emphasized the following, "First of all, we need an internal Islamic-cultural dialogue. To begin with, we Muslims need a working program or project aimed at enhancing communication and mutual familiarization between Muslim nations. We need to put on a higher level our close relations, our mutual affinity, and understanding, our coherence about the common civilizational goal in the framework of the activities aimed at preserving the essence and foundations of Islam» [3]. Annual and year-round pilgrimages of a vast amount of Muslims from all around the world to the holy places of Islam in Arabia create an effect of a close community bound tightly. In Kazakhstan, the number of people wishing to perform the Hajj increases every year from the year 1991 to the present [4]. The Islamic world is trying to provide the Muslims of our country with some help and support, which indicates their solidarity and belonging to the same religion and the desire to be side by side in the overall development. For example, the construction of the Senate of the Parliament was carried out with the financial support of Saudi Arabia. Almaty opened Nur-Mubaraq Islamic University. On March 22, 2005, a mosque Nur-Astana, constructed with the sponsorship of Qatar was opened in Astana. President Nazarbaev pays substantial attention to spirituality issues. Thus, in the village of Chemolgan, Almaty region, he sponsored the building of a mosque. Nursultan Nazarbaev together with Sultan bin Abdel Aziz, a crown prince of Saudi Arabia, participated in the construction of the mosque in Petropavlovsk. In October 2007, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan, President of the United Arab EmiratesNihayan, who visited the South Kazakhstan region, announced his intention to build a 27th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development – Rome, 1-2 March 2018

629

mosque and a hospital there. These are only a few examples. Being a part of the Islamic world, Kazakhstan develops educational activities of Kazakh-Arab and Kazakh-Turkish institutions for young people. For example, in the city of Turkestan in 1992, the International Kazakh-Turkish University after A. Yassaui was opened. The university receives financial support from the budget of two countries, Kazakhstan and Turkey, and accommodates over 15 thousand young people as its students. Kazakhstan is a full member of the Organization of the of Islamic Conference since 1995. The organization unites 57 Muslim countries. However, along with positive effects, the revival of religion is accompanied by some negative trends. Recently, new external factors have made an effect on the traditional branch of Islam in Kazakhstan. Among them are the following:

* • the activities of religious organizations of different currents that do not comply with the laws of the country;
* • the spread of Muslim beliefs alien to the Kazakh mentality through the media and social networks;
* • politicization of religion through calls for the creation of the Islamic caliphate and other destructive ideas.

In this regard, it is necessary to monitor the tendencies and adequately respond to them. The politicization of Islam can take place in various forms. For Kazakhstan, in our view, the exploitation of the values of Islam by extremists is especially dangerous. Some religious communities fall under the influence of missionaries from foreign Islamic centers that carry the idea of religious intolerance. The most vulnerable to this trend is the southern and western regions of Kazakhstan. In the South-Kazakhstan and Zhambyl regions, the agitation actions of such radical movements as Tablighi Jamaat and Taliban were recorded. The experience of over Central Asian neighbors shows that it is impossible to solve the problem of religious extremism using only administrative methods. Not exclusively power agencies, but other state bodies, public and religious associations, the mass media should take part in mending the situation. Some preventive and educational measures should be organized among the population. The emergence of radical extremist trends represents a specific stage in the evolution of Muslim society. It must be admitted that the existence of well-established religious institutions and competent theologians contribute to the quick neutralization of extreme manifestations in the religious field. In his book "Critical decade" President Nazarbayev wrote, "In a country where 70% of the population are Muslims, imams, the spiritual leaders, should be able to explain the canons of Islam correctly. They need to communicate them to people, conduct educational activities and show that Islam, like any other religion, has nothing to do with terrorism, extremism or radicalism" [5].

**3. CHAPTER**

In Kazakhstan, the national legislation in the field of combating terrorism and extremism is continually improving. Some changes and additions to the criminal, criminal procedural legislation, and other legislative acts on national security issues. In February 2005, the Laws 'On Countering Extremism' [6] and 'On introducing amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on countering extremism' were adopted [7]. In 2011, a new law on religious activities and religious organizations was ratified. In Kazakhstan, at the moment, some preventive measures have been implemented that put a barrier to extremist activities in our country. Kazakhstan initiated some internal measures at the regional level and on a global scale. In many respects, this took place because of an inability of one single country to combat extremism and terrorism without collective interstate efforts. Such an approach could not lead to a more or less significant result. 27th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development – Rome, 1-2 March 2018

630

The problem of religious extremism is not limited to radical Islamic groups. The potential, and often real threat of extremism comes from new religious trends that came from abroad. The intimidation from these religious organizations is not as noticeable as in the case of radical groups that often tend to open violence or converting activity. In this case, it is due to the introduction of new cultural values and norms of behavior into the Kazakh society, which may conflict with the values that already exist there. It is well known, that as a rule value conflicts are very complicated to resolve.

**3.1. The influence of non-traditional religious organizations to Kazakh society**

In Kazakhstan, active proselytism of new religious movements can be considered as a potential trigger of extremism. This venture is carried out very 'aggressively,' and the specificity of the Kazakhstani society where the ethnic identity is associated with a religious affiliation is not taken into account. One of the main reasons that course this fact is the fact that Kazakhs and Russians, who traditionally profess Islam and Orthodoxy respectively, are two dominant groups in Kazakhstan; they do not proselytize against each other. There was a change in the national believers' composition among non-traditional religions. Many of them (primarily of foreign origin) are deliberately working to attract Kazakhs. Religious services are held in the Kazakh language, and the state language is studied in the communities. Communities of non-traditional faiths try to involve citizens who speak the state language in their ranks to use them in the future to influence indigenous people. For example, since 2007 in Almaty, a religious association Jehovah Witnesses periodically conducts seminars in the state language, and in the city of Rudny in 2008 a biblical congress 'Follow Christ!' was held with the participation of over 500 believers of different nationalities, including Kazakhs. There are two indigenous congregations in Astana with up to 100 members. The congratulatory letter of President of the Republican Center 'Grace' Kim San Song (Almaty) distinguishes the outstanding services of F. Gainutdinov, the head of the city branch of Kostanay, in the evangelization of Kazakhstan. Preachers of these religious associations are specially trained to work with Muslims, and methodological literature on attracting Muslims into their ranks is published and distributed.

*3.1.1. New religious movements*

New religious movements are most active in involving new members. For example, the religious associations of Presbyterians, created mainly as a result of Korean missionaries, are spread in the southern, central and northern regions of the country. The consequences of such activities are manifested in the fact that a particular part of the state-forming ethnos, changes traditional cultural and religious guidelines, and does not accept Islam. This phenomenon can become one of the causes of internal ethnic conflicts. This also causes tension between the two main denominations, on the one hand, and non-traditional religious associations, on the other. At the same time, contradictions between the leaders of different confessions become not only their internal issues but go into external manifestation through ordinary believers who belong to wrestling groups. This process requires close attention not only from the state but also from representatives of Islamic associations registered in the Republic.

**4. CONCLUSION**

An analysis of all the facts of offenses in the field of religious relations shows that most of them became possible due to flawed legislation regulating the activities of religious associations. In his Address to the People of Kazakhstan in 2017, President Nazarbayev noted that "in modern times, humanity has faced the growth of terrorism. The key issues here are the fight against the financing of destructive forces and relations with foreign terrorist organizations. It is necessary to work to prevent the propaganda of religious extremism, including on the Internet and social networks. It is necessary to form in the society the zero tolerance for any actions connected 27th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development – Rome, 1-2 March 2018

631

with radical manifestations, especially in religioun" [8]. Tolerance to Kazakhs is inherent. In one of his Address to the people of Kazakhstan, the President pointed out:**,** "During 16 years of Independence, we realized our model of ensuring public stability, interethnic harmony, the formation of Kazakhstan's identity and Kazakhstan's patriotism which became our Kazakhstan «know-how». We are rightfully proud of it and must be guard carefully» [9]. Today, because of the peacekeeping vision of N.A. Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan becomes the only guarantor of maintaining the security regime in Central Asia. It is his status as the state apologist for the peaceful dialogue in the spirit of Eurasianism, the regional power-stabilizing security. As the leader of economic reforms, President Nazarbaev plays a significant role in all Eurasian global and regional geopolitical, geoeconomic and geo-information structures, including such vital systems of cooperation and security as SCO, CST, and Common Economic Space.

**LITERATURE:**

1. Gumilev L.N. (1993). *Hunnu.*Saint Petersburg: P. 8.

2. https://www:zakon.Kz/4871654-kazahstane–deystvuet

3. Transcript of speech by the Minister of Religious Affairs, Wakfah and Islamic Call of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Sheikh Saleh bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al Al-Sheikh at the Palace of Peace and Harmony.

4. Report of the Committee on Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

5. Nazarbayev N.A. Critical decade. Almaty: Atamura, 2003. – P. 28.

6. Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan «On Countering Extremism» (2005) // The statements of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. - № 5 (2438) – February 5, 2005. - 32-42 pages.

7. On introducing amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on countering extremism//The statements of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. - № 5 (2438) - February, 2005. - 55-60 pages

8. www.akorda.kz/ru/cadresses\_of\_president/poslanie/

9. Message to the people of Kazakhstan from February 6, 2008 «Improving the well-being of citizens of Kazakhstan is the main goal of state policy» Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, February 7, 2008.