

Insights into the Arrival and Settlement of Islam in Central Asia in the Works of Western Researchers

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Abstract

The territory of Central Asia has long been located at the junction of the East and the West; in the center of the most active part of the Great Silk Road. Such a geopolitical location is an important factor, and it is in this territory that the ideological foundations of many world religions have competed. In the end, the religion of Islam has won. Islam, which came to this region in the 8th century, has gone through two periods: the period of expansion (VII-XVIII centuries) and the period of strengthening (XVIII-XXI centuries). Undeniably, this has had major implications for the emergence of culture in these settlements.

In this context, this article examines the discourse of Islam in modern domestic and foreign studies (1991-2021) in a comprehensive way, using interdisciplinary methods. In the study, the works of Western researchers have been analyzed on the issue of the arrival and establishment of Islam in Central Asia. The information presented in the article can be used in the lessons of historiography, history and Islamic studies.

The paper concludes that Islam has attracted the attention of foreign researchers from the Middle Ages to the present day. The importance of the works of Western authors is not only due to the fact that they conduct field research, but also to the fact that they mastered the Kazakh language by living among the researched people, Kazakhs, in rural areas for a long time.

Keywords: Islamic history, Central Asia, Western researchers, Traditional worldview, Historiography, Kazakhstan.

Introduction

It is important to study the historical path of Islam in the territory of Central Asia, from its emergence in the early Middle Ages, its further spread under different political systems, its rise and relaxation, and finally its final consolidation these days. Searching for answers to the questions of what role Islam has played in the history of the people of this region, what is its place in modern times, and what is its perspective are important issues that historians need to study. Therefore, the study of the history of the emergence and further spread of Islam in the territory of Central Asia is one of the urgent issues not only for Kazakhstan, but also for all the post-Soviet Central Asian states.

Important geopolitical changes and globalization processes taking place in the modern world in recent decades encourage new approaches to the role of Islam in it. In addition, today Islam is becoming an important factor in world politics. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the so-called 'Islamic revival' contributed to the politicization of Islam and the Islamization of politics in Muslim countries. One of the main reasons for this phenomenon is that Islam, as a whole religious system, is a comprehensive regulator of all spheres of Muslim life. This is influenced by historically formed ideas about the inseparability of religion and politics in Islam, spirituality and secularism, Islam and the life of the Muslims in general.

In this context, this research examines the discourse of Islam in modern domestic and foreign studies from 1991 to 2021. Its objectives are as follows.

1. To identify the major contribution to the understanding of scholarship on Arrival and Settlement of Islam in Central Asia.
2. To ascertain the Kazakh scholars who have contributed significantly to such scholarship.
3. To identify the ways in which the western scholars have approached the issue of history and to ascertain the mechanisms through which they have succeeded.

Theoretical Approach

The theoretical basis of the article is the generally accepted scientific positions of studying historical processes and real events through the philosophy of historicism buttressed by scientific objectivism. Within this, the relevance of this article stems from the need for further the development of domestic historiography related to the issue, improvement of the method and methodology of research of traditional Kazakh society in Western historiography, systematization experience in leading foreign countries, and the development of social and humanitarian sciences. In this regard, the role and importance of studying the formation and development of foreign historiography in Kazakhstan at the present time is urgent. In fact, this has become possible only after Kazakhstan and other countries of Central Asia gained state independence and entered the world arena as independent subjects of international relations. An important direction of Western historiography is thus the study of Central Asia and Kazakhstan often referred to as 'Central Asian studies'.

It is noteworthy that foreign historians have made a great contribution to the study of the history and culture of the people of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. In fact, as Bekmakhanov (1957) points out, the specially compiled study of foreign historiography, its organizational foundations, the database, and the research methodologies employed are of great interest to both science and practice. As such, the struggle to establish scientific and objective ideas about the past and the present historical developments of human society is now taking place in the context of the increasing progress of common human interests and values. It is undeniable that the concept of a controversial, but simultaneously unified, interdependent world, which is the result of new political thinking, helps to truly assess the world. It enables us to look differently at the relationship and dialectical connection of the past and the present, the history of international relations, and the methods of ideological and scientific controversial issues.

Research Methods

The need to establish constructive interaction between states and people on a global scale should bring about significant changes in our attitudes and relationships to historiography. In this regard, among the 'whitewashes' of national history, there are also problems of the history of studying Kazakhstan in Western Europe and the USA. It is important to understand how positive and negative stereotypes are formed, how stable or variable they are.

Considering the interpretation of the most important issues of the pre-revolutionary history of Kazakhstan in modern non-Marxist historiography, it is necessary to mention the ideological-theoretical and epistemological sources of research on a certain issue, and to dwell on the most important concepts. Thus, a critical analysis of the research of Western authors

related to the history of Islam in Central Asia is not directed only to the past, but is closely related to the tasks of today.

In the past, a significant amount of historical, philosophical and political research has been devoted to the study of Islam in Central Asia. This is because the socio-cultural phenomenon of Islam is multifaceted, and it requires an interdisciplinary approach. This research employs examination of previous literature produced by the Western Researchers as the main method. It generates such literature through internet sources, published books as well as research articles. In this context, this article is an attempt to comprehensively study the complex tasks related to the development of traditional Kazakh society in Western historiography, the accession of Kazakhstan to Russia, the colonial policy of the kingdom in the region, and the national liberation struggle of Kazakh workers in pre-revolutionary and modern literature.

First of all, it is necessary to mention the general theoretical, historical and philosophical works devoted to the problems of the emergence and spread of Islam in the Central Asian region. The works of such researchers as G. E. Grünbaum, V. V. Barthold, S. M. Abramzon, I. S. Vasiliev, I. B. Ermakov, R. Polonskaya, M. T. Stepanyants, Sh. Ualikhanov, M. Abdyl daev, B. Amanaliev, Sh. Shukurov, A. Muminov, Z. Zhandarbek, and N. Nurtazina have played an important methodological role in understanding the role and place of Islam in Central Asia. They are investigated here. The representativeness and reliability of the research results was ensured by using such methods involving systematic, structural-functional, historical, logical, sociological and comparative analysis.

Findings

In modern historiography, it is important to mention the ideological, theoretical and epistemological sources of Western researchers, which are relevant, in order to explain the important problems of the spread of Islam in Central Asian countries. Critically analyzing the researches of Western authors related to the religious beliefs of the people of Central Asia and the history of the Islamization process is closely related to the tasks of our research. Among the literature on this issue, there are various sources that contain a lot of information about the socio-economic, political life, culture, population and territory of Turkestan.

When considering the works of European authors about spiritual processes in the countries of Central Asia, there are reasons why we start with medieval works. Most importantly, both medieval authors and modern European researchers have the same goal, which is missionary and political-economic policy towards the peoples of Central Asia. In this regard, the emergence of Genghis Khan's empire was the event that shocked the whole world and left a deep mark on the fate of people as a great impetus for the development of geographical and ethnographic ideas about individual countries of the East in Western Europe. Indeed, according to Bekmakhanov (1957), the conquests of the Mongols, have

"had such a strong impact on the minds of their contemporaries that in the 20s and 30s of the XIII century, the Mongol invasion was spoken of as the greatest misfortune of that time in all the countries of Central Asia, North Africa and Europe"

Bekmakhanov, 1957:167

From the second half of the 13th century, before the Mongol invasion of the Western European states, during the last echoes of the Crusades, when rumors about the Mongol campaigns and their Christianity spread, Pope Innocent IV, Louis IX and other Christian world figures have sent several ambassadors to Tatar commanders and Great Khans. The goal of this has been to find out whether the Tatars are a threat to the West, whether it is possible to spread Christianity among them and use them against the Sultan of Egypt. However, as Mikaelyan (1952) points out, the embassies of Plano Carpini in 1245, Andrey to Kuyik Khan in 1249, Ascelina to Batu Khan in 1247, Rubruk to Monke Khan in 1253-1255 have not had the expected results.

The first embassy has been established by Pope Innocent IV in 1245, led by the Italian Plano Carpini. However, Carpini has left Lyon and has come to the Palace. Plano Carpini wrote about his visit to Karakoram, and says "After that we entered the land of the poor (Puteshenstvia, 1993:23). We entered the land of the Kanlyaris into the country of the Bisermins. There is one big river in this region, the name of which is unknown to us (Syr Darya). Then we went to Karakytai (along the Emil River), where the Tatars built only one city called Omyl (Chuguchak)" (Puteshestvia, 1993).

During these trips, travelers describe the places they have visited and provide information about the religion and traditions of the local people. For example, Plano Carpini, an Italian traveler of the 13th century, says about the God religion of the ancestors of modern Kazakhs, and says "they (Mongols) believe in one God... But they do not praise and pray to their God" (Puteshestvia, 1993).

In turn, the Mongols have sent several ambassadors to various European countries. In fact, Abaqa Ilkhan alone has sent three ambassadors to Western Europe: in 1265, 1274 and 1276. Ilkhan's activity in the diplomatic sphere has been to a certain extent due to the fact that his mother Dokuz-khatun and one of his wives, Maria, the daughter of the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus, were Christians. However, the Western travelers who have been in the court of the Mongols, in the palace of the Ilkhans have included their Turkic wives: the wife of Hulagu Khan, Dokuz Khatun, and the wife of Abaka. In this connection, Horda drew attention to the important role of khatun.

In addition, in the 12th-14th centuries in China, Iran, Central Asia and Europe, representatives of the Turkish tribes have been recruited by the Mongols to rule the countries that had been part of the empire of Genghis Khan and his successors. All this was contrary to the political goals of the kings of Western Europe, who wanted to defeat the Turks with the help of the Mongols. Thus, news of the Mongols and the countries and people they enslaved had reached the British Isles.

According to literature, Medieval Western European scholars have been able to provide information about Central Asian states and their people. The famous English philosopher and naturalist Roger Bacon has given a historical and geographical description of Asia in his works (Bekmakhanov, 1957). The author believes that there are four obstacles on the way to the truth, which included worship of power, and harmful customs of the past. Therefore, cognitive research should be based on real experience in researching unknown regions and populations.

In this sense, Bacon used the notes of many travelers who have visited distant Asian countries at different times. It is also known that he used the works of the famous scientist, and encyclopedist Abu Nasir al-Farabi. Indeed, all this has allowed him to create a large encyclopedia, which has expanded the knowledge of medieval people and has contained some information. In his great work "Describing Komania, the steppe of Kypshaks, whose historical destinies are closely connected with the Kazakh land", he tells about the Tatars and Karakhitas, and gives a detailed account of the peoples and places of Central Asia (Bekmakhanov, 1957).

In the Middle Ages, the colonies of the trading republics of Genoa and Venice on the Black Sea coast have been of great importance in spreading knowledge about Asian countries and people in Western Europe. After being driven out of the Black Sea trade by their rival Genoa, the Venetians have turned their attention to the other areas. In fact, this is the reason for the journey of Nicollo, Maffeo and Marco Polo to Asia in the second half of the 13th century, which started a new chapter in the acquaintance of Europeans with many eastern peoples.

It is noteworthy that Marco Polo has spent 17 years in the service of Khan Kublai of the Yuan Mongolian ruling dynasty in China, during which period he has visited many countries and provinces and has also mastered the Tatar, Arabic, Persian, and Uyghur languages. He has used this unique opportunity to collect various information that later became the basis for Marco Polo's book. Despite the many facts in the field of economy and trade, Marco Polo did not have only utilitarian goals.

For Marco Polo, the countries and places he saw were a wonderful display of the abundance of forms of animal and plant life and the amazing diversity of human races and tribes. This is evidenced by his descriptions of Samarkand, Turkestan cities, and the kingdom

(Marco Polo, 1956). The book contains references to the rule of the Mongols in Central Asia, the Kipchaks, and the struggle between Berke and Alau Batyr. Based on the data of M. Polo and his predecessors, the outline and geographical nomenclature of Central Asia has begun to take shape in a completely new way.

González de Clavijo in his 'Travel Diary' describes in detail the biography of Lame Iron, his relationship with Tokhtamys and Edige. Later, G. Shiltberger adds new information about Temir's son Abu Bakr, Khan Shadibek, Jalal-ad-Din, feudal disputes and palace revolutions, other events in the Golden Horde, and the possessions of Joshi and Sheibani. In the travel book, he is also interested in ethnographic information about the inhabitants of the Bavarian Kazakh steppe and their occupations. The process of accumulation of geographical and historical-ethnographic knowledge about Central Asia and Kazakhstan has later been connected with the era of great geographical discoveries and the colonial expansion of European states (Hukhkem Hilda, 1994).

In the middle of the 15th century, the historical situation in Europe changed significantly (Bekmahanova, 1986). The beginning of the emergence of the elements of the capitalist structure, the creation of large 'nation' states, the sea voyages and campaigns of the Portuguese and Spanish, the Dutch, the French and the English led to the conquest of territories inhabited by peoples of different races, languages and cultures across the seas. The enormous flow of information about these peoples have led to a dramatic expansion of the ethnographic horizon. In fact, the science of cartography has developed rapidly.

In 1552, Kazan, and in 1556, with the accession of the Astrakhan khanate to Russia, the road to Western Siberia and the Kazakh steppe has been opened, and the South-eastern road to the Zhayik River and the Caspian Sea has also been opened. England has also decided to take advantage of the favorable geographical location of these routes and has created a special "Society of Merchants in Search of Unknown Countries, Lands, Islands, States, and even Places Unvisited by Sea."

In this regard, the English artist John Kestle, who participated in the Orinbor expedition has published materials about Russian history in his 'Diary'. The description of this work in English consists of three parts: the Horde of Khan Abilkhair, all the fauna and flora of the territory of Kishi Yuz, and all the various wealth of minerals are introduced. Kestle has been a witness at the Court of Judges in the Palace. According to Castle (1998), one Kazakh, who has kidnapped 40 mares, has been punished mercilessly and has been ordered to return the stolen cattle. In the diary, he describes the women's and men's clothes, Kazakh women's products: earrings, rings, mirrors, combs and others Kazakh yurts, military weapons, and food (kumyz, sheep, agargan, etc.). He also writes about the size of cattle, the meeting of future spouses, betrothal, funeral ceremonies, and national musical instruments.

Speaking about the religion of the Kazakhs, Castle (1998) reports that there is a small number of mullahs among them, and that that Islam is mixed with shamanism. Adding to this, as one of the generalized works of the members of the historical and ethnographic expeditions about the Kazakhs, Pallas's work entitled "Travel to various provinces of the Russian Empire in 1768-1784" can be mentioned (Pallas, 1786).

Near the settlement of Varna in the Chelyabinsk region of the neighboring Russian Federation, there is a complex of roof-shaped tombs called 'Kesene Mazar' or 'Temir Tower' (Fig. 1). Located 230 km from the city of Kostanay. This complex consists of a 17-meter-high tower, several mounds belonging to the Early Iron and Bronze Ages, and 150 mounds belonging to the later Middle Ages.



Fig 1: Tomb (Temir [Iron] Tower)

Source: Author

After conquering Kazan and Siberia, the Russian state strictly has forbidden the construction of architectural monuments, minarets, stone mosques and mausoleums accumulated over thousands of years in the conquered regions for 200 years. In 1770, the traveler Pyotr Simon Pallas has come to the Orynbor region, has taken a picture of the mausoleum on paper and has left information about the complex for the first time (Pallas, 1786).

In fact, Pallas (1786) describes the religious concepts of the Kazakhs and writes that they come to spend the night in this mausoleum. Thus, in the first half of the 19th century, England's military and political goals in the Asian continent, especially in Central Asia adjacent to India, were determined by the struggle for raw materials and influence. Official visits of the 'West India' Company and British diplomats to Bukhara, Khiva and Kokan with intelligence duties have been an integral part of this policy.

Discussion.

It is noted that European authors have published their studies on the history of Central Asia, especially related to the religious situation in this region, based on the collected data. One of them is the Swiss scientist Adam Metz, the author of the famous book "Muslim Renaissance" translated into 32 languages. For the academic Barthold, the book of Metz has inspired independent research. Appreciating this work, Barthold shows how to use the book in his own work. The meaning of his explanations depends on Barthold showing how to analyze the data collected by Metz and supplement them with sources that the scientist could not use for various reasons. In fact, Bartholdt has foreseen that Metz would stimulate new research on the issues raised in the scientist's work (Bertels, 1973).

In the first decades of the 19th and 20th centuries, ethnographic and historical works have created the spirit of the evolutionist trend appeared. This is especially noticeable in France from the last quarter of the 19th century. The historical, ethnographic and anthropological study of people there has significantly increased. Indeed, French scientists have studied the physiological characteristics of Kazakhs, their national character, language, religion, housing, racial characteristics and the legends.

At the end of the last century, the German historian Kramer, who has visited Turkestan with Auli-Ata, Shymkent, Yrgyz, Kazali, writes about the population and ethnic basis of these cities, and about the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. His attention has been drawn to the social organization of the Kazakh society, vassals, sultans, khans and other social categories (Bekmakhanov, 1957). Although he says that the Kazakhs are supporters of Sunni Islam, he writes that religious fanaticism is foreign to them, and the remnants of shamanism are preserved among them.

Nevertheless, Islamic mysticism or Sufism, or Tasawwuf in its original form, still attracts the attention of specialists interested in the spiritual development of Islam, as well as

the educated readers. Among the scientists, the Swiss orientalist Fritz Meier, who has made a huge contribution to the study of the Sufi worldview with his fundamental research, stands out (Sufism, 2001).

Moreover, Mayer has written five monographs discussing the most important themes and figures of Sufism. In his dissertation "The Life of Sheikh Abu Ishaq Al-Kazaruni" Mayer shows his originality and high professionalism. The rendering of the Persian text from a philological point of view is skillfully done, and in his very well-structured and clear introduction, written in good German, he touches on the socio-historical, especially intellectual and psychological aspects of the text. Another monograph by Mayer, published in 1989, is devoted to Baha'i Vlad, the father of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi. Based on the Persian diaries of Baha'i Ma'arif, many of which are presented in a masterful German translation, Mayer creates a portrait that in many ways reflects a special kind of mysticism.

Mayer's last major work, "Zwei Abhandlungen über die Nakshbandiya" (Two Treatises on Nakshbandiya), has been published in 1994 (Sufism, 2001).

German researcher, one of the world's leading specialists in Sufism, Anne-Marie Schimmel, in her book "The World of Islamic Mysticism" delves into the history of medieval Sufism, introduces the reader to the most famous Islamic mystics and currents in a deep and subtle way, and sheds light on the key issues of Islamic mysticism, and the symbolism of Arabic and Persian poetry.

Based on the documents studied by Anke von Kugelgen, it is stated that the Bukhara Khanate has been inhabited by high-ranking judges (qadis), muftis, supervisors of markets and customs (mukhtasibs), and mudarris (teachers of madrasahs), which have been considered higher educational institutions in the Middle Ages. Most of the positions have been held by seids and lords, who have left their education and affairs, including through inheritance (Anke von Kugelgen, 2001).

It is noteworthy that the collapse of the Soviet Union has opened up new opportunities for the study of Islamic history in Central Asia. One of the researchers of this period, the famous Western Islamic scholar and historian Devin De Weese, has devoted his work to medieval Sufism and has written the fundamental work "Studies on Sufism in Central Asia" (Nadirova, 2019), which helps to understand many modern phenomena.

The monograph examines previously unexplored data sources in order to identify changes in the social history of the main Sufi groups in the region. The author opened completely new perspectives on the religious landscape of Central Asia. It shows how the conversion to Islam has been combined with the indigenous religious values of the people of Central Asia and thus has become a central and defining element of the popular discourse on ethnic identity (Nadirova, 2019).

Adding to this, De Wies provides an English translation and analysis of a wide range of historical sources and excerpts from epic and folkloric material. The chronological range of the included sources extends from the 13th to the 17th century. The author demonstrates deep professional skills, great philological skills, and an example of original conceptual thinking. It focuses on the vast Sufi traditions, groups, and individuals whose role they have played in the history of Islam in Central Asia. This study will definitely be a reliable assistant for researchers of national history and religion (Nadirova).

As part of the long-term research of the Institute of Central Asia and the Caucasus (Johns Hopkins University), Prof. F. Starr (as well as S. Cornell and J. Tucker as co-authors) have prepared a similar (but more detailed) study for Kazakhstan in addition to Uzbekistan - titled "Religion and the Secular State in Kazakhstan" (Svante, 2018).

The first part of the book is called "Development of religion and statehood in Kazakhstan", which, of course, has a historical character and touches on wide-ranging issues: Islamization, Russian colonization, and the rise of Kazakh nationalism in the Soviet era. As noted, Islamic issues are directly related to Oriental studies (Svante, 2018).

The authors reason that all the problems associated with religious extremism in the Republic of Kazakhstan arise from the influence of regions such as the North Caucasus, the Af-Pak region (Afghanistan-Pakistan) and the Syria-Iraq region (ILIM). They note that the

Kazakhstani model of secularism contrasts with the American model, which takes a neutral stance toward various religious communities. The Kazakh model has been probably inspired by the French and Turkish experience. Moreover, according to this model, religions are divided into traditional and non-traditional, with preference given to the former. That is, the concept of 'dominant religion' is accepted in the republic. The main dilemma facing the country's authorities is the conflict between Hanafi Islam and the so-called 'popular Islam', which is influenced by Sufism (Svante, 2018).

The general line of research is established by the first part of the book, which is retrospective in nature. At the same time, the authors conclude that the religious life of the Kazakhs (and other peoples) in its Islamic history has experienced severe pressure first from the Russian authorities, and then from the Soviet authorities. As can be seen from the book, the main issue in this matter is: when and how deeply did the Islamic religion take root in the Kazakh society? On this issue, the authors argue that since the time of Shokan Valikhanov (which was arbitrarily supported by Soviet historiography), the Kazakhs (not the elite, but the mass of the people) have never been true Muslims, but have essentially been pagans (cult holy places, pre-Islamic holidays, shamanism, etc.). It cannot be called Islamic when it concerns only the elite. This is especially true of the Haji (pilgrim) lineage, which traces back to the founders and first caliphs of Islam. In general, the authors recognize Kazakh Islam as very unique and a kind of synthesis with theism and Sufism (Svante, 2018).

Regarding the Russian-imperial period of the history of Kazakhstan, the authors adhere to Alcott's concept. According to him, it is based on the idea that Islam was purposefully introduced in the Kazakh steppe by Catherine the Second (the forces of the Tatar clergy against radical Central Asian Islam) as a certain civilizing force. As a result, in the middle of the 19th century, Kazakhs became the object of double Islamization from the North and the South. Researchers consider the establishment of Kazakh nationalism to be the main event of the Tsarist era.

They say that among the Kazakh elite, a group of secular intellectuals (Sh.Ualikhanov, Y.Altynsarin & A.Kunanbayev) have appeared who have turned their backs on the Russian authorities. The second wave shows that even in the 20th century, future alashordans have appeared: A. Bokeikhanov, A. Baitursynov, M. Tynyshbaev, M. Dulatov, M. Shokaev and others. In the period before the First World War, intellectuals: B. Karataev, J. Seydalin, S. Lapin have entered the political and spiritual life of the region. According to the authors, during the difficult years of the revolution and the civil war, the secular view of the future of the Kazakh society has won as an ideological direction. The authors emphasize that this is not the result of forced Bolshevization (Svante, 2018).

Analyzing the Soviet period in the history of Kazakhstan and the entire region, the authors recall all known obstacles of the former Soviet system. Summarizing this era, they resort to academic trickery, drawing common conclusions about Kazakhstan and other Central Asian republics, despite their strange and sometimes contrasting cultural, historical, and socio-political context. According to them, the conflict of the next post-Soviet period will be based on religious, ideological and political competition between traditional Hanafi Islam and Salafism.

According to the research results of these authors, Islamic and Muslim currents and teachings are fighting in the territory of modern Kazakhstan. The republic has also become a field for the expansion of various directions of Christianity. In such a situation, the Orthodox Church becomes an ally rather than a rival of official Islam and its patron state. Here, the authors note the phenomenon of 'Christian revival' in Soviet Kazakhstan. Back in 1989, the number of Protestant and non-traditional organizations registered within the framework of only 46 Muslim associations had reached 671. In this situation, the Sunni Hanafi direction of official Islam and Orthodoxy are becoming the true allies of each other and the state.

Over time, an alarming trend has emerged regarding religious extremism. The penetration and spread of Salafism in the region has been the result of strong financial support from the foundations and individuals of the Persian Gulf countries. In this context, the book has a separate section devoted to the growth of the Islamic terrorist threat since the beginning of

2010s. According to the authors, the 'contribution' of Kazakh Islamists to ILIM jihadism is about 400 people. As a countermeasure against such trends, the Government, including at the legislative level, has acted against the non-traditional religions and has boldly supported the 'traditional' confessions by the state. This primarily means that official Islam under the jurisdiction of the KMDB and the OPS, as well as Judaism, Buddhism, and, to a lesser extent, Protestantism, along with Catholicism has been suspected of proselytizing.

The authors devote a separate chapter to the system of support and protection of state secularism, which has constitutional foundations, many laws and official institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Muftiyat, the NSC, the Congress of Leaders of the World and Traditional Religions, and educational institutions. Summarizing this chapter, the researchers come to the conclusion that the Kazakh model of secularism is not yet fully formed and is undergoing evolutionary development.

This model is based on the principles of French republicanism and anticlericalism (as a Soviet legacy), including the model of the Turkish secular model. However, the alarming events of the last decade show that the authorities have underestimated the extent of the terrorist threat and have tried to give dynamism to the process of forming and strengthening the country's secular system.

Scientists have noted that the Kazakh model of secularism attracts the attention of the West due to the geopolitical importance of this republic. In conclusion, the authors compare Kazakhstan with a socio-cultural laboratory that tests the working model of the relationship between the state and religion. However, like influential external (primarily Western) forces, the leading segment of the Kazakh elite is interested in preserving the country's secularism. In this regard, the task of preserving the secularity of the legislation, judicial system and education system becomes a strategic goal.

As for the level of religiosity of Kazakhs and the people of Kazakhstan, it generally supports the liberal character of religion, interfaith peace and interfaith dialogue. It is noteworthy that this is the most precious legacy of the Soviet internationalist system, which the Western colleagues love to criticize (Svante, 2018).

Jeanne Fau de la Croix wrote the book "Holy Lands in Central Asia: A Moral Geography of Pastures, Dams, and Sanctuaries" which is devoted to the analysis of the special situation in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, and the three political and social models - socialist (hydroelectric system), neoliberal (free use of pastures) and examines the interweaving of the neo-Islamic (cult of saints - holy places) model. His works are based on debates about Islamic values in modern Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries (Féaux de la Croix Jeanne, 2017).

Conclusions

Based on this brief review, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The religious situation in the Central Asian region, including the beliefs of the peoples living in this region, and the state of Islam, have attracted the attention of foreign researchers from the Middle Ages to the present day. Historically, this has been connected with the religious interest of Christian missionaries and the commercial and economic purpose of the European merchants. At the present time, this is due to the strategic importance of the region for the Western countries, as well as the fact that it does not know borders and distances, brings peoples and societies as close as possible to each other, turns any aspect of life, political events, cultural heritage of even the smallest ethnic group into a common good, connected with the globalization processes.
2. Western scholars approach research of any nature, whether historical, anthropological, religious or otherwise, with extreme caution, using advanced methodologies, latest theories and concepts. The importance of the works of Western authors is not only due to the fact that they conduct field research, but also

to the fact that they mastered the Kazakh language by living among the researched people, Kazakhs, in rural areas for a long time.

This research examined the Works of Western Researchers bringing Insights into the Arrival and Settlement of Islam in Central Asia. This is an area of research that has hardly been investigated thus far. In this sense, this research contributes significantly to the scholarship about the spread of Islam in Central Asia and marks yet another milestone in understanding the involvement of Kazakh people in this process. However, it remains as an initial attempt with inadequate literature which needs to be comprehensively sourced from across the world, if the findings are to be relevant and considered as the scientific truth. This is undeniably a weakness of the research and it is recommended that the future scholars take a clue from this study and delve deeply into the nuances of the arrival, settlement and expansion of Islam in Central Asia, bringing the Arabian Gulf, the Middle East and the Central Asia to be identified as the Islamic world.

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Ethical Practice: This research followed accepted ethical practices. It did not involve any personal data, nor did it coerce any participants to take part in this research under pressure. No person has been identified.

Availability of Data: Data presented in this research is selected from a larger data set and they are available for scrutiny by any legitimate organization.

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