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## The activity of missionaries in the Qazaq steppe in the context of the religious policy of the Russian Empire (end of the 19<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>1</sup>

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**Тірек сөздер:** отарлау саясаты; орыс-түзем мектебі; миссионерлер; бұратаналар; шоқындыру; ислам; христиан

**Ключевые слова:** колониальная политика; русско-түземная школа; миссионеры; инородцы; крещение; ислам; христианство

Religion is relevant at different times. The question of religion was frequently raised during the Tsarist era, during the Soviet system and after the country's independence, and different opinions and views emerged. Since the country's independence, religions have been analysed from social, cultural, political, economic, legal, philosophical and other points of view, and the power of religion and spirituality has been evaluated from a scientific point of view. One of the methods used by the Russian government to colonise the Qazaq steppe was to change religious beliefs: It was important to include native children in the education system in order to teach them Orthodox religious teachings. By sending missionaries to the Qazaq steppe, they began to study literary works and cultural values of the locals to strengthen their faith in religion. They pointed out that the opening of Russian-indigenous schools would gradually lead Qazaq children to baptism and displace Islam. Such missionaries as Nikolai Ilminsky, Alexander Alektorov, Vasily Katarinsky and Nikolai Ostroumov, who were sent to the Qazaq land, took an active part in this work. Books in which Christianity was preached were included in the reading system and thus firmly anchored in the consciousness of the people. Schools were opened in the outskirts of Russia to train Russian missionaries. The article states that the textbooks written by the missionaries for the locals were a special means of russification and baptism. The opinions of representatives of the Qazaq intelligentsia on religious issues are analysed.

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## Қазақ жерінде жүргізілген Ресей империясының дін саясатындағы миссионерлердің қызметі (XIX ғасырдың соңы – XX ғасырдың басы)

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Дін – әр уақытта өзекті. Дін мәселесі патша заманы тұсында да, советтік жүйе кезеңінде де, тәуелсіз ел болғаннан кейін де жиі көтеріліп, түрлі пікірлер туындап, көзқарастар қалыптасып келді. Әсіресе тәуелсіз ел болғаннан бері діндер әлеуметтік, мәдениеттану, саясаттану, экономика, құқық, философия және тағы басқа тұрғысынан зерттеліп, дін мен руханияттың беріктігі ғылыми түрде бағалана бастады. Ресей үкіметінің қазақ даласын отарлаудың бірден бір жолы – діни сенімін өзгерту еді. Ол үшін ағарту саласына «бұратаналардың» балаларын тарту арқылы православие іліміне оқыту маңызды болды. Бұл жолда қазақ даласына миссионерлерді жібере отырып, дінге деген сенімділікті арттыру үшін халықтың әдеби шығармаларына, мәдени құндылықтарын зерттеуді қолға алды. Ол орыс-түзем мектептерінің ашылуы ислам дінін ығыстыра отырып, біртіндеп қазақ балаларын шоқындыруға көшіру еді. Бұл іске қазақ жеріне жіберілген Николай Ильминский, Александр Алекторов, Василий Катаринский,

<sup>1</sup> Translation and annotations from Qazaq into English PhD in Chinese History Dinara Saikeneva.

Николай Остроумов сияқты миссионерлер белсене кірісті. Христиан дінін уағыздайтын кітаптар оқу жүйесіне енгізіліп, сол арқылы адам санасына орнықтыру бағыты қолға алынды. Ресейдің шет аймақтарында орыс миссионерлерін даярлайтын мектептер ашылады. Мақалада миссионерлердің бұратаналарға арнап жазған оқулықтарының орыстандыру және шоқындыруда ерекше құрал болғандығы айқындалады. Қазақ интеллигенция өкілдерінің дін мәселесіндегі ой-пікірлері сараланады.

**Сілтеме жасау үшін:** Смағұлова С.О. Қазақ жерінде жүргізілген дін саясатындағы миссионерлердің қызметі (XIX ғасырдың соңы – XX ғасырдың басы). *Qazaq Historical Review*. 2025. Т. 3. № 2. 167–183-бб. (ағылшынша). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69567/3007-0236.2025.2.167.183>

## Деятельность миссионеров в Казахской степи в контексте религиозной политики Российской империи (конец XIX – начало XX века)

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Тема религии является актуальной во все времена. Вопросы религии неоднократно поднимались в исследованиях российского имперского периода, советской эпохи и после обретения Казахстаном государственной независимости. В каждый из этих периодов формировались различные взгляды и подходы к религиозной тематике. С момента обретения независимости религия стала предметом анализа с социальных, культурных, политических, экономических, правовых, философских и других точек зрения, влияние религии и духовности на общество оценивается с научных позиций. Одним из методов российской колонизации Казахской степи было изменение религиозных воззрений местного населения. Для этого детей «инородцев» вовлекали в систему образования, через которую их приобщали к православию. В степь направляли православных миссионеров. Для успешной религиозной пропаганды изучались литература и культурные ценности казахов. Открывались русско-туземные школы, призванные вытеснить ислам и постепенно привести к христианизации казахских детей. Активное участие в этой деятельности принимали такие миссионеры, как Николай Ильминский, Александр Алекторов, Василий Катаринский и Николай Остроумов, направленные на казахские земли. Книги с христианским содержанием включались в школьную программу и тем самым прочно закреплялись в общественном сознании. На окраинах Российской империи создавались специальные школы для подготовки русских миссионеров. В статье отмечается, что учебники, составленные миссионерами для местного населения, выступали в качестве особого инструмента русификации и христианизации. Также проводится анализ взглядов представителей казахской интеллигенции на религиозные вопросы.

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### Introduction

Until the Russian tsarist government pursued a policy of expansion, Islam remained the main religion in the Qazaq steppe. However, the "Charter of the Russian Empire of June 22, 1822 on the Siberian Kyrgyz" made the nomadic Qazaqs completely dependent on the Russians and interfered with their religion. Articles 243–249 of Section III of Chapter VI of the Charter were devoted to the administration of the spiritual affairs of the Qazaqs, the religious questions. As a rule, Qazaqs did well to convert to Christianity, and when 1,000 people in a district had converted to Christianity, the regional administrations could apply for permission to build a church and receive a permanent clergyman (priest). And the clergy were given the opportunity to open a school in the church, where they themselves could teach the teachings of this religion, writing, reading and bookkeeping. This gradually paved the way for the introduction of differences in religion. In accordance with this charter, the indigenous nomads (in Russian documents they used to call indigenous people *-inorodec / инородец*) were granted religious freedom. Those who converted to Christianity were allowed to build a church with the permission of the diocesan bishop, and those who converted to this religion were allowed to exercise their former rights. Qazaqs were allowed to build pilgrimage sites with the consent of the civil governor instead of

being banned on religious grounds [Masevich 1960: 105, 110]. After this charter, the opening of districts on Qazaq land completely subordinated the system of government to Tsarist Russia and intensified military colonization. The construction of fortifications paved the way for the mass colonization of Qazaq land by other religions. When Christian military believers came to the Qazaq steppe, they demanded that the government create all religious opportunities for them, built churches in fortresses and opened religious schools to educate their children.

Since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the missionaries sent to the Qazaq land did not immediately set to work. When looking for ways to colonize the indigenous first, they decided to gain their full trust by giving them honors, ranks and titles to respected village elders and community leaders. In this way, firstly, the senior sultans were given a free hand to administer the Qazaqs in the volosts, and secondly, their rights were protected. At first, they took the situation of the people seriously and familiarized themselves with their traditions and customs. They collected oral literature, fairy tales, proverbs and sayings of the local population and tried to publish them in the form of books. Based on the works of foreign travelers who had previously written about the Qazaq steppe, they studied Qazaq customs and traditions in detail and considered how they could gain their trust. Believing that Russification could be implemented by gaining the trust of the Qazaq bais (wealthy noble), they began to promote Christianity by opening a Russian-indigenous language school. The main aim of the article is to explain the religious activities of the missionaries who came to the Qazaq land.

### Methods and materials

In studying the activities of the missionaries who came to Qazaqstan and the religious problem at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the methods of systematisation, analysis, description, narration, historical context and problematic-thematic methods were used. On the basis of the systematisation method, the Charter and the resolutions passed at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were examined in connection with the colonial policy of Tsarist Russia and the way of life of the Qazaq people. On the basis of the laws passed, the changes in the field of religion and education in the Qazaq lands were analysed using archival documents and information from research, letters and reports. At the same time, the views and opinions of missionaries and intellectuals in the country on the issue of religion were taken into account. Following the descriptive method, the activities carried out in the course of the Qazaqstani children's Christianisation were considered. The views of the country's intellectuals on religion in the course of the activities carried out were analysed in relative detail on the basis of archival documents. The characteristics of the involvement of Qazaq children by missionaries in Russian indigenous schools and their education were determined in the context of historical events.

### Discussion

The problem of religion was the subject of study both in the tsarist era and during the years of Soviet power and the independence of our republic. Studies and reports written at each stage shed light on the emergence and development of the Islamic religion. Even then, the tsarist government's policy of russification of religion and enlightenment in the course of colonising the Qazaq land was openly exposed. This is evident from the works and letters of the missionaries sent to the Qazaq land. We cite the works of Nikolai Ivanovich Ilminsky (1822–1891), Alexander Efimovich Alektorov (1861–1918/9), Vasily Vladimirovich Katarinsky (1846–1902), Nikolai Petrovich Ostroumov (1846–1930), Vasily Vasilievich Grigoriev (1816–1881) [Ilminsky 1892: 120; Alektorov 1891: 114; Katarinsky 1897: 80; Ostroumov 1904: 78; Grigoriev 1862: 12]. Due to the opening of the Russian indigenous schools, the process of implementing the Russification policy, the system of education in the Russian indigenous schools in the studies of these missionaries is very differentiated. All missionaries relied on Russian tables and wrote special textbooks for teaching Qazaq children.



Fig. 1. Moleben at the newly built Sergievsky site. Semirechensk region, 1909. Russian Geographical Society. Source: Archive of the Institute for Humanities Studies ABDI

1-сур. Жаңадан салынған Сергиев учаскесінде молебен (дұға ету) қызметі. Жетісу облысы, 1909 жыл. Орыс географиялық қоғамы. Дереккөз: АБДИ гуманитарлық зерттеу институтының мұрағаты

Рис. 1. Молебен на вновь строящемся Сергиевском участке. Семиреченская область, 1909 год. Русское географическое общество. Источник: Архив Института гуманитарных исследований АБДИ

The problem of religion in the Qazaq steppe was also the subject of research by the national intelligentsia. Qazaq educator Shoqan Shyngysuly Valikhanov (Shoqan Mūhammed Qanafia Şyñğysūly Uālihanov, 1835–1865) criticizes some prejudices against Islam and proposes a way to govern Islam, stating that there are no features that have developed from the Qazaqs converted to Christianity [Valikhanov 1985: 560]. The further activities of the missionaries among the Muslim peoples were decided at the congress that took place in Kazan from June 13 to 26, 1910. The procedure for filling the gaps in the baptizing mission was analyzed in detail in a book published in the same year [Missionerskij s'ezd 1910: 404]. The missionary organizations that emerged on the Qazaq territory, their activities and directions were well evaluated in the encyclopedic dictionary "Islam in the Urals". Information was given about the teaching system in the missionary schools and the peculiarities of other schools [Khairtdinov 2009: 404].

The intellectuals of the nation Alikhan Nurmukhameduly Bukeikhan (Ālihan Nūrmūhamedūly Bōkeihan, 1866–1937) [Bukeikhanov 1910: 822] and Muhammedjan Tynyshbaiuly Tynyshpaev (Mūhametjan Tynyshbaiūly Tynyshpaev, 1879–1937) [Tynyshpaev 1993: 224] clearly expressed political views against the russification, the baptism of the Qazaq people in his works.

In general, the tsarist government's policy on religion, including the issue of baptising Qazaqs, has not yet been clearly assessed, so this is a matter that needs to be studied.

## Result

With the adoption of the Provisional Rules of 1867–1868, the rights and privileges of the Muslim religion were restricted, and Qazaq religious affairs were taken away from the Orenburg mufti and transferred to the regional administrations. The regulations prohibited the construction of mosques and madrasas without permission and began to close them. Mosques and madrasas were opened only with special permission from the tsarist government, which appointed their representatives as mullahs or teachers approved by the government. Every action of the local Muslim clergy was secretly monitored and reported to high authorities [Masevich 1960: 339–340]. This provision thus allowed, firstly, to follow the spiritual affairs and every step of the Qazaqs, and secondly, to russify and baptise them. The tsarist government resolutely accepted the ban on preaching the Muslim religion and, on the contrary, praised and propagated Christianity. In addition, every opportunity was created for Christian preachers.

Shoqan Valikhanov once believed that religion was a hindrance to society, an obstacle to progress and a negative influence on the development of science and culture. Until 1861, all baptised Qazaqs were classified as Philistines and Cossacks, which was desirable from a Christian point of view, but a serious mistake from a political one. Until his records, baptised people who converted to the Orthodox faith left the Qazaq side and moved to Russian villages, which did not affect the Qazaq population in any way. In general, he noted that there is no data on the number of Qazaqs who converted to the Orthodox faith in the period since the formation of the suburbs, but the number of those baptised is not small. At the same time, Yamyshevskaya, Chistaya and other fortresses were inhabited by baptised Qazaqs, and the tsarist government even allowed them to build a town on the ridge, believing that the conversion of Qazaqs to another religion would bring great benefits to the Qazaq people in the future. However, it was concluded that Christianity, which was introduced by missionaries and priests among the Siberian natives, spread very successfully and did not bring any results. In this context, the educator stated that Christianity has no influence on Muslims and urged the Russian government to refrain from any effective counselling in the Sahara, not to concern itself with a religion that is hostile to all knowledge, and not to forcibly introduce the laws of worship based on fear and sticks in the Sahara. In order to curb the further development of Islam, it is necessary firstly to weaken the influence of the Tatar mullahs and the Central Asian Sufis and secondly to take systematic measures along the lines of the leaders of Orenburg. Shoqan Valikhanov believes that by weakening the religion, one can abolish the customs of Islam that are considered vulgar, such as marrying off girls who are too young and forced marriages. He stated that Islam will be an obstacle to the prosperity of the Qazaq community. Despite the fact that religion is a source of ignorance, a tool that poisons the minds of the masses, it is necessary to reform the religious administration of the Sahara, using the issue raised in connection with the religious court. To this end, the following measures must be taken:

- 1) *to separate the Qazaq steppe from the Orenburg mufti and to appoint a regional ahun, subordinate to the general regional administration, and an advisor on behalf of the Qazaqs;*
- 2) *the title of mullah should be conferred only on the Qazaqs of this land or the Qazaq khodja if there is a strong popular desire for it;*
- 3) *Appointment of more than one mullah in a district and abolition of the office of a decretal in the regions;*
- 4) *Ishans and khojas coming from Central Asia to join the Tatar seminarians should not be allowed to live in Qazaq settlements if they do not practise a particular profession, so as not to create cults and mystic societies [Valikhanov 1985: 199–201].*

Of course, Shoqan Valikhanov did not take seriously the core of the incorrigible policy of the Russian Empire at that time, such as russification and baptism, which brought domination and

lawlessness to the Qazaq land. However, he held firmly to the assertion that the path to progress lay in education and enlightenment.

Nikolai Ilminsky, Alexander Alektorov, Vasily Katarinsky and Nikolai Ostroumov, who were sent to the Qazaq land, began to fulfill their mission through the educational system. Books preaching the Christian faith were introduced into the education system, and thus the path was taken to embed them in the human mind. Schools for training Russian missionaries were opened in the Russian outback. The missionary policy was led by Ilminski on behalf of the head of the Orenburg Border Commission, Vasily Grigoriev, and showed positive results after a short time. In 1862, Grigoriev sent a letter to the highest authority about the transition of the Qazaq language to Russian. He tried to prove the suitability of the Russian alphabet by pausing: "The Arabic-Tatar alphabet used by the Qazaqs does not correspond to their vowels" [Grigoriev 1862: 1–8]. His missionary work thus gave him an orientation as to where he should start. On 8 November 1886, an Orthodox missionary organization was founded in Orenburg under the name Mikhail Arkhangel Brothers. This organization united all currents and sects. Local branches of the organization were founded in Troitsk (1888), Uralsk (1888), Orda (1893), Guryev (1893) and Kostanay (1893), which, in addition to religious and moral education, also set up a conversation store and a traveling library for natives and published religious literature in Russian, Qazaq, Tatar, etc. The organization had large bookshops and bookstores. The organization had large bookshops and warehouses in Orenburg. He sent religious leaders on business trips to minorities, recruited them for his religion and supported poor indigenes financially. He helped to build churches and set up missionary schools for the baptized. In the beginning, these schools were taught according to the programs



Выѣздъ миссіонера въ степь.



Fig. 2. The missionary's departure to the steppe. 1892–1899. Source: Archive of the Institute for Humanities Studies ABDI

2-сур. Миссионердің далаға кетуі. 1892–1899 жылдар. Дереккөз: АБДИ гуманитарлық зерттеу институтының мұрағаты

Рис. 2. Выезд миссионера в степь. 1892–1899 годы. Источник: Архив Института гуманитарных исследований АБДИ



### Миссионерская проповѣдь.



Fig. 3. Missionary sermon. 1892–1899. Source: Archive of the Institute for Humanities Studies ABDI 3-сур. Миссионерлік уағыз. 1892–1899 жылдар. Дереккөз: АБДИ гуманитарлық зерттеу институтының мұрағаты

Рис. 3. Миссионерская проповедь. 1892–1899 годы. Источник: Архив Института гуманитарных исследований АБДИ

of parochial schools, and since 1893 the educational system was carried out according to the Ilminsky program, which included the study of the Orthodox divine law, church singing, the Russian language and natives reading, and arithmetic [Khairtdinov 2009: 282–283].

The number of 22 missionary schools founded in 1867 rose to 130 in 1891–1892 [Borishanskaya 2012]. In his article "On the introduction of the Russian alphabet into foreign languages" published in October 1892, Ilminsky clearly states that he began actively translating the alphabets of Muslim peoples into Cyrillic in 1862. The very first book with the Russian alphabet was published by him in 1862 for the Tatars. It contained sermons on the Christian faith in the Tatar language and with Russian letters. In October 1863, the education of the children of baptized Tatars with the Russian alphabet began, and since 1864 a school for baptized Tatars was opened in Kazan, where the Gospel prayer began to be read from the Gospel of Matvey. Ilminsky tried to prove by concrete examples that teaching the indigenous people with the Russian alphabet is much easier than with the Arabic letter. He therefore suggested that the books of the Turkic-speaking peoples should not be written in Arabic letters, but in Russian [Ilminsky 1892: 5–15]. Ilminsky openly writes in his article "Education of indigenous (Образование инородтsev)" that the missionary policy is effectively implemented among the indigenous people. He points out that the gradual transition of Muslims living in Russia and Siberia to Christianity took place with the help of baptised Tatars,

but that there is still fear among the locals that the opening of Russian schools would "spoil" their children, and does not hide the fact that the problem could be gradually implemented by teaching Russian in the mother tongue [Ilminsky 1982: 18–21].

On March 1, 1876, the Governor General of Turkestan Konstantin von Kaufmann (1818–1882) addressed the issue of transferring the Qazaq script to Russian graphics in a letter to the Minister of National Education Dmitry Tolstoy (1823–1889) [Ilminsky 1883: 5–7]. The education system in the Turkestan region caused great concern to Tsarist officials, especially the missionaries. This is due to the fact that most of the lectures in the madrasas of this region were held in Arabic and were based on the Koran. The authors of the books on the subjects taught were mullahs from Central Asia who had visited Arab countries and gained extensive experience and were fluent in Arabic. For example, the author of "Hidaya-i-Sharif" came from Margelan sart, "Akadyk" from Bukhara, and the author of "Hikash-Al-Ain" from Samarkand [Dukhovskoy 1899: 12].

The missionaries were afraid of immediately introducing Christian content into the Muslim doctrinal system. They therefore decided to publish their religious books slowly in Russian. After the Ministry of National Education took over the task of educating the local population, the Kazan Seminary, together with the Moscow Missionary Society, began to publish textbooks and books of a religious and educational nature for them. Most of these books were published under the direction of Ilminsky. The tsarist government skilfully used the baptised Tatars to spread Orthodoxy. It even promoted the effective introduction of Qazaqs to this religion, who lived in poor living conditions and were spiritually weak. Later, the baptised Qazaqs who had converted to the Orthodox faith turned to the governors-general of their regions with the request that they be allowed to convert back to the Muslim faith. Some of these petitions honestly mentioned those who had converted to Orthodoxy for various reasons but were secretly fulfilling the duties of the Muslim religion. On the instructions of the Ministry of the Interior, the religious consistories held special talks with baptised Qazaqs and persuaded them to come to their senses.<sup>2</sup>

The religious leaders pointed out the need to pay special attention to the mood of the Qazaqs in spreading the Christian doctrine and showed the expediency of its realisation by setting up missions to preach the Christian faith. These missions led to a discussion of Christian doctrine among the Qazaqs and proved that all the answers necessary for life could be obtained from this doctrine. The Bishop of Tobol and Siberia Avraliy writes in a letter to the Tsar dated 22 December 1889 that he met with Qazaqs in Kokshetau, Atbasar and Shuchinsk in the Akmola region and that the Qazaqs listened to him with interest about the teachings of the Gospel and took part in the conversation. He also notes that among the Qazaqs, the Islamic religion was subordinate to the Russian authorities and Christian teaching had begun to spread in the Qazaq steppe since the beginning of preaching, yet there were fears that "the preaching of the Christian religion was being stirred up". However, the mission of the Orthodox Church took place in a peaceful atmosphere and there were no protests. The missionaries capitalised on the Qazaqs' passion for listening to stories and taught them some biblical and evangelical concepts that were close to their understanding. It was clear from the letter that the aim of the mission was to win listeners for the baptism of the Qazaqs through this dialogue. Thus, taking advantage of the Qazaqs' change of mood, they began to win them over to this religion by presenting Christianity as the only support in times of stress.

Bishop Aurelius was of the opinion that the mission could only be fulfilled if the natives were not converted to the faith immediately, but rather if the importance of Christian doctrine was explained to them and they became believers, and in order to fulfil the mission he asked for a missionary camp to be opened in Shuchinsk. By doing so, believed that if the nomadic Qazaqs were mixed with the Russians and familiarised with their traditions, they would follow Christian teachings.<sup>3</sup> In a

<sup>2</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Qazaqstan, Almaty (CSA RQ), holding (h.) 15, register (r.) 1, file (f.) 403, folio (fol.) 49

<sup>3</sup> CSA RQ, h. 64, r. 1, f. 458, fol. 1–3.

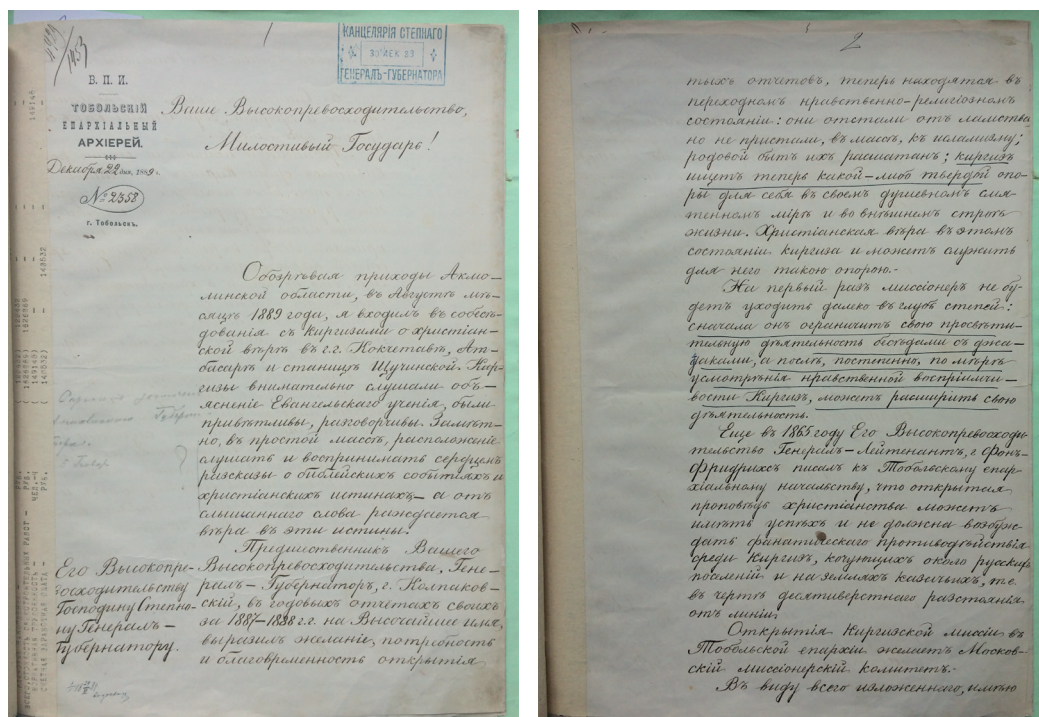


Fig. 4–5. Letter from the Akmola Governor to the Steppe Governor-General with a message from the Bishop Avrally about the need to open a missionary camp. Source: Central State Archive of the Republic of Qazaqstan, Almaty, holding 64, register 1, file 458, folio 1–3

4–5-сур. Миссионерлік стан ашу қажеттігі жөнінде епископ Аврالیйдің өтініші туралы Ақмола губернаторының Дала губернаторына жазған хаты. Дереккөз: Қазақстан Республикасының Орталық мемлекеттік архиві. 64-к., 1-т., 458-іс. 1–3-пп.

Рис. 4–5. Письмо Ақмолинского губернатора Степному генерал-губернатору с сообщением епископа Авралья о необходимости открытия миссионерского стана. Источник: Центральный государственный архив Республики Казахстан. Ф. 64. Оп. 1. Д. 458. Л. 1–3.

letter from the governor of Akmola to the governor-general of the steppe, concerning the opening of a missionary camp in Shuchinsk, Kokshetau district, it is stated that Bishop Avrally preached the doctrine of the Gospel among the Qazaqs, distributed the Holy Scriptures so that they could get to know them better, and called on them to convert to Christianity. But if not one and a half Qazaqs, then many did not have the desire to convert to this religion. The Qazaq villages located near the Russian settlement, however, welcomed the significance of the opening of a mission camp in the Shuchinsk.<sup>4</sup> This is just one example of an event related to the baptism of Qazaqs. And how many letters of this content are kept in the archives.

After analysing the above-mentioned letters, it becomes clear what the tsarist government's ultimate goal was with its missionary activity. Firstly, it was to introduce evangelical doctrine to the Qazaqs through preaching, i.e. baptism, and secondly, to gradually abolish their traditions, which they adhered to without suppression. The main obstacle to the spread of Christianity was therefore Islam, which had to be weakened and taken for granted. The tsarist government, which tried to baptise the Qazaqs, forbade the conversion of sedentary Russians to the Muslim faith. And those who converted to Islam were especially interrogated and tried to return to their religion. For example, the Semirechye regional administration of 26 March 1910 states that the Russian

<sup>4</sup> CSA RQ, h. 64, r. 1, f. 458, fol. 1–3.

girl Fedosia, after being harassed by her mother Elena and expelled from her home, agreed to marry the sarta named Hiyar Sudkanguev, converted to Islam and changed her name to Mendizhamal in accordance with the Islamic treaty. However, when the local elections were approaching, she was forcibly taken home by a police officer named Denisov. She was questioned as to why she had converted to the Muslim faith. At the same time, her husband Hiyar and her mother Elena were also questioned to find out why the girl had converted to Islam. It turned out that the girl had accepted the Muslim religion voluntarily and saw no harm from her husband, said that she would stay in this religion and ran back to her husband [Batmanov et al. 2009: 200–202].

Missionaries such as Alektorov and Katarinsky, who were sent to the Qazaq territories, fulfilled their mission by publishing textbooks for Qazaqs. For example, Alektorov, who was the inspector of the primary schools in the Turgai region, published the book "Russian-Qazaq Abc Book – the Step to Wisdom" in 1892, which contained about 1300 words of the Qazaq language. In it, he compiled the Qazaq alphabet based on the Russian alphabet, which consists of 38 letters [Alektorov 1891: 114]. In 1898, the first part of his book "Kyrgyz Textbook. Collected articles for translation into Russian for teaching and home reading" was published [Alektorov 1898]. These two textbooks were taught for many years in the Russian indigenous schools in the Qazaq steppes. In 1897, Katarinsky's book "Grammar of the Kyrgyz Language. Phonetics, Etymology and Syntax" was published. Like Ilminsky, he proposed a draft alphabet [Katarinsky 1897].

Missionary Ostroumov also made great efforts to change the religious views of the Qazaq people. In 1870, he was elected associate professor of the missionary department of the Kazan Academy of Religion. His missionary work was reflected in the position of secretary of the holy brotherhood of Gurius. He was interested in the education of the natives and saw the great benefit of the school in changing their religious views. The representatives of the missionary organisation in Kazan immediately supported the proposal that the goal could be achieved by opening missionary schools for non-Christians. As part of his missionary and pedagogical system, he also emphasised the importance of training teachers from among the locals, and in the years 1872–1877 he worked in this direction when he taught at the Kazan Teachers' Seminary [Otchjot 1876: 6–7]. Ostroumov's missionary work, during which he visited villages and localities, also manifested itself in agitation to bring Christians who had lost hope in the Orthodox Church back to their religion in order to read Christian teachings by deceiving Muslim believers. In 1877, Ostroumov was appointed inspector of the public school in the Turkestan region and travelled to Tashkent, where he had to stop his missionary work. However, he did not give up on the importance of standardising "language, religion and traditions" in the region, i.e. pursuing a policy of Russification. "With their religious teachings, it is unlikely that the Muslims can live in peace with the Christians," he argued, proving the extreme danger that Islam posed to Russia [Ostroumov 1883; Ostroumov 1891]. In June 1910, at the congress of missionaries in Kazan, he openly declared the strength of Muslim doctrine and the weakening of Christianity [Missionerskij s'ezd 1910: 343–345]. As early as 1870, Ostroumov endeavoured to study Islam in a scientific manner. After the master's work "Critical Discussion of the Teachings of the Mohammedans on the Holy Scriptures" (1870), "The Position of the Mohammedans in the Month of Ramadan" (1877), the journal "Orthodox Interlocutor" "Discussion of the Teachings of the Mohammedans on the Face of Our Jesus Christ", "The Teachings of the Muhammadans on the Life of Man in Connection with the Study of the End of the World", "The Teachings of the Muhammadans on the Holy Trinity in General and the Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit", "The Teachings of the Mukhammedans on the Spiritual World" and others were published. In pedagogical work, more and more attention is being paid to the path of religion, the need for education has begun to develop from the "old" path in a new direction. Ostroumov made this clear in his report on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the teachers' seminar in Turkestan. He quoted: "The task of the Russian – state is to enable the Kyrgyz to join the Russians and create a complete political–state

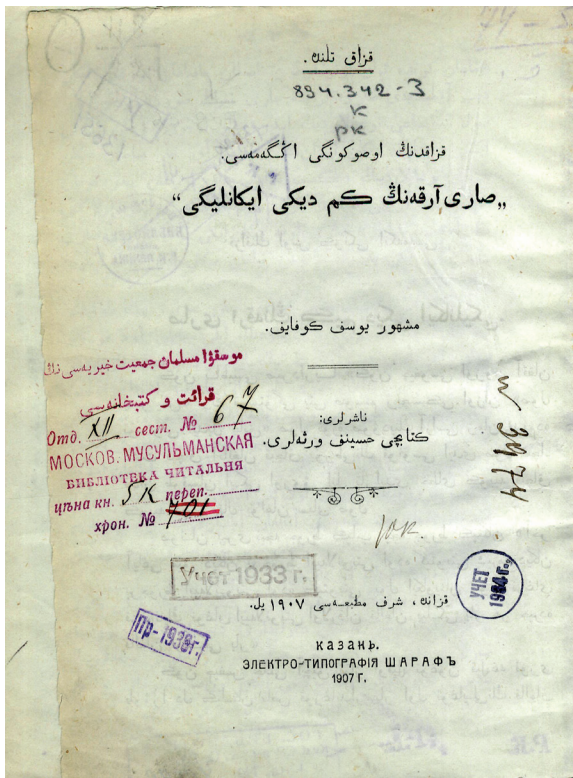


Fig. 6. The title page of Mashkhur-Zhusup Kopeev's book

6-сур. Машхур-Жүсіп Көпеев кітабының титулды парағы

Рис. 6. Титульный лист книги Машхур-Жусупа Копеева

organism" [Ostroumov 1904: 25]. In this way, he was able to clearly express the deeds that the missionary direction prescribed for him.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were 119 Russian schools in Syrdarya, Fergana, Samarkand, which belonged to the Turkestan governor-general, 5246 Muslim madrasas, 6 Orthodox churches in Fergana, 6134 Muslim mosques [Dukhovskoy 1899: 13]. The Turkestan general Dukhovskoy came to the conclusion that the following obstacles made it difficult to join the Russians by baptizing the Muslims

- 1) *The transition of Muslim believers to Christian culture is hindered by Islam. A true Muslim who believes in the Koran and Sharia cannot be a true friend of a Christian;*
- 2) *Sufism is particularly dangerous for us and therefore requires strict control;*
- 3) *Islam, which has so far been ignored by Russian society and the Russian government, is growing stronger, uniting and becoming an enemy against our state duty. The spread of pan-Islamic ideas in Turkey and among our Tatars makes them extremely harmful to our political relations.*
- 4) *Further disregard for Islam is not only unnecessary but also impossible.*
- 5) *The Turkestan region, one of the religiously and ethnographically united centers of Muslims influenced by the teachings of Sufism, deserves special attention.*

Dukhovskoy argued that the russification of Muslims could be achieved by weakening their aspirations [Dukhovskoy 1899: 9].

From 1884 to 1891, four congresses of missionaries were held in Kazan, Siberia and Moscow. The aim of these congresses was to determine the importance of the path to be taken in implementing the theme of baptism. Departments were set up in religious seminaries to train missionaries. One such department was set up in the Orenburg seminary, and lectures were given

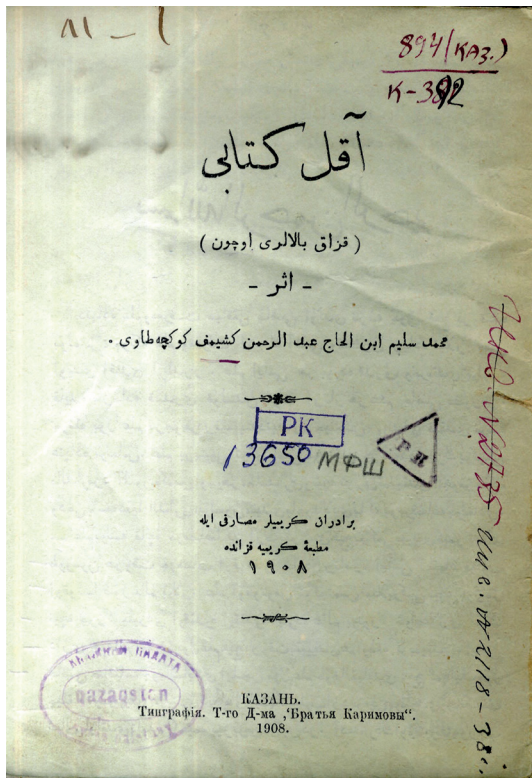


Fig. 7. The title page of Muhammad-Salim Kashimov's book  
7-сур. Мұхаммед-Сәлім Кәшімов кітабының  
титұлды парағы  
Рис. 7. Титульный лист книги Мұхаммед-Сали-  
ма Кашимова

in the language of the local population [Korzun 1984: 177, 179]. In 1896, the Russian Ministry of Religious Affairs published the Charter of Religious Affairs, in which foreigners repented and defined the legal regulations for the communities on the territory of the Russian Empire. The Charter established the leading position of the Orthodox Church. The "external" mission of the Orthodox Church was to spread the teachings of Orthodoxy among the representatives of non-Christian denominations, such as Muslims, Buddhists and pagans [Tishkov 1994: 41].

The arrival in Qazaqstan of Poles who had been exiled to Siberia at the beginning of the twentieth century and the settlement of Catholic Germans and Latvians from the European part of Russia in the region paved the way for a broad rise of this religion. After the establishment of Soviet power, Catholic churches and houses began to grow in the cities of Qazaqstan. In 1917, there were 6 thousand Catholics in Kostanay. In Qazaqstan, the Protestant branch began to spread after the annexation to Russia. The spread of this religion on the territory of Qazaqstan was caused by the Germans of the Lutheran faith in the Russian army and later by the influx of officials and peasants who professed this religion. Protestant means "open proof" in Latin and originated in medieval Europe as an action against the Catholic Church during the reform movement.

In the second half of the XIX and the beginning of the XX century, the publications "Missionary News", "The Missionary Review", "The Missionary Collection", "Missionary Antimuslim Collection" and others appeared, which dealt with the problem of Christianisation and orthodoxy. In order to intensify missionary activity, a special Council for Missionary Work was created at the Holy Synod in the spring of 1908, and in July of the same year a new "Decree on the Organisation of the External Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church" was issued, which involved all parishioners and the Orthodox population in the missionary activity of the Church. This "decree" "was supported at the IV All-Russian Missionary Congress in Kiev in July 1908, and a resolution was passed in connection with the "external" "mission", and at the Missionary Congress in October 1910 the

question of promoting missionary work among the "natives" and pagans was raised, which advocated the training of national teachers and the education of the "natives" in the Church's primary schools. From the end of 1908 until the 1910s, the activities of the "external" mission of the Orthodox Church increased. In 1911, monasteries with schools and orphanages for children of followers of the old tradition (staroobyradtsy) and "natives" also joined the church mission by organising missionary courses and providing medical aid to the pagans [Knyazeva 2000].

The publication of religious works intensified the missionaries' propaganda activities among the population. As a result of the intensification of missionary activity, the number of converts to Orthodoxy in the Russian Empire increased from year to year. At the optimal time, however, there were also some of our intellectuals who courageously took up the pen. One dealt with the land question, another with the problems of doctrine, another with criticising religious restrictions and tried to convey his thoughts through the periodical press and the Duma pulpit.

The publication of Nicholas II's "Decree on Granting Freedom of Speech and the Press" on February 18, 1905, led to significant changes in the socio-political life of the Qazaq people. Representatives of the Qazaq intelligentsia greeted this decision with great joy. Alikhan Bukeikhan said: "The whole steppe has been drawn into politics, and the freedom movement has entered the floodplain" [Bukeikhanov 1910: 596–597], and the lawyer Muhammedjan Tynyshpaev said: "The rescript of February 18 gave all people the right to express their concerns and submit petitions" [Tynyshpaev 1993: 26].

In the summer of that year, several petitions were sent to the highest authorities by prominent representatives of the Qazaq people who had joined the political struggle. They clearly demanded a solution to the religious and land question. In 1905, the petition organised at the Koyandy Fair on 26 June, signed by 14,500 people and sent to the Committee of Ministers, stated that the construction of madrasas and mosques could only be decided with the permission of the Governor-General of the Steppe, demanded freedom of religion, the creation of a religious office for the Qazaqs of the steppe region that would not obey the administration, and a ban on the publication of religious books.<sup>5</sup> In the complaint of the Qazaqs, which was sent by the Semipalatinsk region to the Minister of the Interior for approval in June of the same year, the Qazaqs were designated as Muslim Qazaqs and exempted from military service, as the Qazaqs were placed under the Orenburg religious administration in 1868, the Qazaqs were given the freedom to establish a madrasa and a mosque, to teach Arabic, Persian and Turkish in a madrasa, to undertake a pilgrimage, to visit the Kaaba and to acquire a pilgrimage pass, which was reserved for Orthodox pilgrims. The reason given for this demand is that they should stop sending missionaries and not force Qazaqs to join a foreign religion that they do not recognise, and that those who have joined another religion should be allowed to return to the Muslim faith, and that Orthodox priests should also be shown respect for Muslim clergy.<sup>6</sup>

The acceptance of the general demands and their transmission to the highest levels of government marked the beginning of the common struggle of the nation's citizens against the colonial policy. After that, in large gatherings the Qazaq intelligentsia openly opposed the colonial policy of the Russian Empire towards the native people and made demands of a democratic nature. For example, Muhammedjan Tynyshpaev, one of the Qazaq intellectuals, criticized the wrong spiritual and religious relations of the Qazaqs under the "temporary rule" of the tsarist government in a letter to the chairman of the Committee of Ministers.

*This approach to the administration of the Kyrgyz is completely wrong from a spiritual and religious point of view, as the competence of the officials of various institutions to know the commandments of the Muslim religion is highly questionable. The lack of positive, clearly defined regulations relevant to the modern conditions of Kyrgyz life has led to the authorities issuing numerous circulars, orders,*

<sup>5</sup> CSA RQ, h. 64, r. 1, f. 2053, fol. 13–14

<sup>6</sup> CSA RQ, h. 64, r. 1, f. 5658, fol. 17–20

*regulations, etc. that are incompatible with the principle of religious tolerance, and every official considers it his duty to interfere in our religious affairs. – The closure of mosques and prayer houses, blasphemy and desecration of the Koran and our religion, the ban on teaching our faith in the institutions where our children study, the administration's increased support for missionaries who preach Christianity among us, and imprisonment and other punishments meted out to those who demand just and legitimate justification for such acts – these are some eloquent examples of the lawlessness and arbitrariness that prevail in our steppe, – he considered it illegal to close mosques and prayer houses and all restrictions on the Muslim religion [Tynyshpaev 1993: 15–16].*

Muhammedjan Tynyshpaev emphasised in the "Temporary Rule" of the Kyrgyz (Qazaqs. – S.S.) that all articles on the administration of spiritual affairs are oppressive for the Kyrgyz, do not fit into the life of the Kyrgyz, and raised the need to give full freedom to the spiritual and religious relations of the Qazaqs. He:

- a) Transfer of all Qazaq spiritual and religious affairs from the jurisdiction of various administrative institutions to a special Qazaq religious assembly headed by the Qazaq mufti and independence of the mufti from the administrative institutions and the Missionary Society;*
- b) Construction of mosques, places of worship and madrasas without the permission of the Russian government;*
- c) Abolition of control (censorship) of religious books in the Kyrgyz (Qazaq), Arabic and Tatar languages;*
- (d) Submission of the metrical book to the Qazaq religious administration;*
- (e) conditions such as allowing open opposition and discussions with missionaries without administrative support were considered binding by the authorities.*

Here Tynyshpaev showed that repression in religious matters was a serious violation of human rights.<sup>7</sup> In his report to the first congress of the "Union of Autonomists" on 19 November 1905, it also becomes clear that the "Union of Autonomists" was not a religious organisation. In his report of 19 November 1905, it becomes clear that the encroachment on the spiritual and religious freedom of the Qazaqs, the closure of mosques and places of worship, madrasas and the confiscation of religious books, the threat of deportation to Siberia of those who refused to convert to Christianity, the adoption of another religion with guns and swords, the russification of the education system through the efforts of missionary teachers – all this is a policy of intimidation, humiliation of the government, said. «...The Qazaqs realised that there had not been a single happy day or minute since their subjugation to the Russians," and expressed the opinion that government pressure was increasing [Begmanova 2001: 35]. Muhammedjan Tynyshpaev considered the interference of the tsarist government in the spiritual life of another nation, the suppression of encroachment, the suppression of spiritual dependence on the nation's traditions, and advocated the need to uphold both language and religion in order to preserve the national spirit.

It is no coincidence that Alikhan Bukeikhan, in his speech at the Congress of Local and Urban Leaders held in Moscow in November 1905, raised the issue of religious freedom as one of the most important needs of the Qazaq people. And in the extensive work "Kyrgyz", Qazaqs until the second half of the XIX century were indifferent to religion, or rather, Islam, and only a few went to Mecca, and in the XX century from the beginning, from the Governor-General of Omsk in 1905, it was possible to find out that 500 people immediately received passports to go to Mecca, and under the pretext of not enough money, and so on, the head of the peasants tried not to send them, this was known from saved notes. The Tatars who tried to promote Islam were persecuted from the Qazaq land, and the administration obliged the teachers who taught in the Qazaq schools to master the Russian language, and the missionaries, despite the propaganda among the Qazaqs, could only force random orphans wandering in Russian villages and two

<sup>7</sup> CSA RQ, h. 380, r. 1, f. 1, fol. 132–140

young people in love who tried to escape in this way to accept Orthodoxy. He did not hide the fact that the Qazaqs were harassed and abused and gave several convincing examples of the persecution of Islamic believers [Aqqulyuly 1995: 73–75].

in 1905 Bakytzhan Karatayev, Gubaydolla Berdiyev, Mirali Bakytgereev, Ihsan Tokberdiyev, Khalel Dosmukhamedov, Nurgali Ipmagambetov, Mukhambetkali Mukanov, Gabdolkarim Rakhimberdiyev, Izbarov and Umitali Dyusembins decided to found a Constitutional Democratic Party in Uralsk and devoted special attention to the question of religion in a specially drafted programme. It stated that every citizen should be allowed a wide range of religious beliefs, that they should not be persecuted and punished for his religious beliefs or for changing his religion or leaving religion altogether and for his opinion on religion, that the promotion of his religion should not be blocked, that all Muslims of the Russian Empire, including Qazaqs and Tatars and other religious peoples, should have the right to speak their native language at meetings and gatherings. It was stipulated that there should be neither a shortage nor a proliferation of religions, that the choice of muftis, aldermen and mullahs should be at the discretion of the community, that the building of mosques and madrasas should not be hindered, that the laws of the Russian Empire should apply to Islam and that the permission of the Akim had to be obtained when it came to the question of religion [Qoigeldiev 2004: 55, 58].

In 1907, on the initiative of Shaimerden Kosshygulov, a member of the State Duma, he published the newspaper "Serke". This newspaper was a supplement to the Tatar newspaper "Ulfat". However, its fate did not last long; after three or four issues it was discontinued under the pretext of a religious orientation. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the missionary orientation increased in Qazaqstan, the preachers of the Islamic religion began to promote the Muslim religion and publish religious books in response to their actions. According to scholars Sheriazdan Eleukenov and Zhumagiz Shalgynbaeva, the number of printed books reached 149 publications [Eleukenov, Shalgynbaeva 1999: 100].

At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Jadid movement flourished, the publication of religious books in Central Asia increased considerably. The number of madrasas in this direction also grew, and in addition to religious instruction, lectures on history, arithmetic, geography and other subjects were now also offered. Religious content Mukhametsalim Kashimov (1884–1935) "Nasihah qazaqiya" (1908), Mashkhur Zhusup Kopeev (1858–1931) "Whose Saryarka?" Books such as "Khal ahual", Makash Kaltayev's "Nasihah Qazaqiya", "Bar uakiaga", "Tura Zhol" (1907), Kenzhegali Syrgalin's (Kenzhegali Syrgalieovich Gabdullin, 1896–1937) "Qazaq Qamy" (1913) and others were widely distributed among the population. The historical significance of these books lies in the fact that some of them were dedicated to children's education, but were religious in nature. Under the strict control of the Tsarist government, it was not possible to openly promote religion. Moreover, the war between Russia and Turkey prevented the rise of the Muslim religion, including Jadidism, and on the contrary encouraged the spread of Christianity among the Muslim peoples. However, the tsarist authorities continued the policy of russification by sending missionaries to the Qazaq steppes and repeatedly explaining the importance of winning Qazaqs to Christianity and baptising them. In this way, he led many Qazaq families and even some Volosts to Christianity and settled them. Moreover, the minds of the peoples were poisoned, deceived and promised benefits if they converted to Christianity, and they began to take an interest in those who converted to this religion and gave them Russian names.

The Qazaq mullahs were restricted in their activities, which made them appear backward and ignorant to the population. Fearing the rise of pan-Islamism in Qazaqstan, the government initiated criminal proceedings against the popular clerics for one reason or another, especially against Nauan Hazret (1841–1914) and Shaimerden Kosshygulov (1874–1932), who were sent into exile and strictly controlled. In the madrasa, the lecturer also restricted the activities of the

Tatar mullahs. Despite such obstacles, however, the Qazaq intelligentsia managed to establish contacts with Muslims in Turkey and Russia and unite in an idea on the path to freedom.

In the period before the February Revolution of 1917, several textbooks and manuals for Qazaq schools and madrasas were published in the direction of Jadhism. However, the textbook by Akhmet Baitursynov (1872–1937) was not widely distributed among the population. However, the publication of these textbooks shows that the education system developed at least a little during this period. It can therefore be said that they were of enormous importance.

## Conclusion

The Qazaq national intelligentsia testified that the Russian Empire tried to turn the indigenous people into a nation that submits to what it says and stands up for what it says by putting pressure on their religion, their conscience.

In general, religion is a very important issue in Qazaq society. It is unfortunate that the Soviet system continued the tsarist policy towards religion and kept it under strict control and pressure without granting it religious freedom until independence was achieved. It is safe to say that the views of the country's intelligentsia on religion are very important today. Their thoughts and conclusions, their judgements enable us to understand the teachings of traditional religion.

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