

**PRE-ISLAMIC WORLD VIEWS OF THE KAZAKH PEOPLE:
FROM THE END OF THE 19TH TO THE BEGINNING
OF THE 21ST CENTURY**

Rustem Dosmurzinov

L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University

Abstract. This article analyses the problems of the traditional world views and beliefs of the Kazakh people. The main purpose of the article is to show the features of such cultural phenomena as ‘religious syncretism’ and ‘hybrid worldview’. The author pays attention to the cosmogonic and cosmological beliefs, the perception and feeling of place and time, religious consciousness and national identity, folk customs and traditions, cultural branding. The farming and cattle-breeding practices in the harsh climatic conditions of wide steppe spaces influenced the formation of a special type of culture and unique worldview. In the long history of the nomadic peoples who inhabited the Eurasian steppes, the history of the development of the religious worldview occupies a special place. Being in the crossroad of civilization, Central Asia has been a region of interaction between different world religious traditions, such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity (in their earliest forms as Nestorianism), Manichaism, and Islam. However, the Kazakh people did not break ties with nature due to their way of life, so people’s beliefs and superstitions were based on the animistic, totemistic beliefs and magic. The author concludes that the cornerstone of the entire system of worldview was the faith in the opportunity to transform the world for the good of people’s traditions and it was reflected in the special rites, traditions, and practices.

Keywords: world views, cosmogony, animism, totemism, magic, the Kazakh people, Kazakhstan, Central Asia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2023.4.06>

Received 27 April 2023, accepted 11 October 2023, printed and available online 20 December 2023

1. Introduction

The world views and religious traditions have been a special object of academic studies during a few centuries. The theoretical and methodological basis of this research were the achievements of anthropology (ethnology) in empirical studies and theoretical approaches to the traditional beliefs and rituals, based on the consensus of different theories and scientific points of views and excluding the direct refutation of any of them. It should be pointed out that neither of the existing theories can fully explain the phenomenon of religion, consequently in order to better uncover the phenomenon of religious traditions, it is necessary to take advantage of all known scientific theories. In addition, it should also be noted that in this research the term 'pre-Islamic worldview traditions' refers to the beliefs, attitudes and religious foundations that emerged prior to the spread of Islamic religion. Strictly speaking, this term does not include pagan beliefs contained in the Islamic religion itself, i.e., those which were formed during the emergence and initial development of the Islamic religion and later spread to other regions, although this paper pays special attention to them.

The growth of scientific knowledge largely occurs cumulatively because each subsequent theory is influenced to some extent by previous scientific views. In this process, the general scientific principle of historicism manifests itself, the main essence of which is to consider scientific phenomena in their historical development, within a linear historical timeframe and in the historical interrelationship. Nevertheless, this research follows Karl Popper's (1902–1994) falsification principle. It should be mentioned that, according to Popper, the growth of knowledge does not occur cumulatively, but by selecting, or rather eliminating, false theories. In this regard, this researcher has developed a method for refuting theories, which consists of defining falsifiability as a criterion for the truth of a scientific statement (Popper 2002: 17). To paraphrase Popper's statement, it can be said that any scientific statement is considered true as long as there is a method for disproving it. A complete disproof of any of the verified theories is impossible a priori since none of the provable scientific statements can be regarded as permanently wrong. Thus, individual theoretical concepts that have lost relevance in the past may have regained relevance in various forms (either as part of a new established theory or even as an independent theory) at a later date. In other words, this metatheory incorporates the inverse principle of sufficient reason, i.e., again, no scientific position is false; this can only show further development of scientific knowledge, which will probably exist as long as both humanity itself and the field of science continue to exist.

Therefore, in my opinion, the theories of the evolutionist school should not be discarded, because, as the following analysis will show, one of the main and the very first tasks of the representatives of this scientific trend was to study the religious worldview as a special part of the spiritual culture of all mankind. This universal perception of cultural phenomena was not the only advantage of the school of evolutionism in ethnology.

By now, in social anthropology and ethnography, there is the well-established term and theoretical construct known as relict or 'survival' (in German is 'relikte',

‘überreste’; in French is ‘survivance’, in Russian is ‘perezhitki’), remnant of the past. This concept, introduced by the British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) and Russian historian Konstantyn Dmitrievich Kavelin (1818–1885), refers to a certain element, the part of culture, which was intrinsic to the past stages of its development and remains so. Moreover, this generality, originated and developed within the framework of evolutionary school in science is often used in explaining the development of culture. The culture as such was seen as something that is in the process of constant development and progress from a lower stage to a higher one (Taylor 1989: 12). This understanding of culture appeared in line with the development of advanced ideas in the natural sciences in the 19th century and influenced the elaboration of other ongoing scientific schools of thought. Evolutionist perspectives on the development of society and culture have led to the ‘theory of remnants’ and the ‘method of remnants’, which are “the product of some older state in which customs and attitudes that have become incomprehensible and should be sought to be explained” (Taylor 1989: 43).

The ‘theory’ and ‘method of survivals’ have often been criticised by the researchers. A thorough criticism of ‘remnants’ is contained in the concept of culture by Polish and British anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942), who believed that the term denoted as ‘survival’ is only a new meaning and a new function for this or that phenomenon (Malinowski, 2005: 35). Malinowski criticised Tylor’s ‘theory of remnants’, believing that no remnants actually existed. Therefore, it is fair to note that the ‘method of survivals’ has lost its former significance for contemporary research, although it continues to be used in discussions (Pauls 2012).

The above-mentioned theoretical problems are part of the wide scientific problem related to the study of primitive thinking and religion. Without going deeper into this issue, it is worth noting that the early ethnologists were already studying the origin and development of religion. For instance, E. Tylor, having studied the ancient myths and superstitions, identified ‘belief in the existence of spiritual beings’ as the basis of religion in ancient and traditional societies (Tylor 1989: 264). British anthropologist James Frazer (1854–1941) drew attention to ancient magic and argued that magic had a significant impact on the emergence of science and religion (Frazer 1989: 53). French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), in whose social theory religion is central concept, argued that ‘elementary religion’ is ‘totemism’. Durkheim defined ‘totemism’ as a religion based on the belief in the close connection between humans and animals or plants (Durkheim 2018: 297). It was only later, in the middle of the last century, when British sociologist Edward Evans-Pritchard (1902–1973) stated that “it is useless to look for the ‘original state’ in religion” (Evans-Pritchard 2004: 105). Nevertheless, the contemporary research shows that the oldest form of religion still practiced by modern hunters and gatherers is animism (Peoples, Duda, and Marlowe 2016).

The follower of Durkheim, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939) defended the view that the thinking and representation of people in primitive and traditional societies is a special phenomenon based on principles different from the thinking of modern people. Thus, Lévy-Bruhl introduced the concept of ‘pre-logical thinking’, which he regarded as characteristic of traditional societies. Concomitantly, people’s thinking

could be quite logical and based on rationality; ‘pre-logical thinking’ was governed by other principles, and emotions and feelings took much more place in it. Therefore, Lévy-Bruhl reveals the ‘law of participation’, according to which human mentality in the traditional society is based on belief in supernatural phenomena and on sensual perception of the world (Lévy-Bruhl 1994: 56).

Lévy-Bruhl’s theories had influenced modern researches on religious and cultural syncretism. The Latino American anthropologist Néstor García Canclini (born in 1939), developing the theory of hybridity, defined the term ‘hybridity’ as “socio-cultural processes of hybridisation in which specific (discrete) structures or practices primarily existed in a separate form, which combined to produce new structures, objects and practices. This in turn carries the meaning that the so-called discrete structures were the result of initial hybridisations and therefore could not be considered pure phenomena (‘points of origin’)” (Canclini, 2005: 10). Referring to culturologist Stavans, as an example, Canclini cited the argument that Spanglish emerged in Latin-speaking societies in the United States and through the Internet spread around the world, could be adopted, taught in university courses (as happened at Amherst College in Massachusetts), and became the subject of specialized dictionaries (Canclini 2005: 10).

Canclini’s theoretical concepts are related to the theory of hybridity developed by Indian and British philosopher Homi K. Bhabha (born in 1949). Developing the post-colonial discourse, Bhabha defined hybridity as “a partial and double force that is more than the mimicry but less than the symbolic, that disturbs the visibility of the colonial presence and makes the recognition must reflect consensual knowledge or opinion” (Bhabha 1994: 111). Based on the post-modernist concepts of J. Lacan, M. Foucault, J. Derrida, J.-F. Lyotard and E. Said’s orientalism, Bhabha introduced the notion of ‘mimicry’, which implies “the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which, appropriates the Other as it visualizes power” (Bhabha 1994: 86). Mimicry repeats rather than re-presents, so mimicry is “a process of writing and repetition, final irony of partial representation” (Bhabha 1994: 88). Moreover, Bhabha introduced the concept of ‘metonymy of presence’, which means “the representation of identity and meaning, for instance, the difference between being English and being Anglicized; the identity between stereotypes which, through repetition, also become different” (Bhabha 1994: 89-90).

In general, Bhabha managed to capture the main trends of post-colonial discourse and assess the effect of colonial power. Furthermore, he also reveals cultural ambivalence through evolutionist’s perspectives. Bhabha quotes Maine’s views on Indian culture: “If India is a reproduction of the common Aryan origin, in Maine’s discourse it is also a perpetual repetition of that origin as a remnant of the past; if that remnant of India is the symbol of an archaic past, it is also the signifier of the production of a discursive past-in-the-present; if India is the imminent object of classical, theoretical knowledge, India is also the sign of its dispersal in the exercise of power; if India is the metaphoric equivalence, authorizing the appropriation and naturalization of other cultures, then India is also the repetitive process of metonymy recognized only in its remnants that are, at once, the signs of disturbance and the supports of colonial authority” (Bhabha 1994: 89-90).

The study of worldview traditions is impossible without a theory of ritual. American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926–2006) saw religion as a cultural system, likewise as ideology, politics, science, and art, so this anthropologist defined religion as “a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Geertz 1993: 90). In this long definition, it is influenced Lévy-Bruhl’s conception of primitive mentality, in which people’s thinking is considered as not separated from emotions, are not aimed at explaining the phenomena and based on ‘collective representations’ (in Durkheimian perspective), although Geertz relied on Lévi-Strauss’s ‘the savage mind’ conception (Geertz 2004: 330).

According to Geertz, it is in ritual as a sacralised action that the belief that religious concepts reflect reality emerges; in ritual the real world and the imaginary world, being fused through a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be one and the same world (Geertz 2004: 130). In any religious ritual, there is a symbolic fusion of ethos and worldview (Geertz 2004: 130). British archaeologist Ian Hodder (born in 1948) attached importance to symbolism of material culture, emphasising symbols ‘in action’ (social relations) and revealing abstract meanings of material objects in social reality (Hodder 1992: 10). In return, French anthropologist Bruno Latour (1947–2022) explained ‘the modern’ ‘as two sets of entirely different practices which must remain distinct if they are to remain effective, but have recently begun to be confused. The first set of practices, by ‘translation’, creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture. The second, by ‘purification’, creates two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand; that of nonhumans on the other’ (Latour 1995: 10-11).

British and American cultural anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–1983) saw the ritual as an ‘artificial play-acting’ and the study of rituals as “the key to an understanding of the essential constitution of human societies” (Turner 1966: 6-10). According to another British anthropologist Mary Douglas (1921–2007), ritual symbolises both danger and power, this action recognises the potency of disorder (Douglas 2001: 95). French ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957), developing the concept of ‘rites of passage’, distinguished between pre-liminal (separation from the previous world), liminal (rites performed in the interim period) and post-liminal rites (inclusion in the new world) (Gennep 1999: 24). Russian ethnologist Albert Baiburin (born in 1947) argued that in the ritual system of any particular tradition it is possible (at least tentatively) to identify the ‘main’, core ritual, which is usually the main calendar ritual, performed at the junction of the old and new year and ‘playing out’ the main precedent (creation of the world). Other rituals can then be represented as transformations of the main ritual (Baiburin 1993: 18).

In brief, the above-mentioned theoretical conceptions reflect the state of theoretical studying worldview traditions and practices. That said, the question is how these theories can be used in the context of Kazakh (Qazaq) culture. For instance, how these theories can explain phenomena of religious syncretism? Can the worldviews of Kazakh people called a hybrid? Should the pre-Islamic rituals be

considered as ‘survivals’, ‘remnants of the past pre-Islamic phases’ still? In addition, it should be taken into account the impact of half a century of tsarist power and seventy years of Soviet materialism. So, can the post-colonial discourse be used in comparative perspectives? Most of the researches on religious traditions of Kazakh people relied on the Marxist methodology or basis related with this scientific field (Basilov, Karmysheva 1997, Toleubayev 1991, Toleubayev 2013, Mustafina: 1992, Mustafina: 2010, Galymova: 2003). Only a few recent studies (Larina, Naumova: 2016, Zarcone, Hobart: 2013, Sultangaliyeva 2012, Kulsariyeva 2017) use post-modern methodological approaches to such scientific problems as religious syncretism, shamanism, sufism, and the effect of modernization. Therefore, the study of religious traditions of Kazakh people, including pre-Islamic worldviews, is an essential and relevant task. The theoretical importance of the article is that it revealed pre-Muslim beliefs, such as animism, totemism, ancestral propitiation, and magic, among the Kazakh population. The practical significance is that the results can be applied in filling gaps in the history of the spread of religions in the territory of Kazakhstan, for instance, regarding the interaction between Islamic doctrine and local cults. The chronological scope of the research covers the period from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 21st century, in which religiosity has had 3 phases: 1) strengthening of Islamic religion as a part of identity; 2) influence of secularization in USSR; 3) the Islamic revival (Mustafina 2010: 26). We can hypothesize that pre-Islamic beliefs as a part of the cultural heritage have demonstrated resistance to external influences and have changed slightly regarding the Islamic religion. The research base included the works of the first Kazakh ethnographer Shokan Valikhanov (1835–1865) on shamanism, field recordings of ethnographer and archaeologist Abdesh Toleubayev (born in 1953), his doctoral thesis on the pre-Islamic beliefs of the Kazakhs, and ethnographer Raushan Mustafina (born in 1953), who has studied ‘folk’ or ‘domestic’ Islam in Kazakhstan. The field data of these researchers were issued and reissued as a part of separate monographs (Valikhanov 2007, Toleubayev 1991, Toleubayev 2013, Mustafina 2010).

This ethnographic study was based on the results of field work conducted during the ethnographic expedition (2019), Yesil archaeological expedition (2021) by Kemal Akishev Institute of archaeology (L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University) in the Tselinograd (Taitobe, Tasty, Zeleny Gai villages) and Zhaksy (Baubek batyr village (abolished in 2006; there exist some houses of farmers), Zaporozhye village) districts of Akmola region in Northern Kazakhstan. The ethnographic expedition lasted for 10 days, the research team included the teachers of the Department of archaeology and ethnology, students of the university. The archaeological expedition was 2 months; as a member of expedition, the author of the article studied Kazakh cemeteries and took photos of separate monuments.

The studies involved participant observation, structured interviewing, and surveys. The interviews were conducted predominantly in Kazakh language. The interviews included 3 stages: 1) introduction (explaining the aims and purposes of the study); 2) the main part (biographical and thematic questions); 3) summary (additional questions). Selected questionnaires and field materials were processed by the author

of the research during scientific internship (2022) at the Miklukho-Maklai Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Moreover, it studied the archival materials of Russian ethnographer Fyodor Fielstrup (1889–1933), who visited different regions of Kazakhstan before forced collectivization, leading to demise of traditional subsistence and famine. The field data of this ethnographer formed part of collective monography by the Kazakhstani and Russian researchers (Azhigali – Naumova – Oktjabr'skaja 2021).

In the following research, both emic and etic perspectives were conducted. Since the above-mentioned villages are multi-ethnic, the method of selecting respondents called as 'snowball' was applied. The method was employed in creating sample, when the respondents knowing the rituals of Kazakh people were chosen initially. The research materials were complemented by interviews with 3 former journalists and 2 respondents, who performed the pilgrimage of Hajj and provided valuable information on the rites of the Kazakh people and Islamic traditions.

2. The cosmogony of the Kazakh people

The terms of 'cosmogony', 'cosmogonic representations' and 'manifestations' have frequently meant the ideas of people about the world, which surrounds them; the objects of nature, the role and place of man in a given world. Being inherently linked with the cosmological world understanding, the cosmogonic ideas are the most important integral part of traditional worldview. Nevertheless, it is known that the Kazakhs by religion are Muslims of Sunni direction. The spread of Islam was a long and complicated process, during which the ancient traditions, customs and cults continued to exist, taking various forms and gaining a different explanation and interpretation. The worldview of the Kazakh people is based on the ancient ideas, superstitions and worldview traditions, as well as the canons of Islamic religion. Thereby, the faith of the Kazakhs should be considered as a system of implicit components, 'fragments' of mind distinguishable by their origin.

At the end of the 19th century, the Kazakhs still believed that the world as a whole consisted of three layers: 'the upper world', 'the middle world' and 'the underworld' (Valikhanov 2007: 86). The 'upper world' is the dwelling place of sky people, who wore a belt around the neck, the site of rule of supreme god Tāñir (also 'the Sky'; comparatively in Hungarian the word 'tenger' means 'the sea') and goddess of hearth Ūmai ('Ūmai Goddess'), who was also the guardian of children's souls. The mankind, who wore a back-belt, lived in 'the middle world' and their lives depended of the will of gods. 'The underworld' was populated by the all kinds of creatures, furthermore it is a place of supremacy of 'Yerlik khan', the lord of the underworld and twin brother of creator god known as 'Qūdai'. Together, they created the whole world: the air and the light, the fire and the water, the land and the living creatures, the mountains, rivers and lakes. 'Qūdai' made a clay man, 'Yerlik' breathed a soul of life into him. 'Qūdai' created a dog to assist a man, 'Yerlik' gave her the clothes. 'Qūdai' created horses, sheep and cows, and 'Yerlik khan' created camels, bears and

moles (Valikhanov 2007: 85-86, Sagalayevev 1991: 120). It should be noted that this ambivalence or binary is an interesting and largely unexplored feature of Kazakh culture, more widely of Turkic culture.

Suffice to approve that the Kazakh pastoralists were aware of the star map, because their life and the life of cattle, the basis of their subsistence, depended on this knowledge. The older Kazakhs could predict the weather. The Kazakhs had their own names for the stellar objects, in particular, ‘Temirqaziq’ (literally ‘metal bar’) is the North star, ‘Ürker’ is the Pleiades. According to the widely spread Kazakh legend, ‘two horses’ called as ‘Aqbozat’ (in the international system of designation known as Koukab) and ‘Kökbozat’ (known as Phekda) are attached to a ‘metal bar’ of ‘Temirqaziq’ (the North star). They ‘graze’ during the night. The ‘owners’ of these ‘horses’ are located in the sky in the form of two bright stars, near the constellation of ‘Big Dipper’, and called ‘Aydason’ (Capella) and ‘Aglason’ (Vega). The ‘Heavenly guardian’, known in the Kazakh language as ‘Küzetşi’, watches over two sky runners, not allowing them to be stolen by the so-called ‘Seven thieves’, which in Kazakh is ‘Jeti qaraqşy’. If the robbers steal these horses, then they will attack on the cluster of stars of ‘Ürker’ (the Pleiades). Then the world will end... (Basharuly et al. 2009: 138).

The brightest star, Sirius, is called as ‘Sümbile’, the Milky Way Galaxy is spelled in Kazakh as ‘Qūs joly’ (literally ‘The bird’s way’). Sooner, towards the fall, the older Kazakhs used to speak such phrases as ‘Sümbileniñ suy jürip pe eken?’ (Is it a time for ‘Sümbile’?), ‘Sümbile tusa su suyr, Tarazy (constellation of Orion) tusa tañ suyr’, ‘Sümbile tusa qoşqar basyn köteredi’ (The cold will be soon). It is a sign that soon it will be cold, it rains. Another Kazakh belief says that ‘Qūs joly’ (as mentioned above the Milky Way Galaxy) was a road through which the souls of the dead have been sent to another world following the birds.

Ancient Kazakhs believed that the star in the sky was the soul of a living man. When a Kazakh saw a star, he said: ‘... Ha, my star is still on fire’ (Valikhanov 2007: 16). So, according to the widespread legend, the last ruler (‘khan’) of the Kazakh people, known as Kenesary khan Kasymov (1802–1847), before the final battle, in which he was captured and died, compared the numbers of enemy troops to the numbers of stars (denoting by them the souls of his ancestors). These legends about Kenesary khan and his last military campaign continue in use by the people (respondent Abradkhimov K. 1970, Kulan Kypshak tribe, Tasty village).

However, the main celestial stars were the sun and the moon. In ancient times, the sun was worshipped, but the Kazakh culture kept the ancient views on its ‘deification’ only a certain elements of culture in the late 19th century (Valikhanov 2007: 85). Some of them still exist as part of linguistic culture. For instance, in the Kazakh language there are lots of phrases and collocations linked with the main star of our galaxy. Even the simple word ‘to live’ in Kazakh language is spelled as ‘kün köru’, which literally can be translated as ‘to see the sun’. Another Kazakh phrases are ‘künniñ közi’ (literally “the eye of the sun”), ‘kün şyqty’ (“the sun rose”). The wooden frame on the top of traditional house, a yurt, (in Kazakh ‘kiiz üi’) known as ‘şanyraq’ is round and similar to the sun. ‘Şanyraq’, the dome of the yurt, in

addition to homefire and cauldron ('qazan'), was regarded as the most important part of house (Toleubayev 1991: 149, Toleubayev 2013: 120). The Kazakhs kept it, passing down through the generations. After all, the yurt itself is very similar to the sun, the rails ('uyq') and slatted backbone ('kerege') of it are like the beacon of sunlight. The following argument is the Kazakh ornament. Even nowadays, the luxury of Kazakh carpets, the 'richness' of ornamental diversity keeps on giving. The most well-known Kazakh ornament called as 'qoşqar müüz' (literally 'ram horns'), depicted on the state flag of Kazakhstan, can be connected with the sun worship. Besides, it can be interpreted as a symbol of world tree (in Kazakh 'bäiterek') and also as a floral ornament.

The Turkic peoples, including the Kazakhs, have kept tales and legends about the poplar tree of 'Bäiterek', on the crown of which the mythical bird 'Samrūq' (in Persian Simurgh) demolishes the egg every year. According to the legends and myths, once a dragon ('aidahar', the image, which is close to the Scandinavian 'Jörmungandr') wished to eat it, but a man prevented him (Kondybai 2018: 155). It should be mentioned that the dragon is also the most special of all the Chinese zodiac animals, for it is the only imaginary one among them. In Chinese cultural tradition, the legendary dragon has an ox head (or the head of a Yangtze alligator), deer antlers, a horse mane, a snake body, a fish tail, and eagle claws. It is a combination of several animals and a triphibian one at that, for it can walk, swim, and fly (Wang 2012: 36). The Chinese also see themselves as the offspring of the dragon (Wang 2012: 39). The main difference of the image of dragon in Kazakh culture and mythology is that it was personified (the link between images of Russian 'Zmei Gorynich', 'Tugarin', Hungarian 'sárkány' and later Kazakh 'Şora batyr'; furthermore, in Kazakh culture 'aidar' means 'children's hair'). The dragon was related with the historical personalities in the later Kazakh folklore (Kondybai 2018: 232).

Thus, the significance of the 'world tree' and dragon in general in the traditional culture was great. Based on the analysis of mythological plots of various peoples, it can be argued that the traditional ideas about the 'world tree' had a great influence on the appearance of different customs and rites, associated with the veneration of trees. Perhaps these ideas had a totemistic character, i.e. people believed in their special connection with the trees or spirits that live in them. Later, these beliefs had a certain impact on the formation of New Year and other festive traditions in the modern culture. It should be noted that the modern Kazakhs put the fir tree up on New Year, but that is later tradition, because in the Kazakh traditional culture the 'world tree' was played by poplar ('terek').

No less, and maybe even greater importance, was given to the moon. The famed Kazakh ethnographer, the first researcher of the Eastern Turkestan (Kashgar), Sh. Valikhanov wrote: "...shamanism initially was a cult of nature and it was concentrated on the ideas of heaven, in particular, of the sun, moon, rivers and other miracles of nature, being partially similar to fetishism. Hence, this belief system is more than just rigid and small worship" (Valikhanov 2007: 71) (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. Kazakh shaman. Second half of the 19th century. Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences



Figure 2. Karakalpak shaman, first quarter of the 20th century. Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences

The Kazakhs believed that an old woman lived on the moon. Thus, the people treated the moon with respect and were afraid to look at the moon for long. According to the superstition, if a man did this, the old woman could count his eyelashes and the man will die. The ancient Kazakhs bowed to the moon, then in summer months took the grass from the place of bowing and threw it into the fire near the home during the new moon. The Kazakh traditional armament (known as ‘bes qaru’, literally ‘the five weapons/tools’), alongside a sword, mace, javelin and bow, included a particular type of long axe which is called ‘aibalta’ (literally is ‘the moon-like battle axe’). An old Kazakh proverb says, “Er qaruy bes qaru” (“The arm of man is the five weapons”). Nowadays, many of moon-related rituals are forgotten. Nonetheless, modern Kazakhs hold the moon in high regard. The interviews showed respectful attitude to the moon (respondents: Zhakin Zh., 1929, Kulan Kypshak tribe, Taitobe village, Abradkhimov K. 1970, Kulan Kypshak tribe, Tasty village, Nurlanov U. 1965, Atygai tribe, Zaporozhye village). Although worshipping and respect are not the same thing.

At the end of the 19th century the Kazakh people were most excited by the rainbow. The shepherds called it as ‘the old woman’s leash’ (‘kempirdiñ qosağy’) (Valikhanov 2007: 86). Regarding thunder, the Kazakhs believed that it is an angry voice of God, and lightning was interpreted as arrows in which he shoots the devils. When the first thunder struck, the Kazakhs said, “the sky horse is neighing...”. There was a specific ritual: the owner of the yurt runs out with a ladle, hits the wall from the outside, saying, “the milk is a lot, the coal is not enough. When he arrived home, he stuck the ladle by the door into the backbone of the yurt (‘kerege’)” (Valikhanov 2007: 86-87).

The veneration of trees was widespread among the Turkic peoples of the Altai and the Sayan Mountains. Perhaps, as a part of world views, this belief was preserved among the Kazakhs until the late 19th century. The 19th century Polish ethnographer B. Zaleski, who visited the Mangyshlak Peninsula, described ‘the sacred tree of the Kyrgyz’ (Zaleski 1991: 97). The Kazakhs, like other Turkic-Mongolian peoples, had a rite of tying patches of matter on the tree branches. This practice still exists, so in rural areas of northern Kazakhstan many roadside trees are decorated with colourful ribbons. Presumably, this rite is a manifestation of the so-called ‘contagious magic’ (‘the Law of Contact’). The well-known researcher J. Frazer in ‘The Golden Bough’ described this magical thinking as follows: ‘The techniques of witchcraft based on the law of contact or infection can be called the contagious magic’ (Fraser 1986: 19). Furthermore, the magic means the faith and practices in the opportunity to transform the world for the good of people’s traditions, special part of ‘triple helix’ (alongside religion and science), linking the man with nature (Gosden 2020: 37). The basis of the Kazakh magic beliefs were the ideas of benevolence, requests to send happiness and help in solving various vital issues among the highest forces.

In modern traditions of New Year’s celebrations, the lighting of a star on a spruce is common. A five-pointed star has many semiotic values. One is the designation of peace. By lighting an asterisk and decorating the tree for the New Year, people believed that something new, a new world would come, and happiness, peace, tranquillity and wealth would come to the house. This tradition, developed in the Soviet Union, is still present and can be seen as ‘liminal area of time and space’, ‘core’ ritual (Turner 1966: 6, Baiburin 1993: 123).

The great place in the Kazakh worldview belonged to the image of the steppe. There are lots of phrases linked with the grasslands in the Kazakh language. For example, verbal expressions of ‘keñ dala’, ‘saiyn dala’ (‘the wide steppe’) is still used in public discourse. The modern Kazakh ethnographer N. Shakhanova listed three concepts in Kazakh worldview regarding the land and distance: ‘the closest world’ covering the home fire and the yurt, ‘the middle world’ including the village, the pastures, the rivers and streams, and ‘the distant world’ encompassing the steppe, the Earth, heaven and hell (Shakhanova 1998: 102).

Traditional culture has an accumulative, social character. This was dictated by the notion that the one who had accumulated a great fortune, according to the traditional beliefs, had acquired a means of preserving and increasing fortune, happiness and, of course, wealth. The individual, once receiving wealth, in accordance with the traditional ideas, received the favour of the Higher Forces. And only his generosity could contribute to the new sending from above. Such ‘attraction’ was associated with the concept of ‘qūt’ (happiness). The distribution of wealth sent from the higher forces is the duty of a rich individual. Therefore, in the consciousness of the people, the wealth of one person required redistribution among the entire group, and the distribution of wealth itself took the form of allocation (Suraganova 2009: 189). The exchange relations and their symbols in culture indicate that innovations in traditional society had the character of minor corrections, which allowed the basic attitudes in social behaviour to be preserved. This is what explains their viability.

The phenomenon of religious syncretism reflected religious tolerance, between heterogeneous manifestations, similar to ‘abangan rituals’ and ‘prijaji mysticism’ in the Indonesian culture observed by C. Geertz in the mid-20th century (Geertz 1960: 153).

Therefore, the Kazakh cosmology was based on the close kinship with nature. Knowing the laws of nature kept people alive. The Kazakhs frequently saw the world as in the image of familiar animals, such as horses, sheep, and cattle. People understood the world according to their own way of life, so it was presented as a polystructural system. The transferring of ancient knowledge was facilitated through verbal expressions, legends, fairy tales, i.e. it was presented diachronically. The results of interviews showed only superficial knowledge of the folk cosmology, so this part of belief system has already become a book tradition.

3. The concept of space and time in Kazakh worldviews

In the traditional worldview, an important place belonged to the designation of space and time as two categories of measurement of the material world (‘space-time continuum’). The space consisted of such components as ‘mastered’ (or ‘conquered’), ‘own’ space associated with the homeland and hearth (the so-called ‘closest world’) and ‘undeveloped’, ‘unfamiliar’, ‘unknown’, ‘alien’ (‘distant world’). The basis of space was two constituent parts – the sky (‘aspan’) and the earth (‘zher’). The sky, as has been mentioned, was the place where god Tengri and different spirits lived. Later, with the adoption of Islam, in the traditional Kazakh culture this understanding became the place of existence of the Almighty God (Allah) and the angels. The Kazakhs had a belief “about an angel who beats the clouds, thereby producing lightning and thunder” (The Kazakhs 1995: 241).

Another important component of understanding the material world is time. Time was presented cyclically, every cycle (‘müšel’) had its fractional parts, for instance, the 60-cycled ‘müšel’ had 5 ‘müšel’ by 12 years. Every 12 years of living person related with some changes in life (‘rite of passage’). These rites marked the real and symbolic reincarnation of man, his transition to a new status. Life cycle rites – birth, wedding, death – were the main milestones in human biological and social life. Earthly life was perceived as a continuous chain of qualitative transformations through metaphorical dying and symbolic rebirth to real death and subsequent posthumous existence as a spirit (Azhigali – Naumova – Oktjabr’skaja 2021: 508).

The ‘müšel’ of 12 years included ‘Tyşqan jyly’ (the year of Mice), ‘Siyr jyly’ (the year of Cow), ‘Barys jyly’ (the year of Snow Leopard), ‘Qoyan jyly’ (the year of Hare), ‘Ūlu jyly’ (the year of Dragon), ‘Jylan jyly’ (the year of Snake), ‘Jylqy jyly’ (the year of Horse), ‘Qoi jyly’ (the year of Sheep), ‘Meşin jyly’ (the year of Monkey), ‘Tauyq jyly’ (the year of Hen), ‘It jyly’ (the year of Dog), ‘Doңыз jyly’ (the year of Pig). The choice of these animals is linked with their ‘deification’, totemistic cults. The totems were considered sacred, and people, identifying their origin with them, did not eat their meat; it was forbidden to hunt and kill these animals.

The 12-year animal cycle is a system of chronology common among the peoples of Central and East Asia. The distribution of the animal cycle is widely spread. It is known from Japan to the Volga region and from the Caucasus to Indo-China. The origin of the calendar is linked to the 12 (24)-member tribal system among the Turks and the totemistic beliefs concerning most of the animals that entered the cycle, in other words the birthplace of 'animal calendar' is Central Asian steppes (Zakharova 1960: 39). This scientific statement needs additional arguments, but it is likely that Central Asia is one of the presumed birthplaces of the calendar.

Its essence is that, as mentioned above, the years are named after 12 animals arranged in a certain order. The peoples who use the Central Asian (or Turkic-Mongolian-Chinese) cycle can be divided into two groups: western and eastern. The western, which consists mainly of Turkic-speaking peoples, uses a 12-year animal cycle, the eastern, or Sino-Mongolian group uses a 60-year cycle in addition to the 12-year one. The names of animals may have varied, for example, the names of fish ('balik') and crocodile (Persian 'neheng' or 'nak') occur in parallel with the dragon (Chinese name 'lun'). Another name of the dragon 'aydahar' was never used in the calendar in Central Asia (Zakharova 1960: 32-36, Alimbai – Mukanov – Argyubaev: 1998).

In the modern world, where the established traditions of measuring physical time and space occupy an important place in people's lives, the self-worth of these concepts is mainly forgotten. They raise practically no questions from the people who use them and are perceived as phenomena that are forever inherent in humanity. Whereas calendars based on the constant principles of astronomical counting, which allow us to restore in memory the time frames of the past and develop them for the future, the units of measurement characterizing our spatial representations did not immediately appear. The nomadic pastoralist peoples made a huge contribution to the development of basic standards for understanding space and time. To a certain extent, the unification in the vast territory of Eurasia of spatial and temporal concepts and the units of measurement that may be credited to nomads (Artykbayev 2015: 157).

The Kazakhs based on their origin the old myth about 'Alaşa khan'. According to the myth, a ruler had a son who was born speckled, piebald. The ruler was afraid of the peculiarity of his son and, on the advice of his close associates, ordered him to be taken far away. Shortly afterwards, this boy grew up and fame about him went all over the country. The ruler, having heard about the exploits of his son, wanted to return him. He sent a hundred warriors. The warriors did not come back. He sent the second hundred, the soldiers did not return again. He sent the third hundred, the same thing happened again. Three hundred warriors proclaimed a young man named Alaşa ('The piebald man') their leader. Later, the fourth hundred, which his grandmother gave, joined them. So, the Kazakh people emerged. Since then, people have been saying, "qazaq qazaq bolğannan, alaşa han bolğannan, mündai qylyq bolğan emes alaştyñ balasy (Since the Kazakhs became Kazakhs and Alaşa became khan, Alaş's children never done it again)" (Potanin 2005: 119). The word 'ala' means 'motley', 'colourful', 'many-coloured' (in old Greek the word 'khalkós' meant bronze, comparatively in Kazakh the bronze translated as 'qola'); in ancient times the word

‘alapes’ meant disease of leprocy (the link between ‘Alaş’, the names of the Indo-Aryan people of ‘the Kalash’ and Turkic tribe of ‘the Khalaj’) (Amanzholov 1997: 53).

In order to explore the notion of space among nomadic peoples, a little excursion into history should be done. One of the ancient Asian peoples who entered the historical arena was the Huns, who created a large state. In 188 BC the Huns defeated the founder of Han dynasty Liu Ban, however, in 46 AD the Hun empire fell apart. In the 5th century the Huns had their leader Attila, who united various Hunnic, Ugrian, Indo-Iranian, Germanic and Slavic tribes. After the battle of Nedao in 454 the name of the Huns disappeared from the pages of history. There was a period of stabilisation in the steppes (Gumilyov 2008: 290).

Much later, in 1206, at the Great Kurultai (assembly) on the banks of the river Onon, Temujin was proclaimed supreme khan of ‘all those who live in felt tents’, ‘Genghis Khan’ (‘Shyngyshan’, ‘ruler of universe’). From 1210 Genghis khan sent his troops into China and captured Peking (Beijing) in 1215. The new rise of nomadic peoples is associated with the unification of the Mongol Empire. In 1236 Genghis khan’s grandson Batu khan led the Western campaign of the Mongols and walked with fire and sword across Eastern and Central Europe, reaching the Adriatic coast. Genghis khan’s will had come true, defining the borders with the phrase ‘as far as the hooves of a Mongol horse reach’ (‘moñğol atynyñ tūiağy jetken jerge’) (Artykbayev 2015: 337).

The borders that exist among settled peoples are conditional for the nomadic pastoralists. The land was considered the property of the clan community, so clans used the vested land collectively. Traditional mentality does not perceive rigid boundaries, distinctions, since there are no clearly expressed proprietary principles to the land. In this regard, it is appropriate to recall the great thinkers of the past who are looking for a promised, fertile land where people live forever. In the social structure of nomadic peoples there were no dependent social categories, slavery was not widespread. The nomadic societies, which were based on a particular system of subsistence, had their own perceptions of liberty.

In the oral historical tradition there are the images of Qorqyt ata, Asan Qaiğy, Būqar jyrau. Asan Qaiğy (literally Asan the Hapless). Asan Qaiğy is the historical person and figure of Kazakh legends who was sure that there is a place on the earth where people did not die until the age of one hundred, where the cattle give birth twice a year, where there were no cruel crop failures, severe winter freezing of pastures (‘jūt’) and enemy raids. In the search of ‘Jer-Ūiyq’ (‘the promised land’), Asan Qaiğy drove through the land of the Kazakhs on his fast-legged camel (‘Jel maya’). The folklore texts attributed to the Asan Qaiğy express customs and traditions, at the same time the ideology of the nomadic pastoralist society of Kazakhs. The land is treasured, it is the fundamental substance of our being, it is noteworthy that Asan Qaiğy marked the most significant and useful places in the terms of nomadic cattle breeding. Everything that grows on it was considered as a gift of God. In relation to life, the human life is fast-paced.

At the same time, a certain state ideology is carried out by Asan Qaiğy, since the territory of the habitat of clans and tribes included in Kazakh society is clearly fixed.

In these texts there is information about the economic and cultural system, the main strategic uplands of the Great Steppe (Artykbayev 2015: 116). In the oral history of the people, the concept of 'el-jürt' (the native land) is constantly used. 'Jürt' seems to be a part of the coordinate system of nomadic society and is partly subordinate to the kinship system. The concept of 'el' is agnathic, built vertically and provides a connection between generations that have a common ancestor. In this situation, the 'el' is a chronometer of nomadic society, the 'jürt' in this system is horizontal. The intersection of vertical and horizontal as a result gives the concept of 'nation', which is expressed in the phrase 'el-jürt'.

The equally interesting question is the understanding of time or using the time category in the Kazakh oral tradition called as 'Şejire'. The time is an important component of any historical work, including 'Şejire'. From the written European and Muslim traditions of historiography, the understanding of history and historical time in Kazakh 'Şejire' is very different. In principle, in Kazakh 'Şejire' there is no periodization of history (conditional and template, as in modern historiography). The historical time in Kazakh 'Şejire' is primarily connected with the historical personality. A particular personality, whose acts are remembered in folk memory actually serves as a certain chronometer. These are, for example, the eras of Alasha Khan, Oguz Khan (Uyz Khan), Zhoshy Khan, Äz Jänibek, and finally Abylai Khan, and his grandson Kenesary Kasymov. When presenting certain events of antiquity or the Middle Ages, the Kazakh 'Şejire' calls the name of the person who gave the name to the era (Artykbayev 2015: 285).

According to the opinions of philosophers, the values of the modern Kazakhs have changed. So, the philosopher Z. Sarsenbayeva describes modern Kazakh society as follows: "...If the ancient nomadic pastoralists carried everything with themselves, quickly oriented, building close relations with a new environment, then the modern people carry all its goods in a chequebook. The house, the natural world for it is another refuge, and the ensuing friendly communication is unacceptable luxury. The new gifts of civilization, such as the car, phone, video, computer are not replaceable for rest and work, and they require a special roof above their head. The conservative way of life, unhurried tribal customs and rites for them are only reminders of museums" (Sarsenbayeva 2009: 16).

Therefore, perceptions of space were based on special principles of its development. The symbiosis of man and horse made it possible to unite vast territories inhabited by different peoples. Perception of time was based on the tradition of 'Şejire', the understanding of one's place in the genealogical scheme, more broadly in the historical tradition. Central to this historical tradition was the myth of the legendary ancestor Alasha Khan, based on the concept of kinship of the Kazakh people. Another important component of the concept in Kazakh culture is the notion of 'müşel', because the time was seen as cyclical process, the action of changing life cycles.

4. The ancient ritualism in everyday life

This part of the research is based on the fieldwork in the rural districts of northern Kazakhstan. This is a special region with multi-ethnic and multi-cultural population, whose history is determined by migration processes since the middle of the last century. The system of socio-normative culture and ritual practices of the Kazakh population has largely preserved its traditional character, despite the intensive processes in this sphere of culture (especially in rites related to births and weddings). These processes were caused by cardinal socio-economic, political transformations in the republic as a whole, long and intensive ethno-cultural interaction of Kazakh people with Russian, Ukrainian and other populations in the region. As a result of ethno-cultural interaction, the celebration of golden and silver weddings was typical for the rural population of northern Kazakhstan in 1970–1990. However, from the beginning of the 1990s many adopted customs such as ‘stealing shoes from bride’ and ‘bride price’, shouting of ‘gorko’ (borrowed from Russian population) are actively pushed out of Kazakh rituals as non-traditional. The main trend in the modern development of the ritual sphere of the Kazakh rural population is the revival of traditional forms of ritualism with a combination of modified elements (Galymova 2003: 65).

In the spiritual culture of the Kazakh people heterodox religious beliefs and practices existed and often interacted. For example, the performance of ‘alastau’ and recitation of Muslim prayers at the infant’s cradle had the same goal of protecting the child from evil forces. ‘Alastau’ was no longer a full and direct veneration of fire, and its meaning was retranslated in people’s minds, but the belief in the purifying power of fire survived. The recitation of prayers from the Qura’n is already a Muslim rite. The use of these practices is a manifestation of the parallel coexistence of pre-Muslim and Islamic rites, similar in function but fundamentally different in structure and meaning.

The first ritual consists in ‘knowledge’ of the influence of natural forces, the second ritual is based on a verbal and gestural address to the god. If the two rituals were performed alternately, it was a ‘symbiosis’ of the two phenomena, which may or may not have been realised by the ritual participants.

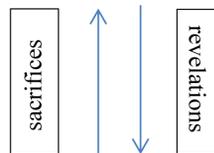
And vice versa, the performance of the circumcision ritual ‘sündet’ was also connected with the custom of distribution of scraps (‘zhyrtys’) and food remnants (‘sarkyt’), etc. In this case there is not a ‘symbiosis’ or parallel coexistence, but rather a synthesis (syncretism) of the Muslim custom ‘sündet’ (although today it is known for its pre-Muslim origin) and pre-Muslim practices (Chvyr 2006: 101).

In the maternity and childbirth ceremonies pre-Muslim practices predominate in quantitative terms; however, Muslim ceremonies ‘mark’ such important events in the life of the child as the naming and joining the Muslim community (‘sündet’). On the contrary, in the wedding rituals the pre-Muslim practices prevail in both quantitative and qualitative (in terms of importance). The custom of ‘neke kiyu’ (wedding ceremony) involving a mullah and witnesses, however, is still not widespread.

The results of cross-cultural influences can be seen primarily in wedding rituals. It is mainly reflected in the objects of material culture (wedding bouquets, rings, etc.). The wedding serves as a construct, which combines elements of Kazakh traditional rites and modern culture. Both national and European dishes are presented at the festive meal. The funeral and memorial rites related to that ethnic group’s religion have undergone the least changes. Thus, Kazakhs and Tatars predominantly profess Islam and follow its canons in funeral and memorial rites. Other peoples (Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Armenians) profess Christianity and follow the prescriptions of the Christian religion during funerals. The features of the funeral and memorial rites of these peoples are similar. In many cultures the deceased is carried feet first. Muslims have memorial days on the third, seventh and fortieth day, including anniversaries. For Christians, memorial days are the third, ninth and fortieth day, as well as the anniversary.

It is known that funeral and memorial rites are ‘conservative’. In general, the conduct of such ceremonies among the Kazakhs corresponds to Islamic rules; it contains more Islamic injunctions and prohibitions. Moreover, the conduct of memorial events not historically associated with Islam (for instance, yearly funerals called ‘as’) is accompanied by the recitation of Muslim prayers. In interviews the respondents reported that people living in this world are in almost constant communication with ancestral spirits. However, some claimed to respect ancestral spirits, but they did not worship them (respondents: Abradkhimov K. 1970, Kulan Kypshak tribe, Tasty village; Nurlanov U. 1965, Atygai tribe, Zaporozhye village). The connection between the different worlds is shown in the following scheme.

THE SPIRITS (ANSECTRAL SPIRITS)



PEOPLE

Figure 3. The interaction between the spirits and living people.

Figure 3 shows communication between ancestral spirits (‘aruaq’) and humans in the traditional culture. By making supplications to the higher powers people dedicated ‘Sacrifices’ to them; on the other hand, they received ‘Endowments’. In return for real ‘Sacrifices’ the spirits gave non-material and material ‘Endowments’, because the people counted on “receiving material benefits from the power to which the sacrifice was addressed”. In sum, the pacification of ancestral spirits was the most important task of the living (Suraganova 2009: 62). Although it is an ancient tradition, it has become common to build holy temples (called as ‘mazars’), for instance Baubek batyr Mausoleum near an ancient cemetery (see Figures 4 and 5).



Figure 4. Mausoleum of Baubek batyr Bekmyrzauly. Dosmurzinov R. K. Yesil archaeological expedition to the Zhaksy district of Akmola region, Baubek batyr village, June of 2021.



Figure 5. Mausoleum of an unknown person. Early Iron Age, Hunno-Sarmatian Stage. Dosmurzinov R. K. Yesil archaeological expedition to the Zhaksy district of Akmola region, Baubek batyr village, June of 2021.

Public holidays play a special role in the culture of modern cities and villages. A striking example of a public holiday in Kazakhstan is the celebration of spring and renewal 'Nauryz'. Nauryz is truly a national holiday, as it unites all Kazakhstanis, irrespective of their ethnic or confessional identity. Thus, during the mass celebrations in urban squares in Kazakhstan people of different nationalities can be seen. In this way, it enhances respect for the culture of different peoples and strengthens Kazakhstan's identity.

The symbol of this holiday was the traditional dish named as 'nauryz köje' (literally Nauryz soup), taking into account the difference in recipes consisting of nine ingredients: water ('su'), salt ('tüz'), rice ('küriş'), millet ('bidai'), meat ('et'), dough ('kespe'), corn ('jügeri'), buckwheat ('qaraqūmyq') or barley ('arpa'), oat ('sūly'). After eating 'nauryz köje', people read a prayer: "Let this treat will reach of the patrons of farmers and the spirits of the ancestors ("Diqan babağa, äruaqtarğa tie bersin").

In the spring, planting of crop began. The beginning of crops was also accompanied by rituals of sacrifices in honor of 'aruaq' (ancestral spirits), patrons of agriculture. There was also a holiday on the occasion of the harvest called as 'saban' (in Tatar language – 'saban tui', in Bashkir language – 'haban tui', literally 'saban' – 'plough, lemech'). In the days of celebration, races, traditional competitions were arranged. Therefore, the Kazakhs said about themselves: 'The Kazakhs are the nation of superstitious people' ('Qazaq – yrymsyl halyq'). Every important part of life, every endeavour was closely linked to certain actions, which should have given the happiness ('qūt', which is also in ancient meant a soul), well-being ('yrys', from 'yr', or – 'the sun') and luck ('sät'). These concepts lead to the unique phenomenon of religious worldviews called as shamanism.

Shamanism is one of the most noticeable pre-Islamic phenomena in the religious traditions of the Kazakhs. It is based on the ideas about spirits formed in ancient times. Islam brought the Arabic word 'jynn' to the Kazakh language, which became the name of spirits in general, but was sometimes used as a designation of a special category of spirits. The Qur'an divides 'jynn' into Muslims and non-Muslims. So, in Kazakh beliefs 'jynn' are also divided into Muslims and non-Muslims. In modern times beliefs about 'jynns' are not widely spread. One of the respondents, who performed the pilgrimage of Hajj, information about 'jynns' was explained during the Hajj, but in, his view, the 'jynns' have not existed (respondent Abradkhimov K. 1970, Tasty village).

The 'jynn' appeared in the image of men and women. The term 'jynn' did not supplant the former names of spirits that denoted their different categories. The Kazakhs believed in 'Peri' spirits, among which supposedly there were also adherents of different religions – Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus. 'Peri' seemed to be people of both sexes, able, like 'jynns', to change their appearance. It was believed that they have a padishah (governor) ruling them. The Kazakh demonology was familiar with 'dev' (deu), who is a mighty and dangerous demon hostile to people. A special place among the spirits was occupied by 'albasty', who is a demon in the form of a woman with large breasts and long red hair, which she likes to comb with a crest. This

demon is known to a wide range of people. The favourite occupation of ‘albasty’ is to harm pregnant women and little babies. She seems to sit on a woman and choke her with her breasts or grabs the lungs of the child and runs with them to the river.

Counteracting the evil deeds of albasta and other evil spirits was the main task of shamans. Shamanism (‘baqsylyq’) connects individuals with spirits. The help of spirits explained the ability of shamans (‘baqsy’) to treat patients, find missing things and livestock. The shamans were also credited with power over the phenomena of nature, the ability to perform miracles. A little information that has reached us about the Turkic-speaking peoples and tribes of the Middle Ages indicate that shamans occupied an important social position, being essentially priests. Even after the spread of Islam in the Kazakh steppes, shamans continued to exert great influence on the life of their fellow tribesmen.

In the 19th–20th centuries shamans (in Kazakh ‘baqsy’) were mainly men. Some recent materials confirm that female shamans were not uncommon. Occasionally, there were individual remnants of a ritual suit in some ‘baqsy’ (for example, a hat with swan wings, a woman’s dress). In general, in the 19th century ‘baqsy’ did not stand out with their appearance among others. However, according to ancient tradition, shamans did not cut their hair. According to F. Fielstrup’s work, the main ritual subject of the shaman was ‘qobyz’, a bow instrument with two strings of horse hair, which in popular beliefs was endowed with special properties (Azhigali – Naumova – Oktjabr’skaja 2021: 15). So, among the Kazakhs the stories about ‘qobyz’ were widespread. Playing ‘qobyz’ was seen as a specific sign of connection with spirits. For instance, ‘baqsy’ named as Oken assured that he did not hold a ‘qobyz’ in his hands until he became a shaman (The Kazakhs 1995: 248).

Some shamans forbade outsiders to touch their instrument. Since the middle of the 19th century, ‘qobyz’ began to be replaced by a ‘dombyra’, another Kazakh national instrument, which is easier to play. Another attribute of the ‘baqsy’ was the percussion instrument (‘asa’, ‘asatayaq’) with iron rings and suspensions on the upper part.

The occupation of shamanist among the Kazakhs was considered hereditary, although there are also cases when a person who did not have ‘baqsy’ in the family was engaged in this art. The spirits that patronize and help shamans belonged to the category of ‘peri’, although they were often called generically as ‘jynn’. Some believed that the ‘white shaitan’ (‘aq saitán’) helped shamans. Individual shamans called their spirits angels (‘perishte’). The term ‘peri’ dates back to the traditions of the Iranian world. At the same time, the ideas about specific assistant spirits, like their names (Qarabas, Zhirentai, etc.) remained from the beliefs of the Turkic-speaking ancestors of the Kazakhs. The spirits were given a human appearance, which is why the assistant spirits were often called by shamans merely as ‘people’. The spirits appeared in the image of animals and birds: snakes, horses, wolves, eagles. Among the assistant spirits of shamans there are also ‘dev’ (deu) and, oddly enough, ‘albasty’. The ability of the ‘baqsy’ to drive this demon away from giving birth and babies was explained by the shaman’s power over the ‘albasty’: having once seen her, shaman tore off a piece of hair. The shamanic career of many ‘baqsy’ began with a meeting with the ‘albasty’.

Totemic animals acted in them as patrons, and only later they were transformed into victims. The act of sacrificing a totem went back to the oldest form of theophagy and was magical incorporation, an archaic form of possession, the capture of a divine entity, due to which those who took part in the ritual meal of his eating gained part of this essence, sacredness, everything that this animal symbolized. The symbolic incorporation among the Kazakhs was reduced to collective rituals from sacrificial animals. The food in the traditional culture of Kazakhs was considered as God's gift, and the concepts of 'happiness', abundance and well-being are closely connected with it (Suraganova 2009).

Hence, the picture of the world in the traditional worldview was very diverse. Along with Islam as a unifying faith in the Kazakh worldview tradition, the most important component included ancient beliefs. They reflect faith in supernatural powers (veneration of deities and spirits), belief in the ability to influence the course of certain events (known as magic, spell). And, of course, the interaction of these elements of the worldview with canonical Islam is a significant topic open to further research.

5. Conclusion

This study has confirmed the thesis that the Kazakh worldview is a multi-structured scientific and sociocultural phenomenon (Toleubayev 1991: 169, Mustafina 2010: 255). The modern world views of Kazakh people are the confluence of atheistic attitudes and Islamic canons, secular values and ancient views, based on the belief in close connection with nature. These beliefs are founded on the unique cosmogonic beliefs and cosmological knowledge, a special sense of space and time. The modern culture of most peoples of Kazakhstan retains some components of traditional culture. On a societal level, the celebration of two 'main', core rituals, two New Year's celebrations (New Year of the Gregorian calendar, derived from the Soviet past, and ancient Nowruz, construed in the new cultural identity), is a unique phenomenon of 'hybrid worldview', but this statement needs additional evidence. Moreover, the question is how these traditions can be replicated. Which of the 'modernist' or 'traditionalist' tendencies will prevail? On a local level, many rites of the life cycle of the Kazakh people continue to retain 'pre-Islamic' elements that are considered, if not fully Islamic, at least as not contradictory to the Islamic religion. The most common interaction between the Islamic doctrine and ancient pre-Islamic beliefs is synthesis, rather than parallel coexistence. On a socio-economic level, religious traditions can help to level social differences. Finally, on a political level, the religious traditions of the Kazakh people are a powerful barrier to the penetration and development of destructive religious movements.

To a greater extent, elements of tradition are characteristic of the sphere of spiritual culture. So, in particular, at the modern stage of ethno-cultural development, the Kazakh people witness 'revitalization' and 'revival' of some religious and non-religious traditions, represented in everyday culture. However, ancient religious and cultural traditions should be considered as 'survivals' only in order to separate them

from a scientific perspective, i.e. the ‘method of survivals’ can be used only as a tool of scientific inquiry. Some scientists defined religious phenomena in Kazakhstan as ‘Islamic revival’ (Jalilov 2006) and ‘returning of Islam’ (Sultangaliyeva 2012), other scientists defined this process as ‘legalisation of Islam’ (Mustafina 2010: 77). The modernization of Kazakh society is characterized by a combining and confrontation between traditionalism and modern culture, which brings not merely new challenges, but also new opportunities. Kazakhstan has a historic chance to keep a unique culture that combines the best features of traditional culture and the trends of modern time.

Address:

Rustem Dosmurzinov

L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University

Satpayev 2

010008 Astana

Republic of Kazakhstan

E-mail: rustem.dosmurzinov@mail.ru

References

- Akatay, Sabetkazy (2011) *The ancient cults and traditional culture of the Kazakh people*. Almaty: Print Express.
- Alimbai, Nursan, Marat Mukanov, and Khalel Argynbayev, eds. (1998) *Traditional subsistence of the Kazakhs: essays on theory and history*. Almaty: Gylm.
- Artykbayev, Zhambyl (2015) *The Kazakh ‘Şejire’ as a source and the conception of history of the Great Steppe*. Astana: Altyn kitap.
- Azhigali, Serik, Olga Naumova, and Irina Oktjabr’skaja, eds. (2021) *The Kazakhs*. Moscow: Nauka.
- Baiburin, Albert (1993) *Ritual in the traditional culture: the structural-semantic analysis of the rites of East Slavs*. Saint-Petersburg: Nauka.
- Basharuly, Rakhmetolla, Danagul Kazahbayeva, Uazipa Tokbergenova, and Nysanbai Bekbasar, eds. (2009) *Astronomy*. Almaty: Mektep.
- Basilov, Vladimir and Balkhis Karmysheva (1997) *Islam among the Kazakhs (until 1917)*. Moscow: Miklukho-Maklai Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of Russian Academy of Sciences.
- Bhabha, Homi K. (1994) *The location of culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Canclini, Néstor (1995) *Hybrid cultures: strategies for entering and leaving modernity*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press. Originally published as *Culturas híbridas: estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad..* Mexico: D.F., 1990.
- Chvyr, Ljudmila (2006) *The rites and beliefs of Uighur people in the XIX – XX centuries*. Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura.
- Cornell, Svante, Stephen F. Starr, and Julian Tucker (2017) *Religion and the secular state in Kazakhstan*. Washington DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program.
- Douglas, Mary (2001) *Purity and danger: an analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Durkheim, Émile (2018) “Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: le système totémique en Australie”. Moscow: Elementary forms.
- Evans-Pritchard, Edward (2004) *Theories of primitive religion*. Moscow: OG-I. Originally published in Oxford: Clarendon, 1965.
- Fraser, James G. (1986) “The golden bough: study in magic and religion”. Moscow: Politizdat. Originally published in London: Macmillan and Co, 1890.
- Galymova, Aliya (2003) *The family rites of rural Kazakhs of North Kazakhstan in the modern period*. Astana: L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University.
- Geertz, Clifford (1993) “Religion as a cultural system”. In his *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*, 87–125. London: Fontana Press.
- Geertz, Clifford (2004) *The interpretation of cultures*. Moscow: Russian politic encyclopedia. Originally published in New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Gennep, Arnold van (1999) *Rites of passage*. Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura. Originally published in Paris: E. Nourry, 1909.
- Gosden, Chris (2020) *Magic: a history: from alchemy to witchcraft, from the ice age to the present*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Gumilyov, Lev (2008) *The rhythms of Eurasia*. Moscow: AST Press.
- Hodder, Ian (1992) *Theory and practice in archaeology*. London: Routledge.
- Kondybai, Serikbol (2018) *The principles of worldview of ancient Kazakhs*. Almaty: Ana tili.
- Kulsariyeva, Sabira (2017) *The ethnography of Kazakh childhood from 1950 to 1980*. Almaty: Kazakh University.
- Larina, Yelena and Olga Naumova (2016) *Through the modernization: traditions in modern life of Kazakhs in Russia*. Moscow and Saint-Petersburg: Nestor-History.
- Latour, Bruno (1993) *We have never been modern*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Originally published as *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes: essais d'anthropologie symétrique*. Paris: La Découverte, 1991.
- Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien (1994) *Le surnaturel et la nature dans la mentalité primitive*. Moscow: Pedagogika Press. Originally published in Paris: Alcan, 1931.
- Malinowski, Bronisław (2005) *A scientific theory of culture and other essays*. 2nd ed. Moscow: OG-I.
- Mustafina, Raushan (1992) *Kazakh beliefs, cults and ceremonies: (in the context of folk Islam in South Kazakhstan in the late XIX and XX centuries)*. Alma-Ata: Kazakh University.
- Mustafina, Raushan (2010) *Islam and Relics of pre-Islamic rites and customs among the Kazakhs*. Astana: Zharkyn.
- Pauls, Elizabeth (2012) “Survivals”. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Available online at <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/survivals>>. Accessed on 02.06.2022.
- Peoples, Hervey, Pavel Duda, and Frank Marlowe (2016) “Hunter-gatherers and the origins of religion”. *Human Nature* 27, 3. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-016-9260-0>
- Popper, Karl (2002) *The logic of scientific discovery*. London and New York: Routledge. Originally published as *Logik der Forschung*. Vienna: Julius Springer, 1935.
- Sagalayev, Andrei (1991) *The Uralic and the Altai mythology*. Novosibirsk: Nauka.
- Sarsenbayeva, Zaure (2009) *The ethnicity and values*. Almaty: Kolor.
- Shakhanova, Nurila (1998) *The world of the Kazakh traditional culture*. Almaty: Kazakhstan.
- Stringer, Martin D. (1999) “Rethinking animism: thoughts from the infancy of our discipline”. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 5, 4, 541-555. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2661147>

- Sultangaliyeva, Alma (2012) *Return of Islam to Kazakhstan*. Almaty: A. Sarsenbaiuly's Fund.
- Suraganova, Zubaida (2009) *The gift in the Kazakh traditional culture*. Astana: KAM-Mediaprint.
- Taylor, Edward B. (1989) *Primitive culture*. Moscow: Politizdat. Originally published in London: J. Murray, 1871.
- The Kazakhs*. Almaty: Kazakhstan, 1995.
- Toleubayev, Abdesh (1991) *Relicts of pre-Islamic beliefs in family rituals of the Kazakhs (XIX – the beginning of XX century)*. Alma-Ata: Gylym.
- Toleubayev, Abdesh (2013) *Traditional beliefs and superstitious rites of the Kazakhs*. Almaty: Kazakh University.
- Valikhanov, Shokan (2007) *The ethnographic legacy of the Kazakhs*. Astana: Altyn kitap. Originally published in N. I. Veselovskij, ed. *Sochineniya*. Saint Petersburg: Printing office of the General Directorate, 1904.
- Wang, Tieying (2012) *What is the dragon: finding the dragon from view of Chinese*. Beijing: People's Fine Arts Publishing House.
- Zakharova, Irina (1960) "The twelve-year animal calendar of the peoples of Central Asia". *The Works of Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography of Academy of Sciences of Kazakh SSR*, 32–65.
- Zaleski, Bronislaw (1991) *The life of Kazakh steppes*. Almaty: Oner. Originally published as *La vie des steppes kirghizes: descriptions, récits & contes*. Paris: J.-B. Vasseur, 1865.
- Zarcone, Thierry and Angela Hobart, eds. (2013) *Shamanism and Islam: Sufism, healing rituals and spirits in the Muslim world*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris.