



# Examination of the Activities of Religious Educators of the Soviet Period in the Context of the Development of European Religious Thought

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## Abstract

The purpose of the study is to analyse the activities of religious educators during the Soviet period in Kazakhstan in the context of the development of religious thought against the background of secularisation and state atheistic policy. The article examines the processes of reviewing religious thought, adapting religion to social and political conditions, and the role of religious leaders in preserving spiritual traditions. The study investigates the activities of key religious figures in Kazakhstan, such as Akhmet Baitursynov, Alikhan Bukeikhanov, Ybray Altynsarin, and Duissenbek Kabylanbayuly, well as the influence of international religious models on local education. Historical materials on religious education in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are analysed, and the relationship between secularisation, religious revival, and government policy in the Soviet Union is considered. Secularisation processes and atheism policies in the Soviet Union put serious pressure on religious institutions, reducing official religious activities through repression and closure of churches. However, religious leaders adapted, using family connections to pass on spiritual knowledge and creating underground communities for secret rituals. Sufi orders such as Naqshbandiya and Yasawi played an important role in preserving religious and cultural traditions and maintaining spiritual unity and identity. In the post-Soviet period, religious education was revived, which led to the creation of new madrassas and educational programmes that contributed to the strengthening of religious life and social harmony and the restoration of spiritual traditions lost during the Soviet era. These programmes not only supported Islamic teachings but also contributed to the development of interreligious dialogue and tolerance in modern society, which strengthened cultural identity and cohesion.

**Keywords:** Secularisation, Spiritual Unity, Underground Education, Sufi Order, Spiritual Knowledge

## Introduction

The examination of the activities of religious educators in the Soviet period is an important subject for understanding the processes of preserving and adapting spiritual values in the context of harsh government policies. The analysis of these processes allows identifying the mechanisms of interaction between cultures and spiritual practices and determining how world



religious thought influenced the formation of local spiritual ideas under conditions of restrictions.

Investigating this subject is necessary for several reasons. The official policy of atheism has not been able to completely eradicate religious traditions, but they have undergone substantial changes in forms and ways of expression. This highlights the importance of analysing the strategies by which spiritual leaders preserved cultural and spiritual values in the face of ideological pressure. The assessment of the impact of these processes on religious education in the Soviet Union, especially in Kazakhstan, helps to understand how religious leaders adapted and integrated European ideas into their spiritual practices. J-Y. Lee (2023) reviewed the role of the Turkic peoples in world history and emphasised that their ability to integrate Islamic values into local practices played an important role in preserving cultural integrity.

The impact of government policy on religious institutions was analysed in detail by Olcott (2014), who reviewed the restrictions imposed on religion in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and their consequences for post-Soviet societies. The study showed that strict control measures only increased interest in religion after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In this context, Mukhamedov and Turambetov (2021) concluded that the historical interaction of different cultures and faiths has become the basis for peaceful coexistence and successful religious revival in the region. Research on Western views on religion in Central Asia also plays an important role. Yuxuan (2021) analysed how Soviet religious policy was perceived in the West and showed that ideological stereotypes often defined academic research. Balzer (2016) examined the preservation of traditional shamanism and other beliefs under Soviet control, concluding that these practices survived due to their flexibility and adaptability. Menzel (2022) stated that Eurasia represents an important symbolic dimension for religious and cultural identity.

The aspect of identity regulation in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, including marginalised groups, was investigated by Levitanus (2020). The author assessed the influence of cultural and religious norms on the formation of identities, especially in the conditions of post-Soviet control. The impact of Soviet policy on the religious environment in Uzbekistan was studied by Numonzoda (2023). The author noted that the Soviet Union's systematic efforts to institutionalize atheism and suppress religious practices which significantly shaped the theological and sociopolitical landscape of its republics. In Uzbekistan, these dynamics manifested in both the restriction and eventual reconfiguration of religious expression. In the study by Diec (2021), the author assessed how traditional values, including religious ones, are integrated into the neo-Eurasian ideology, which in turn forms a collective identity. Chatterjee (2021) came to the conclusion that religious elements were an important component of the revival of national identity.

This study fills in the gaps in the study of religious education in Central Asia and expands the understanding of the interaction of European and Muslim traditions. The study is also relevant in the context of the post-Soviet period, when many countries, including Kazakhstan, began actively reviving spiritual traditions. However, these processes were largely based on the activities of those religious leaders who were able to preserve traditions in the face of repression. Thereby, it is important to understand that the activities of religious educators had both spiritual and social importance.

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of religious educators in Kazakhstan during the Soviet period and analyse their activities through the prism of the influence of European religious thought. The objectives included the investigation of religious education processes, considering the influence of global and local factors, and the analysis of specific examples of religious activity in the context of atheism.



## Materials and Methods

The study examined various aspects of religious education in the context of global and Kazakh processes and the activities of key religious and cultural educators in Kazakhstan during the Soviet period. The features of secularisation affecting religious institutions on a global scale and in the Soviet Union were investigated. The trends of religious revival in Europe, occurring in parallel with modernisation and cultural exchange, were also investigated. It was important to determine the ways in which European ideas about religious values penetrated into Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, and how these ideas were reflected in religious and educational processes. The activities of Kazakh educators such as Ahmet Baitursynuly (2023), Alikhan Bukeikhanov (Shayakhmetova, 2021), Ybyrai Altynsarin (2023) and Duissenbek Kabylyanbayuly (The library of KazNU..., 2021) were also reviewed. Their role in preserving cultural and religious values under Soviet pressure on religious institutions was analysed. The organisation of educational processes was considered, which, on the one hand, supported national traditions, and on the other, preserved spiritual values; the approaches to the development of education and upbringing, implemented in the context of a strict state policy of atheism, were analysed.

The study covered a wide range of issues related to how religious and cultural values were preserved and transmitted in the face of repression and ideological pressure. The role of spiritual leaders in the adaptation of educational programmes and their impact on cultural and religious legacy in Kazakhstan was also considered. It was identified how Kazakh educators created and supported educational initiatives aimed at preserving spiritual and cultural heritage.

Attention was paid to the relationship between the local traditions of Islam and European religious ideas. Special emphasis was put on the role of Sufi orders such as Naqshbandiya and Yasawiya. The study also focused on how Kazakhstani spiritual leaders used the ideas of the European religious revival to strengthen national identity, education, and the formation of new religious programmes.

## Results

Secularisation, which diminishes the influence of religion on society, has notably influenced the development of religious thought worldwide. With the rise of scientific and technological advancements and the strengthening of secular states, religious institutions and leaders were compelled to rethink their educational and societal roles. A significant aspect of this reconsideration was the integration of religious values into education. Philosophers and theologians advocated for religion's openness to dialogue with science and secular culture while preserving its spiritual mission. In Europe and the USA, this shift led to new theological approaches, incorporating modern scientific and social knowledge into religious teachings. For example, Protestant theologians such as Karl Barth (Willis, 2023) and Paul Tillich (MacGregor, 2021) viewed religious thought through existential and humanistic lenses, opening new possibilities for religious enlightenment.

The European religious revival, which began in the late 19th century, significantly impacted religious education globally. This movement sparked greater interest in spirituality and sought to reconcile religious teachings with modern scientific and philosophical ideas. The revival influenced both Catholic and Protestant movements, leading to the development of new religious education forms, especially among youth. In the UK and Germany, educational programs emerged, emphasizing personal spiritual experiences and the integration of religious values into daily life. These programs included Sunday schools, religious seminars, and clubs, which were actively supported by church organizations. The religious revival also spurred missionary movements aimed at spreading Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Spyska, 2023a).



In Kazakhstan and Central Asia, secularisation was tightly controlled by the state, but religious leaders and intellectuals still sought ways to preserve spiritual values and adapt them to modern realities. This led to the development of hybrid enlightenment models that combined traditional spiritual values with secular education. In Kazakhstan, the influence of the European religious revival was evident in the adaptation of certain educational program elements. Although the Soviet Union imposed political and ideological barriers, ideas from the religious revival reached the region through migration and exchanges with Muslim intellectuals in Europe, contributing to the emergence of educational programs that incorporated European approaches to religious education, despite strict religious activity restrictions (Mukhtarova et al., 2024).

In the Soviet Union, religion was under constant pressure from the state, which pursued a policy of strict secularisation and atheism. The repression against the clergy and religious organisations that began in the 1920s led to the mass closure of churches, mosques, and other places of religious worship, as well as arrests and harassment of clergy (Spytska, 2023b). The policy of atheism sought to replace the religious worldview with a scientific and materialistic one, which had a serious impact on education and religious institutions. Under the conditions of strict control on the territory of Kazakhstan and other Central Asian republics, religious leaders were looking for ways to preserve spiritual traditions. Many religious teachings were passed down in family circles or in underground communities, which preserved the bond between generations and maintained the spiritual legacy. The policy of atheism in the USSR also influenced the development of religious thought in the country. Under the conditions of the ban on public religious discussions and events, theologians and religious leaders had to look for new forms of expression of their ideas. This led to the development of religious philosophy, which, under the conditions of repression, became more hidden, but no less substantial for religious education and the preservation of spiritual legacy in the Soviet Union. In response to the harsh state policy, religion in the Soviet Union was forced to adapt to new conditions. In the 1940s, after World War II, the Soviet government softened its attitude towards religion, which allowed some religious institutions to be partially restored. Nevertheless, religious leaders were still under strict control, and their activities were limited by the state (Chorna, 2020).

During the Soviet era, religious leaders in Kazakhstan and Central Asia adapted to the state's strict control, with Muslim leaders focusing on preserving religious traditions through folk customs and culture. Sufi practices thrived in closed communities, allowing the continuation of spiritual traditions. Religious activity was formalised through structures like the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, which regulated religious leaders and served as a state link (Khamzin et al., 2016). Despite repression, religious thought in Kazakhstan contributed to preserving national identity and spiritual values. Religious leaders maintained contact with local communities and transmitted spiritual knowledge through oral traditions and secret meetings, ensuring the survival of religious practices.

International models of religious education, particularly from Western countries such as Great Britain, France, and Germany, influenced Kazakhstan's religious education system. These models, including Sunday schools and university programs, helped transmit religious knowledge and social values. Muslim countries like Egypt, Iran, and Turkey also shaped religious education, with institutions like Al-Azhar University playing a key role in Islamic education (Vovchuk, 2023). Despite Soviet restrictions, Kazakhstan integrated elements of international religious models, with religious leaders adopting methods from Islamic countries to preserve traditions. After the collapse of the USSR, Kazakhstan strengthened ties with international Islamic organisations to restore its religious institutions.

Religious education has always been instrumental in shaping national identity, especially in societies where religion has served as an important element of cultural and spiritual heritage. In Kazakhstan, religion, particularly Islam, has always been an integral part of national identity. The national identity of the Kazakh people is largely connected with Islam, which was an

important factor not only in religious life but also in cultural self-determination (Nurtazina et al., 2018)

Internationally, religion has also served as an important element of cultural legacy. In Western European countries, Christianity has played a major role in shaping national identity and values (Sichkarenko, 2023). In Muslim countries, religion was a central element of social and cultural life. Thus, religious education supported the spiritual development of society and contributed to the formation of a collective national identity, combining cultural, historical, and religious aspects into a single system of values. International and local models of religious education have a substantial impact on social and cultural processes, forming both personal and collective identities. Theoretical approaches to religious education in the global and Kazakh context reflect the complex processes of interaction between secularisation, religious revival, and public policy. These processes laid the foundation for the activities of religious educators during the Soviet period. For example, Akhmet Baitursynov is known not only as an educator, philologist, and reformer of the Kazakh language but also as a religious educator who sought to preserve the spiritual traditions of his people in the conditions of Soviet atheistic politics (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. A. Baitursynov (1872-1937)**

Source: Akhmet Baitursynov: Equal among the best, best among equals (2022).

Substantial moments of his activity were his participation in the Alash movement, which fought for the autonomy of the Kazakhs and their cultural revival at the beginning of the 20th century. His contribution to religious enlightenment was closely linked to his educational reforms and struggle for national identity. Baitursynov believed that religion plays a crucial role in fostering moral qualities and shaping the cultural integrity of Kazakh society. One of the key aspects of his religious enlightenment was the development of educational programmes for Kazakh schools in which traditional spiritual values were harmoniously combined with modern teaching methods. He sought to ensure that young people received education in their native language, which in itself contributed to the preservation of national culture, and also had the opportunity to comprehend the basics of religion. Thus, his activities were aimed not only at developing literacy but also at maintaining spiritual education through the preservation of religious elements in education. Although open religious teaching was prohibited, Baitursynov continued to support the idea that religious knowledge could be transmitted through literary works, poetry, and oral folk traditions, which he actively promoted. His work stimulated the study of Kazakh religious and cultural traditions, despite the strict restrictions of the Soviet

government. The results of his work are visible in how his programmes influenced the upbringing of the younger generation of Kazakhs. Even under conditions of political repression and bans on religious education, Baitursynov's works preserved and transmitted the spiritual foundations of Kazakh society, creating a strong link between education and religious traditions (Weller, 2023).

A supporter of Baitursynov in the Alash movement was Alikhan Bukeikhanov (Figure 2).

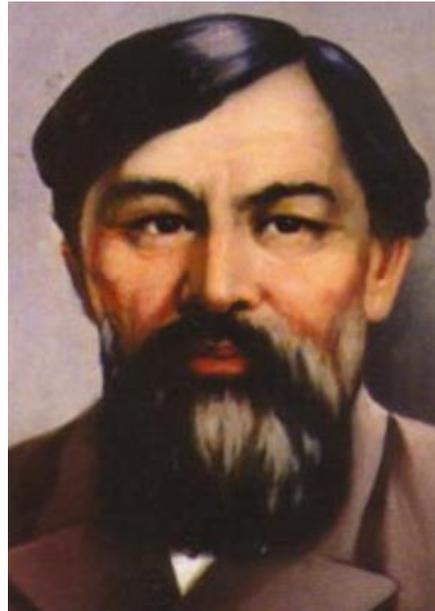


**Figure 2. A. Bukeikhanov (1866-1937)**

Source: Life and death of Alikhan Bukeikhanov (2018).

Bukeikhanov, educated in Omsk and St. Petersburg, was a key figure in the Kazakh intelligentsia and a prominent leader in the formation of Alash-Orda. He played a significant role in preserving national traditions under Soviet pressure. Bukeikhanov viewed Islam as essential to Kazakh identity and believed religion shaped morality and national values. Amid increasing atheism, he supported the integration of Islamic values into education. He advocated for the preservation of Kazakh madrassas, promoting the use of the Kazakh language while maintaining their religious focus. He contributed to the development of educational programs for Kazakh schools that blended secular and religious elements, emphasizing Islamic morality alongside secular sciences. His efforts helped preserve Kazakh religious and cultural identity during Soviet secularisation and ensured the continuation of spiritual heritage despite political repression (Temirbolat et al., 2017).

Another active figure in religious education was Ybray Altynsarin, an outstanding Kazakh educator, teacher, and writer who played an important role in creating the education system in Kazakhstan (Figure 3).



**Figure 3. Y. Altynsarin (1841-1889)**

Source: About Y. Altynsarin (2024).

Altynsarin, born into a biy family, was educated at a Russian-Kazakh school, which inspired his commitment to developing an education system for Kazakhs. In 1864, he opened the first Kazakh school, teaching in Kazakh, and aimed to provide both secular and religious education. Altynsarin recognized the importance of combining traditional Islamic values with modern secular education, integrating religious elements into the curriculum. He developed programs that included Islamic teachings, Arabic script, and religious texts alongside secular subjects, helping Kazakh youth preserve their spiritual roots while developing intellectually. His work, such as *The Kirghiz Anthology* (Altynsaryn, 1879), combined moral lessons from Islamic teachings with stories and fables. Altynsarin believed that religious and secular education should complement each other, fostering respect, integrity, and diligence. His efforts resulted in a robust education system that preserved Kazakh religious identity amidst growing secular influences, integrating the basics of Islam and Arabic language into the curriculum (Makhat, 2021).

One of the most influential Kazakh religious educators who had a substantial impact on the preservation of Islamic traditions in Kazakhstan during the years of Soviet repression was Duissenbek Kabylanbayuly (1904-1986) (Figure 4). He was born in the village named after Lenin (now the village of Turmaganbet Iztleuov) in the Kyzylorda region and received a religious education in one of the leading Islamic educational centres of that time – the madrasah of Samarkand. This education gave him a deep knowledge of Arabic and Persian, which became the basis for his further efforts to preserve and transmit Islamic knowledge in the face of atheistic pressure from the Soviet government. One of the key events in D. Kabylanbayuly's life was his arrest in 1937. Despite the persecution, he continued his activities, imparting knowledge about the Quran and Islamic ethics in private circles, teaching students in rural areas.



**Figure 4. Duissenbek Kabylanbayuly (1904-1986)**

Source: created by the authors.

He used ancient manuscripts in Arabic and Persian, which he secretly kept, passing on knowledge orally to avoid persecution. In his religious educational activities, Kabylanbayuly emphasised the importance of preserving Islamic traditions and values as part of the Kazakh national identity. In conditions when religious literature was banned, he used folk methods of transmitting knowledge through oral traditions, teaching ethical and moral norms of Islam based on the Quran and Hadith. Kabylanbayuly was also known for helping to preserve Islamic customs despite massive bans. For example, he taught his students the basics of religious rituals, such as Janazah (funeral rite), and the importance of observing fasts and prayers. The results of Kabylanbayuly's activities proved substantial for the preservation of Islamic knowledge in Kazakhstan. His descendants continued to pass on the knowledge that he managed to collect and preserve. In 2021, his works and manuscripts, including books written in Arabic, were transferred to the library of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, which became an important event for the preservation of the Islamic legacy of Kazakhstan (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. A collection of books donated by Kabylanbayuly's grandson to the Al-Farabi University Library Fund**

Source: The library of KazNU was replenished by 246 very valuable and rare books (2021).

Kabylanbayuly not only preserved his spiritual heritage but also passed on to his students a sense of responsibility for preserving religious traditions, which helped preserve the Islamic identity of Kazakhs under strict state control (Dudoignon, 2021). Religious resistance in the context of atheistic politics was not a unique feature of Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Around the world, various religious groups and leaders resisted States that tried to suppress spiritual teachings. One of the most famous examples is the activity of the Catholic Church in Eastern Europe during the period of communist rule. In Poland, for example, the Church played an active role in maintaining spiritual and national identity. The Catholic Church, led by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, was able to maintain its religious importance and even actively participated in the political struggle, supporting the Solidarity movement (Figure 6).

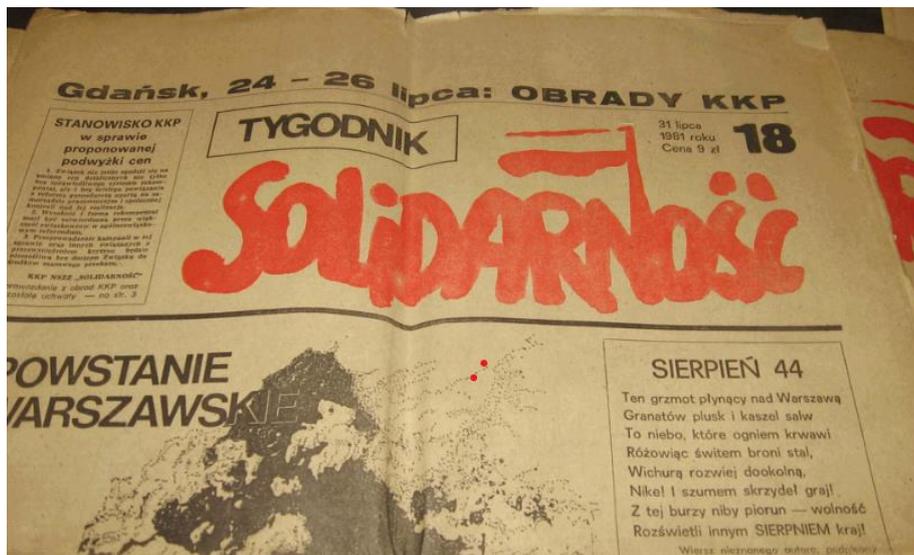


Figure 6. Weekly edition of the Solidarity movement's newspaper of the same name

Source: Solidarity Movement – Freedom for Europe (2011).

The church organised secret services, conducted illegal catechism classes, and distributed religious books underground, despite constant pressure from the communist regime (Ficek, 2021). Similar examples can be found in the Soviet Union. The Russian Orthodox Church, despite the persecution, was able to maintain its spiritual activities using home worship services and hidden religious schools. Many clergymen were arrested or shot, but the church continued to exist in secret communities. This experience was similar to the religious resistance that took place in Kazakhstan, where religious leaders used secret methods to spread Islamic knowledge.

Internationally, resistance was also evident in Muslim countries such as Egypt, where religious leaders were under constant pressure under the rule of British colonialists. However, organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood movement (Figure 7) fought for the preservation of Islam by combining political activism with religious education (Mohiuddin, 2022).



**Figure 7. The emblem of the Muslim Brotherhood movement**

Source: What is the Muslim Brotherhood? (2022).

Sufi orders in Central Asia, especially in Kazakhstan, played an important role in preserving spiritual traditions under the atheistic Soviet policy. Sufism, being an esoteric branch of Islam, was more flexible and resistant to external pressure due to its ability to adapt to social and political changes. In Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries, Sufi orders such as Naqshbandiya and Yasawiya continued to exist even during the harshest times of Soviet repression. The orders operated in secret, preserving rituals, practices, and spiritual knowledge through family and community ties. An important feature of Sufism is its emphasis on inner spiritual practice, which allowed preserving spirituality in the face of external constraints. For example, rituals such as dhikr (repeating the names of God) were practised in secret, often at home, maintaining a link between generations (Sahni, 2022). Sufi orders also played an important role in preserving the Kazakh cultural identity, as they continued to transmit not only religious knowledge but also traditional customs and rituals. An example is the Naqshbandi Order, which has preserved its rituals and spiritual practices even under strict control, supporting secret spiritual schools and educating a new generation.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, religious education played a key role in restoring the spiritual life and cultural identity of post-Soviet countries, including Kazakhstan. During the years of Soviet rule, religion was marginalised and under strict control, but after gaining independence, the Central Asian countries began to actively rebuild their spiritual and religious institutions. Kazakhstan, in particular, has experienced a spiritual renaissance, and Islam has once again become an important part of public life (Khamzin et al., 2022).

One of the crucial aspects of this renaissance was the restoration of educational institutions that taught the basics of religion. Muslim madrassas, which were closed during the Soviet era, have begun to revive and play an important role in educating a new generation of religious leaders. Universities and schools also began to teach courses on the history of religion and ethics, which helped restore the lost connection between culture and spiritual knowledge. For example, the creation of new madrassas in Kazakhstan, such as the Uagiz Madrassah in Almaty, has become a symbol of the revival of religious enlightenment (Berman, 2021).

Religious education in post-Soviet Kazakhstan also played an important role in supporting social stability. Amid the growing interest in Islam, religious leaders actively promoted the ideas of peaceful coexistence and tolerance, which helped strengthen social foundations and prevent possible conflicts on religious grounds. Religion has once again become an important element of Kazakh society, helping to strengthen spiritual and cultural ties lost during the Soviet era.



## Discussion

Studies conducted by various authors shed light on the specifics of these processes in Kazakhstan and on the international arena, which allowed for a deeper analysis of the role of religious educators in preserving spiritual values. One of the key aspects of the discussion was the impact of secularisation on religious education. Sikhimbayeva et al. (2021) showed that secularisation had a profound impact on Kazakhstan, which led to a weakening of the role of religious institutions in public life. This echoes the findings of this study, which argues that secularisation has forced religious leaders to seek new forms of adaptation, such as hidden learning through family connections and underground communities. However, the authors note that secularisation in Kazakhstan had its own specific features. While this study suggests that government pressure was felt everywhere, Sikhimbayeva et al. emphasised that religion continued to play an important role in rural areas.

Weller (2013) highlighted the post-Soviet cultural renaissance as a key factor in reviving religious practices in Kazakhstan, aligning with this study's focus on restoring spiritual identity through religion. However, while this study emphasizes a gradual revival, Weller views it as a rapid process. Mukan et al. (2024) explored religion's dual role in uniting and dividing post-Soviet society, complementing this study's emphasis on religious education's role in fostering identity and harmony, though their work delves deeper into religious differences. Shlapentokh (2023) and Barlybayeva (2020) both stress religion's role in shaping national identity—Shlapentokh focusing on its political resistance to Soviet atheism, and Barlybayeva on its ethical and moral significance. This study reflects both perspectives, presenting religion as a vital force in preserving both political and ethical identity during and after the Soviet era.

A study by Jelen et al. (2022) focused on the post-Soviet transformations in Central Asia and investigated how the population adapted to changes in the natural environment and socio-economic processes. They concluded that despite major social and economic changes after the collapse of the Soviet Union, traditions and spiritual values continued to be instrumental in shaping identity and maintaining social cohesion. The authors emphasised the importance of spiritual factors. This overlaps with the conclusions of this study, which also emphasised the important role of spiritual traditions, in particular, religious ones, in preserving the cultural identity of Kazakhstan. However, unlike a study by Jelen et al., who considered spirituality through the prism of adaptation to the natural environment and the material aspects of life, this study focused on the influence of religion and spiritual leaders on the process of preserving cultural and spiritual values in the context of Soviet atheism. The similarities between the studies consisted in recognising the importance of traditions and spirituality in the process of adapting to new conditions, but the difference was that Jelen et al. paid close attention to interaction with the natural environment, while this study focused on the role of religious practices and spiritual leaders.

The study of Patterson and Parkinson (2023) was devoted to the peoples of the steppes of Central Asia and their historical interactions with the environment and other cultures before 1500. They concluded that the steppe peoples of Central Asia relied on spiritual traditions that helped them survive in difficult conditions, maintain social cohesion, and preserve their cultural identity. The research of Patterson and Parkinson focused on prehistoric and early medieval processes when religion and spirituality played an important role in shaping nomadic societies. In this sense, their conclusions are similar to this study, which also emphasised the role of spirituality and religious traditions, but in the context of the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. In both cases, the researchers came to understand that spirituality and religious practices, even under the pressure of external circumstances, continued to serve as the basis of cultural identity and social stability. The difference between the two studies lies in the chronological context and accents.

Parallels can also be drawn with the study by Erkinov et al. (2021), which examined religious activity in the context of political changes and pressure on religious institutions in tsarist Russia. Many aspects related to the survival of religious practices under pressure from the



authorities were identified to be applicable to the Soviet period in Kazakhstan. These findings are fully consistent with the conclusions of this study, which highlights the importance of family traditions and secret religious communities for the preservation of spiritual values.

Research shows both similarities and differences with this work. Secularisation and atheistic politics have had a substantial impact on religious education and the formation of national identity in Kazakhstan. Both approaches recognise the importance of religious institutions in preserving spiritual values, despite repressive measures by the state. The differences are evident in the assessment of the transformation of religious practices and the role of state structures, such as the Muftiate, in regulating religious life. Some researchers focus on using state institutions to promote ideology, while others focus on independent religious initiatives aimed at preserving traditional values. This highlights the complex relationship between government agencies and religious organisations in different historical periods of Kazakhstan's development.

## Conclusions

The study found that while secularisation reduced religion's public influence, it did not eliminate religious institutions; instead, leaders adapted by integrating secular elements into education, preserving spiritual values. Global religious revival, despite Soviet restrictions, influenced Central Asia through cultural and migration channels, helping sustain religious identity. Even under repression, family ties, underground networks, and oral traditions kept spiritual knowledge alive. Sufi brotherhoods played a key role by adapting to changing conditions and preserving teachings. In the post-Soviet era, religious education regained prominence through madrassas and new programmes, restoring Islamic traditions and identity. However, limited access to data on rural and informal religious practices remains a challenge, suggesting the need for further research into these areas.

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