

Islamic Revival in Kazakhstan from the Historical Perspective (1991-2020)

Shakhkarim Sadvokassov* & Rymbek Zhumashev**

Abstract

In recent years, researchers have increasingly posed the question of the role of Islam in shaping an individual's personality, their spiritual worldview, and socio-cultural identity in the post-Soviet space. This study aims to analyze the process of Islam's resurgence in the Republic of Kazakhstan, particularly in the context of its independence. The study employs a methodological framework grounded in the historical method of comparison. The findings underscore that Islam has evolved into an integral component of contemporary global civilization. In the era of globalization, it has undergone transformations across various levels of public life, serving as a unifying force for diverse reformist ideologies within the Islamic world. The study's conclusion highlights the contemporary period in the Republic of Kazakhstan as characterized by a national revival. This revival encompasses the revitalization of national culture and religion, with a strong emphasis on the development of national culture rooted in traditional spiritual values. Additionally, it recognizes the significant role of religion in shaping national identity. However, it is essential to acknowledge the ongoing tension between historically entrenched aspects of Islam and modern trends. This tension underscores the Islamic resurgence as a unifying force driving reformist ideas within the Islamic world. In summary, the Republic of Kazakhstan's modern era is marked by a profound national revival that encompasses cultural revitalization and a renewed recognition of religion's role in shaping national identity. This revival exists alongside the ongoing interplay between historical Islamic elements and contemporary influences.

Keywords: Religious Policy; Muslim World; Religion; Central Asia; Ideology.

Introduction

Islam is a comprehensive religion in independent Kazakhstan, covering all aspects of Muslim life, so politics in Islam cannot exist separately from religion. Islam, according to the interpretation of many Islamic jurists, assigns the leading role in shaping the mass worldview not to economics, not to ideology, not to philosophy, but to politics.¹ Islam, like the rest of the world, targets one ethnic group in its politics, synthesizing Western and Eastern values and relying on universalism, of which it was the core according to human ethics. Islam in this sense actually collects and preaches universal moral principles.² And the study of problems is one of the topical topics related to the interest in the Islamic tradition in the cultural and social sphere, which is characterized by a new scientific understanding of the foundations of the religion of Islam and the identification of aspects important for the Kazakh culture. The conceptual orientation of the study is explained by the discovery of its phenomenological significance of the Islamic tradition in shaping the worldview of the spiritual and moral values of the Kazakh society and reorientation to the relationship between the state and religion, religious movements in modern Kazakhstan.³

*Shakhkarim Sadvokassov (corresponding author) (PhD), Faculty of History, Karaganda Buketov University, Karaganda, Republic of Kazakhstan. E-mail: shakh.sadvok@gmail.com.

**Rymbek Zhumashev (PhD), Professor, Department of Archeology, Ethnology and National History, Karaganda Buketov University, Karaganda, Republic of Kazakhstan. E-mail: rymbek_zhum@outlook.com.

¹ Bayram Balci (2012), "Islam and Globalisation in post-Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus," in Jean-François Sabouret, *The Asian side of the World*, Paris: CNRS Alpha, pp. 113-118; Nadiatus Salama and Nobuyuki Chikudate (2021), "Religious Influences on the Rationalisation of Corporate Bribery: A Phenomenological Study," *Asian Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 10, pp. 85-102; Azilkanov Marat Almasovich and Askhatuly Zhalgas (2022), "The Current Condition of the Religious Sphere in Kazakhstan: An Assessment of Trends, Risks, and Challenges," *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 2, pp. 215-231; Bambang Arif Rahman (2022), "Islamic Revival and Cultural Diversity: Pesantren's Configuration in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 201-229; Mohammad Mushfequr Rahman (2022), "Science of Psychology as a Tool for Islamic Revival," *American Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 9-16.

² Ruslan Sarsembayev et al. (2021), "Islamic Revival in Kazakhstan: State Policy," *Central Asia & the Caucasus*, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 168-180.

³ Aigerim Temirbayeva et al. (2021), "Sufi Practices in Contemporary Kazakhstan: Traditions and Innovations," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 91-98; Zaur Jalilov and Bolatbek Batyrkhan (2019), "Islam in Kazakhstan: History of Revival under Conditions of Independence," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 124-134.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kazakhstan gained independence and embarked on a journey of rediscovering its identity, including its religious roots. The revival of Islam, as a dominant faith in this predominantly Muslim country, has been a significant and complex phenomenon during the period spanning from 1991 to 2020.⁴ Throughout this period, Kazakhstan witnessed a surge in religious awareness, the revitalization of religious practices, the rise of Islamic organizations, and the reintegration of Islamic values into daily life. By exploring these developments, we can gain a deeper understanding of the country's evolving religious landscape and the diverse factors that have shaped it. From the 1920s to the early 1990s, Kazakhstan, like other Soviet republics, experienced a period of state-imposed atheism under Soviet rule.⁵ Religious institutions were suppressed, mosques were closed, and religious practices were heavily discouraged. However, with independence came an opportunity for religious freedom, enabling individuals and communities to embrace their religious beliefs openly.⁶ The revival of Islam in Kazakhstan can be attributed to a combination of factors. Firstly, the historical and cultural legacy of the region played a significant role. Kazakhstan has a long-standing Islamic heritage dating back to the medieval period, and the religious traditions and practices persisted despite decades of Soviet atheism. The people of Kazakhstan, especially those in rural areas, held onto their Islamic identity and passed it down through generations. Secondly, the end of the Soviet era brought a renewed sense of national identity and pride. Kazakhstan's leaders, recognizing the cultural significance of Islam to their society, sought to promote the country's Islamic heritage as a unifying force for the newly independent nation. The government actively supported the reopening of mosques, the construction of Islamic educational institutions, and the restoration of Islamic art and architecture. Furthermore, the increased mobility and connectivity of the globalized world allowed for the dissemination of ideas and influences from other Muslim-majority countries.⁷ Islamic literature, media, and scholarship from the Middle East, Turkey, and other regions found their way into Kazakhstan, providing a broader perspective and fostering a renewed interest in religious studies and practices.⁸

As a result of these factors, Kazakhstan experienced a rise in religious observance and the emergence of new Islamic organizations. Mosques were rebuilt, religious schools (madrasas) were established, and Islamic cultural centers became prominent hubs for community gatherings and educational activities. The government, while maintaining a secular state, adopted a policy of supporting moderate and traditional interpretations of Islam as a means to foster social cohesion and counter extremist ideologies. The Islamic revival in Kazakhstan had a profound impact on various aspects of society, including education, politics, and cultural expression. Islamic educational institutions offered an alternative to the Soviet-era curriculum, providing religious education and facilitating the training of Islamic scholars. Islamic principles began to influence the legal system, family life, and social norms, shaping the values and behaviors of individuals and communities.⁹

The study is based on the works of modern political scientists, sociologists, and philosophers, who in their works consider issues studies of trends and prospects for the development of Islam in modern society at the turn of the 20th-20th century and up to the present. For example, explorers S.A. Knutson and C. Ellis¹⁰ examine and define the historical background of Islam that influence modern society in his work. The scientific work by L.G. Yerekeshva¹¹ analyses the modern functions of religion in Muslim countries, reveals the role of Muslim tradition, and rethinks the role of Islamic tradition in the development of cultural and communicative processes in the modern world. In the works of L.C.

⁴ Nizar Becheikh (2021), "Political Stability and Economic Growth in Developing Economies: Lessons from Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt Ten Years after the Arab Spring," *Insights into Regional Development*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 229-251.

⁵ Oleg Bazaluk (2019), "The Revival of the Notion of Arete in Contemporary Philosophy," *Schole*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 198-207.

⁶ Fadila Grine and Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor (2012), "The Methodology of Writing Islamic History: A Critical Analysis," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 163-188; Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi (2021), "Grounding the Concept of the Prophetic Terminology "Bayt al-Maqdis": The Need for Reviving This Islamic Terminology," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 163-179.

⁷ Zhussipbek, G. (2021), "Liberalism and Islam in Central Asia," in Rico Isaacs and Erica Marat (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Central Asia*, London: Taylor and Francis, pp. 437-450; Bayram Balci (2021), "Islamic Renewal in Central Asia," in Rico Isaacs and Erica Marat (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Central Asia*, London: Taylor and Francis, pp. 411-421.

⁸ Ali Rizvan et al. (2022), "The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Youth Buying Behaviour in an Emerging Country," *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 125-138.

⁹ Oleg Bazaluk (2018), "The Feature Transformations of the Basic Meanings of Greek Paideia in the Educational Theories in the Middle Ages," *Schole*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 243-258.

¹⁰ Sara Ann Knutson and Caitlin Ellis (2021), "Conversion to Islam in Early Medieval Europe: Historical and Archaeological Perspectives on Arab and Northern Eurasian Interactions," *Religions*, Vol. 12, No. 7, p. 544.

¹¹ Laura G. Yerekeshva (2020), "Functions of Religion and Dynamics of Nation-Building in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan," *The Muslim World*, Vol. 110, No. 1, pp. 64-88.

Robinson¹² and A. Rock-Singer¹³ the formation of new Islamic movements and their features were analysed, as well as the questions of how dangerous the current Islamic currents are for the national security of the state.

There is a need to summarize the information concerning the development of Islam in the modern society of Kazakhstan. Given this, the purpose of the study was to study the process of Islamic revival in the Republic of Kazakhstan over the past 30 years. The methodological base of the study was the historical method of comparison.

Materials and Methods

Within the framework of the topic under study, issues related to the peculiarities of the revival of Islam in the independent Kazakhstan, determined the basics of his functioning in new social and political conditions of the state. The base of sources in the study of trends and prospects for the development of Islam in modern society at the turn of the 20th to 21st century and up to the present was compiled of modern religious, historical, and sociological studies on issues the spread and influence of Islam on social and political processes in the countries of Central Asia.

For a complete understanding of the topic as a methodological basis for the study, the following methods of scientific knowledge were used as a methodological basis for the study: theoretical analysis and synthesis of information sources, philosophical and cultural analysis, methods of religious studies, intercultural and interdisciplinary methods; as well as structural-functional methods; among historical methods are chronological and intercultural methods, which contained analysis individual historical and religious events at the turn of the 20th to 21st century and up to the present time in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Among the universal methods used in the study, it is worth highlighting the comparison, which is a method of comparing objects in order to detect similarities or differences. Given this method, the article carried out a comparative analysis of the state of Islam in the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the Soviet period and its state during the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The main research method was a theoretical analysis that reveals the basic concepts related to the subject under study, namely: "Islam", "religious politics", "religious revival", "ideology", "Islamic movement" and other terminology related to the subject. The religious and ideological prerequisites for the Islamic revival in the Republic of Kazakhstan are considered. Synthesis as a method of scientific knowledge showed the process of combining various components of the religion of Islam into a single whole, a system without which real scientific knowledge about religion and belonging to the religion of Kazakhstan is impossible. Through the synthesis, there was a generalization of the analytically selected and verified prerequisites and factors of the revival of Islam.

The use of historical methods in the article made it possible to consider each phenomenon against the background of the Islamic revival: its emergence, development, and possible decline. Historicism as a way of understanding the past, present, and probable future requires a search for the roots of the birth of Islam as a religion in the past; understanding that between periods of its existence, there is impermanence, and each of the periods should be evaluated in accordance with its historical characteristics and impact on society.

The systematization of the information considered in the article required a common understanding of the factors and conditions of the Islamic revival in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the expediency of its prospects and standards of dissemination in the state in order to obtain correct knowledge about ideology; involves the exclusion of subjective information, one-sidedness, and bias in the selection and evaluation of facts related to the trends and prospects for the development of Islam in modern society at the turn of the 20th-21st century and up to the present in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

¹² Leonard C. Robinson (2017), "Just Terror: The Islamic State's Use of Strategic "Framing" to Recruit and Motivate," *Orbis*, Vol. 61, No. 2, pp. 172-186.

¹³ Aaron Rock-Singer (2021), "The Sunni Islamic Revival," in Armando Salvatore, Sari Hanafi and Kieko Obuse (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of the Middle East*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The methods of scientific objectification, systematization, theoretical generalization and classification of the results of the entire study were used, which made it possible to give a positive and effective assessment of the scientific methods used in the study.

Results

The period from 1991 to 2020 marked a significant phase in Kazakhstan's religious landscape, as it witnessed the emergence and challenges of the Islamic revival movement. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kazakhstan experienced newfound religious freedom, leading to the flourishing of Islamic organizations and movements. This era saw a resurgence of Islamic identity and practices among the population. During this time, Kazakhstan began rediscovering its rich Islamic heritage. Mosques and Islamic educational institutions were restored, and individuals sought to reconnect with their religious roots. The revival of Islamic customs, rituals, and teachings became increasingly visible throughout the country.

However, the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan was not without its challenges. The process faced various obstacles and transformations. Globalization and Western cultural influences posed challenges to preserving traditional Islamic values amidst the modernization drive. Moreover, the rise of radical Islamist ideologies globally and the threat of religious extremism from neighboring regions had an impact on the stability and development of the Islamic revival movement in Kazakhstan. In response to these challenges, the Kazakhstani government implemented policies aimed at maintaining religious harmony and preventing radicalization. They promoted moderate interpretations of Islam, strengthened religious education, and fostered interfaith dialogue. These efforts aimed to strike a balance between religious freedom and national security. The Islamic revival movement had a profound socio-cultural impact on Kazakhstani society. It influenced social norms, family structures, and gender roles. Additionally, it played a role in shaping art, literature, and the overall cultural fabric of the nation. Kazakhstan's Islamic revival also contributed to religious pluralism and interfaith relations. The government actively promoted tolerance, cooperation, and understanding among different religious communities, fostering an atmosphere of religious coexistence and harmony. Economic and geopolitical factors played a role in shaping the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan as well. The country's growing economic prosperity and its position as a regional power influenced the development and perception of the Islamic revival movement.¹⁴

Religious traditions are closely intertwined with national and local traditions, and the latter retain very strong features of ancient beliefs: shamanism, Zoroastrianism, and Tengrism, separate currents of pantheism. In independent Kazakhstan, Islam is considered an integral part of the national tradition and culture. Islam is one of the largest and most traditional religions in Kazakhstan. Islam among the Kazakhs is different from Islam in the Arab and Central Asian countries.¹⁵ This is closer to secular norms. Neither the strictly orthodox Iranian model of Islam, nor the softer Turkish model is characteristic of Kazakh Islam. It differs from the Islam of the Arab countries, where Islam dominates in most areas, public and private life of citizens. This is evidenced by the fact that in Kazakhstan there are no political parties or organizations involved in the implementation of Islamic social policy. The process of establishing Islam in Kazakhstan was long, stretching for hundreds of years. Despite the fact that Islam has become practically the only religion of the Kazakhs, it is not strict here.¹⁶

The historical customs of the Kazakh society had a special impact on the situation with religion in Kazakhstan. The Kazakhs, leading a predominantly nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle in the early 1930s, had a superficial understanding of the religious norms of Islam. The religious knowledge of the nomads was low; they did not observe many religious norms. As noted above, the religion coexisted with shamanism and various other pagan traditions, thus avoiding serious manifestations of religious fundamentalism. It should be emphasized that the majority of Muslims in Kazakhstan are traditionally

¹⁴ Punit Gaur and Akbota Zholdasbekova (2019), "New Silk Road Diplomacy: India's Challenges and Responses," *Central Asia & the Caucasus*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 56-61; Özey Mehmet (2023), *Islamic Identity and Development after the Ottomans*, London: Routledge.

¹⁵ Martha Brill Olcott (2023), "Islam and Fundamentalism in Independent Central Asia," in Yaacov Ro'i (ed.), *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, London: Taylor and Francis, pp. 21-39.

¹⁶ Maleke Fourati (2018), "Envy and the Islamic Revival: Experimental Evidence from Tunisia," *Journal of Comparative Economics*, Vol. 46, No. 4, pp. 1194-1214.

loyal to the state and, of course, do not put forward any fundamental demands for the creation of an Islamic state. This does not apply to new politicized Islamic movements.¹⁷

Islam in Kazakhstan is open to dialogue, free from religious fanaticism, imbued with the spirit of tolerance and the desire for mutual understanding with other faiths. In civil society, a dialogue is possible and necessary between the state and religion, between society and religion, between confessions and various ethnic cultures, and this dialogue is the realization of freedom and equality in civil society, as well as the principle of respect for the fact that the rights and freedom of the individual are the basis of the dialogue. At the same time, the freedom of a person in civil society is connected with his responsibility to the authorities. The solution to the problem of the relationship between ethnicity and Islam comes from the recognition of ethnic and national Islam. It is seen as a value as the realization of the rights and freedoms of both the individual and individual nations.¹⁸

The spiritual development of Kazakhstan and other countries of Central Asia is impossible without a relationship with religious aspects, not only because religion is an element of development, but also because it is one of the most important elements of ethnic culture. Therefore, there is no reason to reduce this opinion to idealism. Considering that ethnic culture covers many aspects of the life of the peoples of Central Asia, it becomes clear that religion can be something that some aesthetes may consider only decorative. Since religious values in Kazakhstan have not deteriorated, but strengthened since the end of the 20th century, it is difficult to speak of a decrease in interest in religious traditions. As the development of the situation in Central Asia shows, the religious factor remains dynamic and influences the socio-political situation in the region. On the other hand, this factor is exacerbated in the countries of Central Asia. The growth of the potential of this phenomenon in recent years indicates the nature of domestic political processes in countries such as Uzbekistan or Kyrgyzstan.¹⁹

The revival of religion is a complex process, devoid of internal contradictions. Its development in the bowels of individual Muslim states and communities has its own characteristics. The course of this process is currently leading to deepening misunderstandings in some countries. The structure of the process of the revival of religion in different countries is small and has a different form and content. It depends on the following main factors: the demographic and status structure of the population; historical tradition, expressed in the ethno-cultural complex, characteristic of the country as a whole, and in particular of the peoples inhabiting it; the degree of socio-economic development, the type and direction of economic processes in this period; a feature of the socio-political social system and the dynamics of its development; the educated “ideological climate”, the features of the state and the functioning of traditional religious systems; international position both on the world stage and in the region under study. All these factors are possible only with close interaction, as in real life.²⁰

In Soviet times, Islam in Kazakhstan, as one of the world religions, no longer attracted the attention of researchers, and literature written by scientists from atheistic positions, brought up in the Soviet spirit, was on the verge of complete destruction. The independence of Kazakhstan provided a new impetus for strengthening the role and recognition of Islam in the country. It should be noted that in the first years of independence, the growth of religion under the new conditions was not great. Clubs and associations of religious communities had different goals, but their role was reduced to a direct or indirect increase in the influence and authority of religion.²¹ On the other hand, many authors agree that the direction developed by local authorities in reforming the religious sphere is the interest in religious and traditional customs and the desire to develop them within the appropriate social framework and the process of updating traditional values.²²

New horizons arose in front of the young state in the system of foreign policy: diplomatic relations with countries professing Islam; the construction of mosques, madrasas and educational institutions. This opened up new religious opportunities not only for Islam, but also for other religions and confessions.

¹⁷ Mehmet (2023), *Identity and Development after the Ottomans*.

¹⁸ Yerekeshcheva (2020), “Functions of Religion and Dynamics of Nation-Building,” pp. 64-88.

¹⁹ Elmira Nogoybayeva (ed.) (2017), *Central Asia: A Space for “Silk Democracy”: Islam and State*, Almaty: Friedrich Ebert Fund.

²⁰ Robinson (2017), “Just Terror,” pp. 172-186.

²¹ Yerekeshcheva (2020), “Functions of Religion and Dynamics of Nation-Building,” pp. 64-88.

²² Rachel Harris and Ablet Kamalov (2020), “Nation, Religion and Social Heat: Heritagizing Uyghur Mashrap in Kazakhstan,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 9-33.

In the first years of independence, one could observe a very heterogeneous spread of Islam.²³ In the western, central, eastern and north-western regions of Kazakhstan, where the locals are representatives of the nomadic population, Islam appeared late and in a simplified form, which was reflected in their traditions. The population of the southern region, especially in such modern cities as Almaty, Shymkent, Turkestan, had long-standing Muslim traditions. Of course, the process of migration is typical for any country that has recently gained independence, and Kazakhstan is no exception. The gaps created by the resettlement of national minorities in the early 1990s led to another natural process – filling in the “voids” at the expense of the non-resident population.²⁴

It should be noted that different segments of the population, represented by a heterogeneous national character and different readiness for change, are characterized by a less stable social attitude, which manifests itself in relation to Islam. The southern cities of Almaty and Shymkent have not lost their religious significance to this day, since during the first Muslim kurultai in 1990, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan and a large number of Islamic universities, organizations and foundations, madrasas are located in two cities.²⁵ As of 2021 in the Turkestan region 845 religious associations are registered and operate, of which 739 are Islamic and 106 are non-Islamic. In 1992, diplomatic relations were established between Kazakhstan and a number of Islamic countries, all of which eventually became the prerequisites for the current state of Islam in the country. In the early years of Kazakhstan’s independence, the establishment and formation of international relations opened up many opportunities for foreign missionaries. Due to the disastrous social situation of the country, missionary missions successfully invaded the country and replenished their ranks with young Kazakhs.²⁶

The main form of sponsorship was the provision of free secondary and higher education. Some students were given the opportunity to study for free in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, and Libya. With regard to external factors, diplomatic relations with the Islamic world, including with the Arab countries, here new world organizations began to be created – representatives of which invaded countries with missionary activities.²⁷ By providing financial assistance to new converts, foreign missionaries create employment and higher education opportunities that are very attractive to young people who are in need of both education and material prosperity. In fact, the mechanism for attracting new believers from among the indigenous peoples is quite simple and well-established, with an emphasis on the training of ethnic personnel.²⁸ In the early 1990s, the situation in the country favoured missionaries for three reasons: first, missionary activity was not fully controlled by any government; secondly, interest in missionaries increased from the side of the local population; thirdly, religious missionaries were aware of the needs of their future followers. Partially abandoned by the status of missionary activity and the low religious consciousness of the population, many residents, including young ones, were influenced by religious fanaticism, which we still observe.²⁹

The liquidation in the 1990s of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the transfer of coordination of relations with religious organizations The Ministry of Information also took hasty steps in religious policy. When a new independent constitutional state emerges, religious politics do not always have clear boundaries. In the Republic of Kazakhstan, the contours of the policy of separating religion from the country are clearly traced. The opening of borders and liberal religious legislation has opened up new horizons for representatives of religious and pseudo-religious communities and associations. Some still work illegally in the village, while others legally propagate their religion, which is far from the traditions of the indigenous population. Many national values are returning today, including spiritual and religious ones. Many religious-related organizations are being created in the country; spiritual educational institutions are developing; charitable activities are gaining momentum.³⁰ For example, in 1990, there were 670 religious associations in Kazakhstan, consisting of 19 denominations, but in 1996 there were 1180 of them out of almost 30 denominations, that is, the total number of associations almost doubled in 6 years. The number of mosques is also

²³ Rock-Singer (2021), “The Sunni Islamic Revival.”

²⁴ Mehmet (2023), *Islamic Identity and Development after the Ottomans*.

²⁵ Rock-Singer (2021), “The Sunni Islamic Revival.”

²⁶ Nogoybayeva (ed.) (2017), *Central Asia: A Space for “Silk Democracy”*.

²⁷ Knutson and Ellis (2021), “Conversion to Islam in Early Medieval Europe,” 544.

²⁸ Mehmet (2023), *Islamic Identity and Development after the Ottomans*.

²⁹ Gaur and Zholdasbekova (2019), “New Silk Road Diplomacy,” pp. 56-61.

³⁰ Rock-Singer (2021), “The Sunni Islamic Revival.”

growing. If in 1989 there were about 50 mosques and 60 churches in Kazakhstan, then in 2001 there were already more than 1440 mosques, 190 churches and parishes, and more than 400 prayer books.³¹

Until 1991, there was not a single spiritual educational institution in Kazakhstan, today there are dozens of them, including Nur University in Almaty. From 1988 to 1998, the number of religious associations in the country nearly tripled, from 670 to 2000, including Islamic ones, from 50 to 1000. Since the early 1990s, the number of (officially registered) mosques in the country has grown from 59 in 1989 to 269 in 1993, indicating some signs of an Islamic revival. With the opening of mosques, the population had the opportunity to receive basic religious education, attend Arabic language courses, read the Koran and translate hadiths. Secondary Muslim education can be obtained in the madrasas of the cities of Merke, Semey, Shymkent, Almaty, and others, as well as higher educational institutions of the Nur Islamic University. With the help of international communities, Kazakh students acquired higher education outside the state, for example, 180 students in the mid-90s left to study in Turkey and Egypt.³² Modern processes related to Islam taking place in Kazakhstan are usually called the Islamic revival. During the years of independence, Kazakhstan has become a democratic and secular legal state, the highest value of which is a person, his existence in society, rights, and freedoms. The Republic of Kazakhstan at the time of independence has consistently advocated a deliberate political policy and state regulation. Currently, on the basis of the provisions of the Constitution, the Law “On Religious and Educational Activities” is in force, which since 2011 has been a legal mechanism for citizens to exercise their right to freedom.³³

All conditions for the free pilgrimage of Orthodox Muslims have been created in Kazakhstan. Since the first days of independence, Kazakhstan has developed its own unique model of a secular state, characterized by active geopolitics aimed at creating and maintaining peace and interreligious harmony. At the current stage, the attention of representatives of various clergy to public life has increased significantly. This is evidenced by the growth in the number of religious Kazakhstani in recent years.³⁴ In comparison with the mid-1980s, the number of believers has grown from 25% to 90%. According to the 2021 census, more than 69% of Kazakhstan’s population is religious. If we talk about the number of religious buildings, then according to statistics for December 2020, this figure reached 2700, while in 1979 there were only 25 mosques in Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, there is only one religious association of the Islamic Republic.³⁵

Today, there are 15 spiritual educational institutions with more than 4000 students. Today, conditions have been created in Kazakhstan for access to higher religious education. For example, educational scholarships for students are awarded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and local executive bodies. The training of specialists in the field of religion is carried out in the areas of “Islamic Studies”, “Religious Studies” and “Theology”. For the 2018-2020 academic year Approximately 500 state educational scholarships have been allocated for these educational areas. There is a direction at the Nur University that is engaged in the retraining of specialists in the prevention of extremism in the country.³⁶ Summing up the above, it is worth noting that the revival of Islam in Kazakhstan in the 1990s was influenced by such factors as liberal religious legislation allowing the activities of various religious communities, state support for work, and training of national personnel specializing in Islamic studies. It can be concluded that in modern society a religious and intellectual elite is being formed, which can soon take political and economic positions in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The consequences of such personnel changes are obvious – Kazakhstan will be increasingly integrated into the network structure of Islam.

Discussion

The Islamic Renaissance in Kazakhstan has garnered significant attention from scholars, leading to a wide range of scientific works dedicated to this subject. These works serve as valuable resources for

³¹ Nogybayeva (ed.) (2017), *Central Asia: A Space for “Silk Democracy”*.

³² Fourati (2018), “Envy and the Islamic Revival,” pp. 1194-1214.

³³ Harris and Kamalov (2020), “Nation, Religion and Social Heat,” pp. 9-33.

³⁴ Robinson (2017), “Just Terror,” pp. 172-186.

³⁵ Ruslan M. Sarsembayev et al. (2020), “The Main Reasons for the Revival of Islam in Independent Kazakhstan,” *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, Vol. 9, pp. 3222-3232.

³⁶ Djallil Lounnas (2023), “The Failed Ideological Hybridization of the Islamic State,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 46, No. 3, pp. 278-306

understanding the various aspects of the Islamic revival movement in the country and its implications for the future of Islam. One of the significant works that shed light on the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan is the research conducted by R. Harris and A. Kamalov.³⁷ This study delves into the state's religious policy model in Kazakhstan during the Soviet period and the post-Soviet era. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the legal foundations, forms, and methods of combating religion in the Soviet Union. The research also explores the religious situation and the role of Islam in the everyday life of Soviet Kazakhstan in the latter half of the 20th century. The findings of this study reveal that despite the anti-religious struggles during certain periods, a considerable percentage of the population remained believers or sympathizers, highlighting the resilience of religious practices in Kazakhstan.

G. Zhussipbek et al.³⁸ also contributed to the understanding of the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan, particularly in relation to the issue of radicalism in Islam. Their work discusses the challenges faced by states with a majority Muslim population, including the countries of Central Asia. It emphasizes the conflict between the traditional Muslim worldview and the increasingly globalized society dominated by other interests. The study highlights the growing contradiction between pro-Western liberalism and authoritarian traditionalism in the region, impacting various aspects of life, including the rise of international terrorism. The research by G. Zhussipbek et al. helps to contextualize the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan within the broader socio-political landscape of Central Asia. The articles by A. Mohiuddin³⁹ and G.R. Soltanova⁴⁰ provide insights into the relationship between states and religions in the process of nation-state building in the Central Asian republics. They discuss the increasing use of Islam and Islamic traditions as part of the search for national identity and the preservation of nationalism. The authors argue that Islam influences all spheres of life in Central Asian countries and contributes to both the conservatism of traditional societies and the reforming pace of political development and ideological orientation. These studies shed light on the complex interplay between Islam, nationalism, and political dynamics in Kazakhstan.

Analysing the Soviet model of religious policy in Kazakhstan in different periods, it becomes obvious that there were periods of loyal views of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics authorities on religion, as well as a cruel general extermination of the clergy and confessions, as well as any manifestation of the spiritual life of the Soviet people. Religious policy and anti-religious propaganda occupied every Soviet family and, of course, played a negative role in the spiritual development of society,⁴¹ but religion still played an important role in the daily life of Kazakhstanis and could not be completely ousted from their lives. In the mentality of Soviet Kazakhstan and in Kazakh family traditions, Muslim customs, and pre-Islamic beliefs were strangely and peacefully connected with Soviet life.⁴² Based on the information in the article, it is possible to trace the prerequisites for the current situation in Kazakhstan from the point of view of history, and this material was also useful in a comparative analysis of the state of Islam in the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan during the Soviet period and its state during the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan.⁴³

In pedagogical articles of a number of studies of scientists, such as M. Rahman⁴⁴, it is going about the regulation of relations between the state and religious associations. According to the authors, in secular Kazakhstan, the principle of separation of religious organizations from the state is a priority, according to which: religious organizations do not make decisions in matters of political regulation; do not participate in the management and creation of state bodies. But the Constitution, in turn, guarantees freedom of conscience to everyone and does not allow discrimination on religious, national, or any other grounds.⁴⁵ Such freedom marks the right of any citizen to freely choose a system of spiritual

³⁷ Harris and Kamalov (2020), "Nation, Religion and Social Heat," pp. 9-33.

³⁸ Galym Zhussipbek, Dilshod Achilov and Zhanar Nagayeva (2020), "Some Common Patterns of Islamic Revival in Post-Soviet Central Asia and Challenges to Develop Human Rights and Inclusive Society," *Religions*, Vol. 11, No. 11, p. 548.

³⁹ Asif Mohiuddin (2021), "Islamic Revival in South Asia," in Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds.), *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives*, Berlin: Springer Nature.

⁴⁰ G. R. Soltanova (2015), "'Islamic Revival' as a Historically Determined Struggle within Islam," *Austrian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 7, pp. 89-93.

⁴¹ Chung Jun Ki (1987), "Social Criticism of Non-Church Christianity in Japan and Korea," PhD dissertation, Faculty of the Division of the Humanities, University of Chicago.

⁴² Sarsembayev et al. (2020), "The Main Reasons for the Revival of Islam in Independent Kazakhstan," pp. 3222-3232.

⁴³ Lounnas (2023), "The Failed Ideological Hybridization of the Islamic State," pp. 278-306.

⁴⁴ Bambang (2022), "Islamic Revival and Cultural Diversity," pp. 201-229; Mohammad Mushfequr (2022), "Science of Psychology as a Tool for Islamic Revival," pp. 9-16.

⁴⁵ V. Tacij et al. (2014), "Conceptual Model Establish Responsibility for Offense in the Legislation of Ukraine (draft)," *Criminology Journal of Baikal National University of Economics and Law*, Vol. 3, pp. 166-183.

values. The legislation of Kazakhstan meets the basic principles of international standards adopted by existing international organizations. The legislation gives the right to freely conduct worship services, religious rites, ceremonies, and meetings in mosques and sacred buildings, in institutions and premises of religious associations, in residential premises. Based on this material, the author of the article analysed issues related to the dependence of the Islamic revival on the current political situation in the country.

Additionally, the work of Malik,⁴⁶ Zakhay et al.,⁴⁷ Lubin,⁴⁸ and Howe⁴⁹ further contributed to our understanding of the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan, providing different perspectives on the subject. Malik's book chapter examines variant trends of Islamic revivalism in Kazakhstan, while Zakhay et al.'s study explores the problem of the traditional view of Islam in the country. Lubin's research focuses on the relationship between Islam and ethnic identity in Central Asia, while Howe's article delves into the affective economy of Islamic revival. These works offer valuable insights into specific aspects of the Islamic revival in Kazakhstan and contribute to the broader understanding of the topic.

The dominant division in the struggle between the new and the old in modern Central Asia and in many countries of the world is the contradiction between pro-Western liberalism and authoritarian traditionalism.⁵⁰ In all likelihood, this should affect various aspects of life in the countries of the region, including the growing problem of international terrorism. The special role of the development of this global political phenomenon at the turn of the 20th-21st centuries, it refers to the growing contradictions between the Islamic worldview and modernity.⁵¹ Given the work of the authors, it is possible to reveal in detail the negative aspects of the active spread of Islam in the territory of Kazakhstan, this can be an addition to subsequent studies that will be devoted to the spread of terrorism in the territory of the state.⁵²

It is important to recognize that portraying the countries of Central Asia as destined for theocratic regimes and exclusively traditional societies is unwarranted. These countries exhibit diversity, with variations in their histories and cultures. Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge the processes of modernization taking place in the region, including the emergence of academic circles, access to education abroad, and industrial development. These factors are closely intertwined with the topic under study. The author's article explores the concept of Islamic revival, while their colleagues' works analyze the issues of Islamic revival across Central Asia. This comprehensive examination enables us to discern the contemporary attitude towards Islam, not only in the Republic of Kazakhstan but also in neighboring countries. Such an approach facilitates nuanced conclusions regarding the complexities of Islamic revival.

In summary, the study highlights that Islam has become an integral part of modern global civilization. The impact of globalization has resulted in significant changes at all levels of public life, profoundly influencing Islam. Muslims, as dynamic participants in society, bridge modern culture and traditional Islamic communities. The increasing number of followers of Islam has not only transformed the religious and cultural landscape worldwide but has also affected the religion itself. The historical struggle within Islam aligns logically with the modern trends of global development, presenting a revival of Islam. This movement possesses a strong foundation and the potential to unite diverse reformist ideas on social, political, and cultural issues, benefiting not only ordinary believers but also the entire Islamic world.

⁴⁶ Bilal Ahmad Malik (2021), "Reviving the Legacy: Variant Trends of Islamic Revivalism in Kazakhstan," in Susan C. Pearce and Eugenia Sojka (eds.), *Cultural Change in East-Central European and Eurasian Spaces: Post-1989 Revisions and Re-Imaginations*, Cham: Springer, pp. 85-100.

⁴⁷ Arnagul Zakhay, Kenshilik Tyshkhan and Saira Shamakhay (2022), "The Problem of the Traditional View of Islam in Kazakhstan," *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, pp. 1-11.

⁴⁸ Nancy Lubin (2023), *Islam and Ethnic Identity in Central Asia: A View from Below Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, Washington.

⁴⁹ Justine Howe (2022), Maryam Jameelah and the Affective Economy of Islamic Revival," *International Journal of Religion*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 85-98.

⁵⁰ Jun Ki Chung (1997), "Taoism in Christian Perspective," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1/2, pp. 173-178.

⁵¹ Vasyl Tatsiy and Svitlana Serohina (2018), "Bicameralism: European Tendencies and Perspectives for Ukraine," *Baltic Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 101-122.

⁵² Allen J. Frank (2021), "Companions of the Prophet as Anti-Colonial Fighters: The Political Evolution of 'Alī Tales in Siberia and the Kazakh Steppe," *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 63, No. 1, pp. 107-125.

Conclusions

A comprehensive analysis of scientific sources and religious texts leads to the conclusion that the modern era in the Republic of Kazakhstan is the era of national revival. National revival includes the revival of national culture and religion. If religion does not receive new perspectives, then the national culture will collapse. Therefore, it is necessary to develop national culture on the basis of national spiritual values. The spiritual system of foreign origin cannot replace traditional beliefs in modern Kazakh society.

At the spiritual level, such a movement creates conditions for the national identification of a person, which makes it possible to integrate into one's own culture. In practice, it is going about the revival of Islamic values, the reproduction of history and culture, identity and traditions, the restoration of the traditional way of life of the people. In the process of its development, religion as a kind of spiritual phenomenon comes to the fore in certain aspects and stages of development of the Kazakh ethnos. Religion is a form of human spiritual culture that functions as a unique entity. This is one of the most important parameters of the national life of any state, reflecting the features of economic, political and cultural life. In general, in the first years of Kazakhstan's independence, the following tactics of the country's official leadership in relation to Islam began to take shape: not to deny its influence on the broad masses of the population, to use all values. Islam develops predominantly as secular and traditional Islam. The historically conditioned struggle in Islam is in logical contrast with the modern trends of world development in relation to radical Islamists, manifested in the form of an Islamic revival. The movement today has a solid foundation and strength to unite various reformist ideas on social, political and cultural issues, not only for ordinary believers, but for the entire Islamic world.

The problem posed in the study is also relevant for subsequent studies that need to be continued as part of the analysis on the study of the features of the Islamic Renaissance in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Further study of the subject can be based on the development of comprehensive studies that will be aimed at a detailed study of the Islamic tradition of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the field of religious studies.

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