

# Islam in Kazakhstan: Modern Trends and Stages of Development

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**Abstract**—According to the majority and to stereotypes in a simple everyman religious processes in the world in general, and Kazakhstan in particular, have only negative trends. The main reason for the author's opinion is seen in the fact that the media in the pursuit of ratings and sensation, more inclined to highlight the negative aspects of events in the country and the world of processes forgetting or casually mentioning the positive initiatives and achievements. That is why the article is mainly revealed positive trends in mind that the problems of fanaticism, terrorism and the confrontation of society on various issues, a lot has been written and detailed. This article describes the stages in the development of relations between religion and state, as well as institutionalization, networking and assistance in the correct orientation of religious activities in the country.

**Keywords**—Islam, Kazakhstan, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, religious activities

## I. INTRODUCTION

ISLAM - the most common religion among the faithful people of Kazakhstan. According to the 2009 census, Muslims constitute 70.19% of the population. [1] The story of Islam in Central Asia and Kazakhstan starts in the second half of VII century, during the reign of the first Umayyad Caliph Mu'awiya ibn Abu Sufi. The process of its formation in Kazakhstan has been a long and complex, has taken several centuries. Although in fact Islam was the only religion of Kazakhs, it is not of a pronounced Orthodox character. The penetration of Islam into the territory of modern Kazakhstan took place over several centuries, from the southern regions. Initially, Islam has established itself among the settled population and the Seven Rivers Syr Darya in the late tenth century, when it was proclaimed the official religion of the Empire Karakhanids. Today in Kazakhstan operate on different data from 2500 to 2700 mosques, most of the Kazakh population identify themselves as Muslims, and adhere to a greater or lesser extent at least a part of religious ceremonies. [2]. After independence, Kazakhstan, given the multiethnic and multi religious country, and other objective factors, has declared itself a secular unitary republic, where religious groups and ideologies separate from the state. In this regard, priority to those who laid the foundations for a new government, was institutionalized in all spheres of society which would promote the harmonious and united development.

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## II. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY IN KAZAKHSTAN

### A. *The Law on Religion*

Modern institutionalized religious activities in the country was marked in the first place, the adoption of the Law of January 15, 1992 "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations" [3], who later (October 11, 2011) was amended and adopted as the Law "On the religious activities and religious associations". [4]

In its original form of religion law (from 15.01.1992) was, according to many experts, too liberal, and allowed many destructive cults and unconventional religions openly pursue a policy of aggressive expansion of religious ideas that undermine the foundations of a secular constitutional state.

The current law, according to most accounts, has a more complete form than the former, but it needs work, in particular causing heated debate rules set out in the 7th article of the law "Religious rites and ceremonies", which refers to the prohibition of religious ceremonies in state institutions.

According to political scientist T. Kozyrev, this paragraph of the bill, formally restricting religious ceremony at all, in practice it may be purely anti-Islamic in its orientation, and hit only by Muslims, which will be treated accordingly believers. This is no doubt ... And as for, the new law will work or not? (Note the author). I think in reality, little will change. Those who pray in a special room will pray in his office, as he said Maksut Narikbayev, leader of the "Adilet". For those who do not have a cabinet, it will depend on personal relationships with the supervisor. As a result, in practice, little will change, but around all of this will create an unhealthy atmosphere. Why does the believer must feel like a criminal? [5]

But in spite of the above, the positive aspects of the new law are sufficient. According to many - it is not only the preamble, in which, clearly prioritized the development of religious culture of Kazakh society, but also a differential approach to large and small, foreign and domestic faiths, as well as the removal of restrictions related to the ability of the state to provide financial assistance to, or other religious organizations, while protecting the interests of their culture and traditions.

For example, in the preamble of the law said: "This law is based on the fact that Kazakhstan is a democratic, secular state, confirms the right of everyone to freedom of conscience, guarantees equal rights for everyone regardless of their religious beliefs, recognizes the historical role of Islam and orthodox Hanafi directions Christianity in the development of cultural and spiritual life of the people, respect for other religions, combined with the spiritual heritage of people of Kazakhstan recognizes the importance of interfaith harmony, religious tolerance and respect for the religious beliefs of citizens."

*B. Establishment of government regulation of religious activities. Agency for Religious Affairs*

To implement the legal framework and implementation of state control in the sphere of religious activities of NGOs, 30 December 2005 Government Resolution № 1319 was a state agency established by the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Ministry of Justice [6], which was then transferred to the Ministry of Culture. May 18, 2011 Committee was dismissed from the Ministry was reorganized and the Agency for Religious Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. [7]

Agency for Religious Affairs - is the central executive body, is not part of the Government, exercising the state management in the field of interfaith harmony, the rights of citizens to freedom of religion and interaction with religious associations, as well as to the extent provided by law, inter-sectoral coordination and other functions in sphere of activity within its competence. [8]

III. MODERATE POLICIES BALANCE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT CONTROL AND DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS NGO's

*A. Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions*

After the well-known tragic events September 11 2001, occurred in the United States, when the twin towers of the WTC in New York were committed by the terrorist attacks, the whole world on the brink of schism, and the air smelled of burning. While some spoke of the beginning of the III World, the other at least predicted the global clash of civilizations and religions. One of the first heads of state, who boldly and openly declared that pure religion is not in the place of terrorism and that all sorts of "isms" are not inherent to Islam was N.A. Nazarbayev. President of the Republic of Kazakhstan took the initiative of the forum of world and traditional religions in the capital of the Kazakhstan - Astana which was held on 23-24 September 2003. [9]

As conceived by the President of Kazakhstan, the dialogue between the leaders of world and traditional religions built on common aspects and exact information about each other opens up broad prospects for mutual cooperation and contributes to overcoming such negative manifestations of our time, such as violence, fanaticism, extremism and terrorism. Dialogue of religions as a conceptual idea and I congress of a means of settling disputes was opposed to the methods of violence and terror in inter-religious and interethnic relations. The goal of the Congress was looking for human targets in the world and traditional forms of religion, creating a permanent international institution for interfaith dialogue of religions and consistent decision-making.

The forum adopted a declaration in which the religious leaders said on joint action to promote peace and progress for humanity, and the stability of societies as a basis for a harmonious world in the future.

The success of the event was enshrined in the Resolution I Congress, to conduct interfaith forum on a regular basis - at least 1 time in 3 years. In this Decision Kazakhstan was given the honor, to organize the II Congress of world and traditional religions in the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan - Astana, and instructed to develop all aspects related to the establishment of the Secretariat of the Congress.

12-13 September 2006 in Astana, the II Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, chaired by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev's Congress passed a new, purpose-built building for the forum "Palace of Peace and Harmony."

July 1-2, 2009 in Astana hosted the III Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

It is expected that the IV Congress of world and traditional religious will be held in Astana on May 30-31 2012.

*B. International cooperation - the Islamic vector.*

On the official websites of the MFA is: "Strengthening relations with the Muslim countries of Kazakhstan's long-term interests of our country and in line with the Message of the President of RK Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan on March 1, 2006, in which the head of state said cooperation with Islamic countries as a foreign policy priority of the state".

*C. Organization of Islamic Cooperation*

The active participation of our country in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), along with other major regional and global organizations, acquired at the present stage of growing importance. Interaction with the Islamic world is one of the foreign policy priorities of the RK. For its part, the Islamic world considers Kazakhstan as an integral part of the Muslim community.

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (ITNs (up to 2011 - Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)); English. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Arab. منظمة التعاون الإسلامي) - an international organization of Islamic countries.

OIC was founded in September 25, 1969 at the Conference of heads of Muslim states. The purpose of the OIF is to ensure that Islamic solidarity in the social, economic and political spheres, the struggle against colonialism, neocolonialism, etc. The headquarters of the organization is located in Saudi Arabia in Jeddah.

June 28, 2011 decision, held in Astana on 38th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), OIC Organization of the Islamic Conference renamed the Islamic Cooperation Organization (OIC).

Kazakhstan joined the OIC in 1995 and its delegation took part in all the major events of ITNs, such as the Summit Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, as well as the annual coordination meeting of OIC foreign ministers during the UN General Assembly.

In June 2011 Kazakhstan was headed by OIP. During his presidency of the international organization Astana put forward a proposal for long-term program to provide economic and financial assistance to least developed countries in the Islamic world. In addition, under the chairmanship of Astana has already conducted a number of major events in Kazakhstan, including the VII World Islamic Economic Forum, III Islamic Conference of Health Ministers of countries participating in OIF, as well as a number of other initiatives designed to make a significant contribution to solving the problems of Muslim countries.

February 15, 2012 President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the Law of RK "On ratification of the Charter of the Organization of Islamic Conference", thus confirming that the development and strengthening of cooperation with ITN and the Islamic world, is one of the priorities of foreign and domestic policy.

#### D. *Islamic Bank for Reconstruction and Development*

A special place in collaboration with OIC and the Islamic world is given to the interaction with the Islamic Development Bank which has the status of an international bank first level, working only with government programs and carrying out maintenance and financing of the population.

Islamic Bank for Reconstruction and Development was founded December 18, 1973 at the first conference of Finance Ministers of the participating countries of the Organization of Islamic Conference. Operations started in October 20, 1975.

Kazakhstan has ratified the Memorandum of Association of the Islamic Development Bank, May 15, 1996, then March 11, 1997 the IDB has opened its regional office in Almaty. [10]

The IDB continues to work for the implementation of previously signed agreements with the Government of the Kazakhstan. The currently implemented or are in some stage of completion of projects by the IDB. IDB has developed a program for 2003-2006 which included various projects of national economic importance, most of which belonged to the infrastructure:

- Institute named Syzganov - U.S. \$ 10 million;
- Highway Gulshat - Karaganda - U.S. \$ 10 million;
- Construction of a segment of the road Osakarovka;
- Vishnevka - U.S. \$ 20 million;
- Support for Small and Medium Enterprises - U.S. \$ 15 million.

In the framework of the VII World Islamic Economic Forum, also called the "Islamic Davos" held in Astana. Kazakhstan and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) signed a memorandum, in accordance with which the IDB is investing in Kazakhstan's sector of the economy about \$ 1.2 billion. [11]

#### IV. SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPMENT RELIGIOUS NGOS

In civil law society, the role of an enabling environment for the development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including in the religious sphere, is no less important than the actual legal framework and state control. So today, we can observe how the state is not only promotes, but also actively implementing positive religious norms in the socio-economic and cultural-domestic sector of the country, helping NGOs to meet the demands and needs of particular social groups.

##### A. *Development of the Halal industry in the Kazakhstan*

Halal - this property (quality) product, which complies with Shariah, and it characterizes the degree of suitability for use.

Halal Industry includes, in addition to food products, almost all the cultural and service industries, from leisure and recreation, to cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.

The market halal industry - is the most dynamic to date markets in the world. Already, experts estimate that only turnover of the European market halal products in approximately 66 billion dollars, and in the next decade, as expected, it will increase by 20-25 percent. In a sense, the production of halal food has become mainstream in the West, because they offer the largest transnational corporations: Nestle, McDonald's, KFC, TESCO, and others. In general, a major area of halal industry - food industry. It is interesting to note that the largest suppliers of halal meat in the Arab countries are Brazil and New Zealand (the latter, by the way - the largest producer and exporter of halal meat in the world).

In Kazakhstan, a huge contribution to the promotion of "Halal" standards made "Kazakhstan Association Haji", which in 2005 registered in the Committee for Technical Regulation and Metrology of the Ministry of Industry and Trade - Technical Committee number 57 for the development and updating of standards for "halal" (order number 385 of 09.11.2005, the). Chairman Sarsenbayev M.A. [12]

According to Marat Agybaevich: "Today," Halal "- a 500 enterprises of Kazakhstan, and potentially willing to get certified could be more. But the best indicator of the halal industry is, first, to enter the market halal products of large producers in Kazakhstan, and secondly, consumers of halal products is now not only namazhan, but other people of different faiths and different strata of society - from the desktop to the intellectuals". [13]

We would like to mention the halal tourism - it's over in the first pilgrimage to Mecca, an organization which is engaged in more than 10 companies, as well as holidays in Muslim and non-Muslim countries with the provision of special services.

#### B. *Islamic Fashion*

It is also one of the elements of Islamic identity in a secular society is a Muslim women's clothing, hijab. Despite the fact that there are many people who fight for the title of "model of a secular state" and trying every way to prevent the external manifestations of separatism in the "dress code" of Muslim women's clothing market is growing from year to year. Today he is confident recaptures the "glamour" more seats on pedestals branded fashion houses, as well as in everyday wardrobes of the weaker sex. Muslim women's clothing line launched not only a specialized studio, but also well-known fashion houses in Kazakhstan such as Kuralay Nurkadilov, etc.

#### V. SPIRITUAL AND EDUCATIONAL FIELD

##### A. *Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SBMK)*

Muslim Board - is the largest and most influential country in the religious non-governmental organization bringing together most of the Muslims of Kazakhstan. Chairman of the Muslim Board - Grand Mufti was elected at a general meeting. In this case the Supreme Mufti candidate, agreed with the Akorda (residence in Astana).

The history of this public organization dates back to 1943, which was in the Central Asian Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Soviet Union. In the USSR there were four Muslim centralized structures: the Central Asian Spiritual Board of Muslims (CASBM) coordinate the activities of Muslim communities in Central Asia and Kazakhstan; Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Caucasus (SBMC), uniting the Muslims of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia; Spiritual Board of Muslims of Northern Caucasus (SBMNC) in force within the national entities of the region, and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European USSR and Siberia (SAMEU), in whose area of responsibility were assigned all the other Muslim communities. In the Soviet Union's most influential and respected of the Mufti was considered SADUM traditionally acts as a "showcase" of the Soviet Islam. SADUM controlled schools only Muslims of the USSR - Bukhara madrasah "Mir-Arab," the Tashkent Islamic Institute.

In 1990 SADUM broke up and Muslim Board was established as an independent union, the first and second of which was elected chairman Ratbek Nisanbaev.

In the third (June 24, 2000) and fourth (June 4, 2005) kurultai Muslims of Kazakhstan Supreme Mufti and Chairman of the Muslim Board, was elected Absattar Derbisali.

The role of central government and loyal non-governmental organizations as the Muslim Board in the regulation of religious activities of Muslims of Kazakhstan and to support stability in the country is extremely important. That's why representatives of the Muslim Board are regular participants in all committees and working groups of the Government of the RK, associated with religious or other social activities of the Republic. By unwritten rules of all undertakings associated with the Islamic activities in the country, coming from the "bottom" or "upper crust" of society in one way or another must be consistent and be approved by the Muslim Board, which is a kind of mediator between the Muslim communities and the state.

#### B. Nur-Mubarak University

Clearly realizing that extremist religious groups, can withstand only the enlightened and educated religious leaders and the traditional and moderate NGOs without government support, do not be able to withstand the threat of terrorism, the government since the early years of independence, taking concrete steps to address these problems. One of these decisions - the ruling on the construction of the school, which was adopted at a meeting of the two heads of state during the visit of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to Egypt. For this purpose, in Almaty has been allocated six acres of land. June 16, 1993 Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, together with the Minister of Awqaf of Egypt M. Al-Mazhhub laid the first stone of the campus.

In July 2, 2003 Agreement on the establishment of the Egyptian University of Islamic Culture Nur Mubarak was ratified by the Parliament of the RK and by a presidential decree N. № 460-11 Nazarbayev has gained legal force.

University was granted a license of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Today the University Nur-Mubarak is an educational institution that carries out training of qualified imams, Islamic studies, religious studies, teachers of Arabic language and literature, translators and regionovedov.

Since its founding to the present day, more than 300 people came out of the walls of the Nur-Mubarak University graduates.

#### C. Muslim media resources of Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, one of the major Muslim media resources, of course, is television, "Asyl Arna" and the site [www.meshit.kz](http://www.meshit.kz).

Studio "Asyl Arna" was registered as a LLP under the Ministry of Justice September 27, 2007, and in 2008 received a certificate number 9467-E of the "Registering a media" in the Committee of information and archives of the Ministry of Culture and Information.

In addition to the site [www.meshit.kz](http://www.meshit.kz), which is the most popular website among the Muslims of Kazakhstan, there are also: [www.kazreligiya.kz](http://www.kazreligiya.kz), [www.minaret.kz](http://www.minaret.kz), [www.sunnaonline.com](http://www.sunnaonline.com) etc. Also are published in Kazakhstan Muslim religious and educational journals such as "Shapagat-Nur," "Musylman," "Family", the newspaper "Islam and Civilization" "Islam," and operated publishing house "Kokzhiiek", "Albarakat", "Nasihati M" and many others.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In this work we have tried to rethink the range of starting points for analysis and evaluation of modern institutionalization of the religious situation in Kazakhstan.

*Most important of these points are as follows:*

- 1) recognition of not only the general laws of Islam, but specific sides;
- 2) a look at religion as one of the important factors significantly affecting both on the home policy processes and on foreign policy situation in the country;
- 3) understanding of the development of religion as a consequence of the complex process of synthesis ethno-cultural, spiritual at any given period;
- 4) positioning of the Muslims of the country as a subject's domestic relationships in the formation of civil society;
- 5) clear understanding of the Muslim Board of mutual interest and state power structures in the area of religious literacy among the population.

It should be noted that the need for deeper study and understanding of complex phenomena in the religious sphere, including such phenomena as the uneasy development of Islam in Kazakhstan is obvious and urgent.

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