

Trends of the religiosity in a secular state: the reconstructing experience in the modern Kazakhstan

Abstract

An overview of the state and trends of religiosity in modern Kazakhstan on the basis of sociological measurements is offered. Since the beginning of the 90s, under the conditions of worldview pluralism and the absence of constitutional restrictions on the binding of a certain ideology, the role and the purpose of the religion in Kazakhstani society has substantially transformed. The functions of religion as an institution of socialization turned out to be in demand against the backdrop of a decline in the worldview influence of other institutions of socialization: family, education and media. Scientific research focuses on the dynamics of religious conversion. The authorities and society are concerned about the involvement of Kazakhstani citizens in religious institutions and practices that are not traditional for the mental culture, in the patterns of islamization, evangelism, and neo-orientalism. The government is trying to develop an optimal model of secularism and find a consensus of interests of various religious institutions, believers and non-believers fellow citizens. The main results of the reconstruction of religiosity were obtained at the Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies on the basis of sociological measurements that have been carried out since the early 2000s as part of the implementation of fundamental and applied projects. On the basis of various measurements of the processes of religiosity, the methods of qualitative and quantitative sociology and the subsequent interdisciplinary theoretical reconstruction make it possible to reproduce the contours of the religious situation, detect trends, develop models, and provide the predictive estimates for stakeholders. Practical recommendations on the results of comprehensive studies of religiosity are demanded by the government bodies, experts, and researchers. Some results are reflected in scientific articles and monographs. The proposed article presents integrated results and conclusions on the identified topics.

Keywords: secularity, conversion, religious trends, islamization, evangelism, and neo-orientalism, sociology of religiosity

Volume 4 Issue 1 - 2020

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Received: January 27, 2020 | **Published:** February 17, 2020

Introduction

The purpose of the following article is to give a brief overview of the phenomenon of religiosity in modern Kazakhstan on the basis of state statistics and sociological measurements that have been carried out within twenty years. The sociology of religiosity provides opportunities to identify the condition/status, to detect and research trends of the worldview mentality under conditions of transformation of Kazakhstani society. The institute of religion in the post-totalitarian conditions is experiencing a revival, acquiring new opportunities and exerting influence in domestic and foreign policy, in the socialization of young generations, in their everyday practices. Along with the positive possibilities of the institutional influence of religion, risks are associated with loss of identity, which are associated with manifestations of quasi-religiosity in the context of radicalization and denial of the secular nature of the state.

The institute of religion and the manifestation of religiosity are pushed to the forefront of research that requires the use of interdisciplinary methods and strategies. This is especially important in the context of the formation of the sociology of religion in Kazakhstani scientific practice. The format of the brief review requires conciseness and provides the possibility of links to published research results.

Religious statistics

As for Kazakhstan, according to state statistics in the end of 2018 there are 3720 religious organizations of the 18 denomination were registered, which is 2593 - Islamic, 591 - Protestant, 339 - Orthodox, 86 - Catholic, 60 - Jehovah's Witnesses, 26 - the New Apostolic Church, 8 - Society Krishna Consciousness, 7 - Jewish, 6 - Bahai, 2 - Buddhism, 2 - The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), 1 - Moonites.

In total there are 3502 religious buildings (including 2592 - mosques, 407 - Protestant prayer houses, 301 - an Orthodox church, 110 - Catholic churches, 54 - prayer houses of Jehovah's Witnesses, 26 - prayer houses of the New Apostolic Church, 6 - synagogues, 3 - Bahai houses of worship, 2 - houses of worship of the religious association "Society of Krishna Consciousness", 1 - Buddhist temple). 554 missionaries are officially registered (Roman Catholic Church - 268, Orthodox Church of Kazakhstan - 84, Islamic Theological Board of Kazakhstan - 30, Pentecostal churches - 39, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and Presbyterian Church - 31, New Apostolic Church - 30, Baptists - 15, Lutherans - 9, Seventh-day Adventists and Krishna consciousness society - 7, Judaism - 3, Buddhists and Jehovah's Witnesses - 1); 435 of them are foreign citizens and 119 are citizens of Kazakhstan.

There are 15 religious educational organizations, 400 primary courses at mosques and Sunday schools, 383 premises for religious events outside religious buildings, including namazhana, prayer rooms and chapels. 257 special stationary premises for the dissemination of religious literature and other information materials of religious content, religious subjects were identified.¹

According to experts, there are unregistered religious organizations of different confessional orientation in the country. The so-called Islamic “sleeping cells”, conspiratorial jamaats (the number of which is not known) could have more than 20 thousand participants.² Statistics of registered religious organizations in relation to unregistered organizations by state bodies are not carried out.

Kazakhstan is a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic state, whose citizens during the period of sovereignty (since the 90s) have been redefining their identity, including the religious component. It was necessary to identify a model of religiosity, analyze the characteristics and trends of the development of the religious situation, and critically evaluate the trends. Statistics of the ratio of religious and non-religious populations are not conducted in accordance with the constitutional principle of freedom of conscience. Therefore, only sociological measurements of the phenomenon of religiosity create opportunities to determine the extent and trends of religiosity of the population.

Since the mid-2000s sociological measurements of religiosity were carried out in the context of the research of the common Kazakhstani identity, studying the phenomenon of “new religiosity”^{3,4} and the activities of new religious organizations, analyzing the processes of religious conversion,^{5,6} the interaction of secularism and religiosity in a lifestyle. In this regard, the following were investigated: 1) the evaluation positions of various reference groups on the institutions of religion, its influence and significance in society and the individual; 2) attitudes toward traditional and new religions; 3) perception and evaluation of the religious identification of the inner circle; 4) worldview self-identification, 5) perception of processes and results of religious conversion, 6) risks of radicalization based on quasi-religious motives, 7) preferences of secular or religious vector of development of the state and other concepts.

Material and methods

The general orientation and methodology of the study is complex, as on disciplinary specifics (philosophical, sociological, religious studies). The prerequisites for choosing a methodology are determined by the tendencies of a change in the paradigmatic foundations of socio-humanitarian knowledge that have become as textbooks and the formation of a new class of social theories. The latter “grow” out of specific social studies of modern societies, their fluctuations.

Methods and approaches are associated with the substantiation of the subject of research, the development of the methodology of a specific social research and at the stages of the initial empirical analysis and theoretical reconstruction included: comparative studies, visualization, abstraction, phenomenological reconstruction, hermeneutic analysis, narrative method, conceptualization, and modeling.

It should be recognized that the concepts formulated by Z. Bauman on non-linearity and the inability to guarantee the uniquely fixed identity in modern conditions are working.⁸ A methodology for the study of identity depending on the contexts of its functioning, taking

into account the realities of modernity (modernization, the formation of the world system and globalization, economics and consumerism), was proposed by Russian researchers.⁹

The methodological assumptions and methodological equipment of the studies presented in the review include both general scientific and specific scientific methods, approaches, strategies necessary for different stages and levels of research and analysis of ideological identity, including - cluster analysis of identity research in multidisciplinary paradigms.¹⁰

Methods for solution of the tasks arise from the problem-thematic context and nature of the study, are based on a theoretical interpretation of the data of the empirical stage of sociological research and are built on explications, comparisons, generalizations, conceptualizations. The formation and conceptualization of sociological dimensions opens an opportunity of studying the dynamics of identity.¹¹

The applied methodology, methods and research approaches allowed to empirically fix, verify, conceptualize rather complex processes of world-outlook identity, and interpret their trends. The research is based on the data of sociological measurements of identity, which have been conducted at the Institute of Philosophy, political Science and religious Studies of the Committee of Science of the Ministry of Education and Science in different years.

As a result of social measurements, the database of representative data which reflects the state of worldview mentality was created. The implementation of the latest methods of data collection and statistical processing has created opportunities for sampling correlation dependencies with subsequent empirical and theoretical interpretation. The Quantificational measurements allow to allocate volumes, scale and contour characteristics of the worldview identity, to describe their properties from the standpoint of representation in gender, age, ethnic, educational, social, professional, settlement, property, regional content. This opens up opportunities for comparative analysis of the mentioned markers.

At the same time, Data from the analysis of the arrays of sociological measurements of public opinion conducted in 2011-2018, covering 16 regions, in 2011. - 17 regions, Astana city (renamed in 2019 in Nur Sultan), Almaty, Shymkent. A representative national sample was used in the 2011-2019 studies. The general aggregate is citizens of Kazakhstan at the age of 18+. Respondents are represented by the most important socio-demographic groups taking into account gender, age, education, socio-professional status, ethnicity, income level, belonging to the settlement structure, etc. The initial data on the proportionality of these groups in the population are taken from statistical data and are strictly observed when sampling. Representation in the sample of the structure of the general population was ensured by multi-stage selection of respondents - stratified at the stage of selection of survey points, interval at the stage of selection of households, simple random at the stage of selection of the respondent in the household. The methodology of sociological research is developed by the authors, the field stage and empirical processing is carried out by professional sociological structures. In 2011-2017 - Public Association “Scientific Association “Institute of Democracy” (Astana), in 2018-2019. - Center for Business Information, Sociological and Marketing Research “BISAM –Central Asia”. We used the method of personal formalized interviews at the respondent’s apartment using the tablet survey technique (CAPI / TAPI technique)

and processed using specialized IBM SPSS software. The sample in 2019 amounted to 1800 respondents according to the territorial and settlement structure.

Hypotheses

1. In connection with the lack of statistics on the number of believers and non-believers in Kazakhstan, mythologems about the institution of religion were formed as an effective tool that can form an effective modern value context of society, that is, to fill the need for values, goals and ideals of development. Since the 1990's, many publicists, journalists, and researchers have argued that 80-90% of the country's adult population is believers. This mythological requires verification.
2. The mentality of the Kazakhstani people is hybrid: It combines both secular and religious values and norms with a whimsical blend. It can be assumed that religious traditions, norms and ideals do not appear as the most significant for different social groups, but are of paramount importance to the faithful population.

3. Self-identification of the population according to the criterion of religious faith and religious way of life reveals the model and structure of the religiosity of the population.
4. Monitoring studies of religiosity reveal its scale, dynamics, trends, regional features.
5. In order to explore the possibilities and limits of religion as an institution, it is necessary not only to its sociological projections (through research on religious identity), but also to its influence on the world view in comparison with other social institutions.
6. The discovery of functions and the analysis of assessments of the impact of religion on the life contexts of the population indicate trends in its influence and opportunities, both positive and negative.
7. Differentiation of religions to traditional (Islam of Hanafi mahzab and Orthodox Christianity) and new for sociocultural situation in Kazakhstan allows to reveal trends of religious conversion and to study the attitude of the population to state policy (ideologems) in the field of religion.

Results

Religious freedom is a constitutional principle, which implies that citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan freely choose a religious or secular system of values. This choice conceptualizes the value-semantic attitudes in the field of religion and state-confessional relations in general. The Kazakhstani people most often combine two systems of values: religious and secular, the boundaries between them are blurred, which reflects the specifics of the real established religiosity of the population. Religiosity is diffuse, fragmentary, and contradictory. Both believers and non-believers and atheists display the most bizarre combinations of value-setting. The value system is hybrid, the values of pragmatism and liberalism crowd out universal and moral-spiritual values, a transition is being made from the old value paradigm of society to a new, emerging one. (Table 1) ¹ Religious norms	9,8	14,7	9,3	9,2
Both religious and secular norms	36,1	39,5	31,2	27,6
Not sure	14,6	14,1	32,1	40,8

Table 1 What values and norms are most acceptable for you, your family, your colleagues, your neighbors? (2019, N = 1800,%)

	For you	For your family	For your colleagues	For your neighbors
Secular norms	39,5	31,7	27,4	22,4

i. The re-presentation of the functions of religion in the space of Kazakhstan's life indicated the priority of their ranking by

respondents are following:

¹The results of mass adult survey (18+) according to the multi-stage representative sample, which reflects the peculiarities of the territorial, semi-age and ethnic structure of the population of Kazakhstan, which as of 01.11.2019 was 18,592,730 people, are given here and further. The tables explain the year of study and the sample population. Differentiation by respondents to a particular religion in the data presented (except in table 9) is not interpreted due to the review nature of the publication.

existential (brings calm, helps to endure difficulties; helps alleviate feelings and pain), worldview and sense-forming (spiritual enrichment; helps to find the meaning of life; helps to cleanse the soul, repentance; shows the way to save the soul, the path to eternal life), regulatory (prescribes standards of behavior in everyday life), communicative (unites with co-religionians).

The volume of positive functions of religion significantly exceeds the share of negative influence, among them: fostering passivity, humility; a call for an ascetic lifestyle; pulling away from solving specific life problems; the separation of people from different faiths; instrument of destructive impact on Kazakhstani society from abroad; limiter of the influence of modern communication technologies, information; incentive for “color revolutions”. Religion and religiosity gain new often too politically accentuated, statuses in Kazakhstan, therefore it is important to understand the mechanisms of the development of the religious sphere of society, to record its scale, intensity, and to prevent negative influences.

- ii. A comparative analysis of the positive impact of social institutions revealed that religion has not yet become a leading institution that contributes to the unity of Kazakhstani society and ranks last in the series Family - Education - State-Internet

- Media - Religion. The family is assessed by respondents as a more significant institution, having an influence on the formation of a value consciousness. Religion in this hierarchy takes the last place (Table 2).

- iii. As a result of monitoring studies of religiosity, such trends were revealed as: The increase in the popularity of religion in the mass consciousness; recognition of the expanding diversity of religious beliefs, practices; accentuated attitude toward atheism and atheists. A study of the relationship to these trends showed the following. The Kazakhstani people mainly positively (84%) estimate the increase in the popularity of religion in society, with restraint (44.1% - “for” and 36.6% - “against”) speak out about religious pluralism and mainly negatively (42% - “negative” and 25.9% - “positive”) perceive the increase in the number of atheistic convinced fellow citizens (Table 3).

Table 2 Hierarchy of the positive impact of social institutions on the development of society, strengthening harmony, unity and prosperity (2019, N = 1800,%)

Values/Institutions	Family	Education	State	Internet	Media	Religion (All religious currents)
Yes, definitely	89,6	77,2	70,1	47,8	44,9	43,6
Yes, partly	7,2	17,8	22,5	34,4	35,0	35,5
No, never	1,0	2,3	4,0	11,0	12,3	11,8
Not sure	2,2	2,7	3,5	6,8	7,8	9,1

Table 3 How would you rate the following statements...? (2019, N = 1800,%)

Statements	Significance	%
Religion is becoming more and more popular among Kazakhstani people	Positively	84,0
	Negatively	7,0
	Not sure	9,0
In modern Kazakhstan, there are more and more representatives of various religions and religious movements.	Positively	44,1
	Negatively	36,6
	Not sure	19,3
In modern Kazakhstan, becoming an atheist is becoming more and more popular	Positively	25,9
	Negatively	42,8
	Not sure	31,4

- iv. During the Soviet period, the ideologue of the need for continuous atheization of society advanced and religion had mainly negative connotations in the mass consciousness. Since the 90's. The institution of religion receives new interpretations in the state ideology, the period of religious diversity comes and religion

as an institution is perceived by the mass consciousness mainly positively. In the perception of the effectiveness of the influence of religion on the life of modern Kazakh society, multi-polar positions are manifested. Positive impact assessments prevail. (Table 4)

Table 4 How does religion (all religious currents) affect the life of modern Kazakhstan society? (2019, N=1800, %)

Connotation	%
Positively	53,3
Rather positively	24,2
Rather negatively	2,6
Negatively	1,0
Doesn't affect	11,6
Not sure	7,3

More than half of the respondents believe that religion as a whole cannot contribute to aggressiveness and radicalization of public relations, since it is generally positive for society (56.5%), while 12.6% believe that religion can be aggressive and lead to radicalism. 12.2% agree with the statement that so far the level of radicalism is small, but it will increase.

- v. The hierarchy of factors and actors that influence the choice of worldview over the course of twenty years shows that the most significant factors in the formation of a worldview have a direct correlation with the functions of the most important social institutions. Undoubtedly, the family and the direct influence of the immediate environment - 78.1%, are the primary determinants of the worldviews of Kazakhstani people. Family socialization has the main function, in contrast to the educational institution - 37.2%. The cumulative effect of spiritual needs, religious institutions and subjects (in italics) is in third place (21.6%). Every sixth respondent (15.0%) noted life circumstances, 12.4% indicate the impact of moods in society. Special literature (9.3%) is ahead of the independent search for answers (8.1%) and Internet resources (7.9%) (Table 5).

Table 5 What has influenced the choice and formation of your worldview to a greater extent? (2019, N = 1800,%)

	Total on the array of respondents
The immediate environment (relatives, friends)	78,1
Education system	37,2
Life circumstances	15,0
Perceptions in society	12,4
Spiritual need	11,3
Special literature (books, brochures)	9,3
Self-searching for the answers	8,1
Various Internet Resources	7,9
Conversations with the clergy	5,1
Influence of new tendencies on the introduction to religion	3,2
Agitation of missionaries	2,0
The impact of the activities of a religious organization	1,7

- vi. In the context of the restructuring of the institutions that form the value context of society, the family and the educational system lose their monopoly position. Media, the Internet, social networks, and new religious associations are increasingly taking a place as institutions of world-view socialization of young people. Ways of transmitting and reproducing values and norms are changing. The research has revealed that new risks are emerging due to the interruption of the continuity of traditions in young generations. In the education system, the function of educational training disappears. Educational practices are becoming less accessible to most young people, and services in this sector are commercialized.

New religious organizations, including unregistered and opposition to traditional religions and the policies of the state, provide various opportunities for worldview, labor socialization of young people. There is a new area of risks associated with the tasks of forming an intellectual and competitive generation of Kazakhstani people. Of particular concern to society is the socialization of young people on the leqals of religious radicalization of the pseudo-Islamic type. It resulted in recruitment of young Kazakhstani people and their families to participate in hostilities on the side of prohibited terrorist organizations.

SWOT - An analysis of the trends in the formation of worldview mentality summarizes trends and identifies areas of risks and threats (Table 6).

Table 6 SWOT - analysis of trends in the formation of worldview mentality

Trends in the formation of worldview mentality - SWOT analysis	
Strengths	Weaknesses
worldview pluralism	decrease of the upbringing role of education
maintaining the predominance of the status of a family institution in society	lack of proper family socialization
	the increasing role of religious institutions
	lack of authoritative spiritual mentors outside the family
	dependence of worldview on situational external factors
	the ambiguous influence of information resources (media, Internet), the increase of their negative content
Opportunities	Threats
reassessment of the role of religion and religious institutions	substitution of secular values and their corresponding life landmarks by religious
increase in the number of believers	dissentus of worldview orientations
decline in intellectual culture	loss of secularism as a vector of statehood
loss of ideological influence on the mentality	the use of media and communication for directed influences, management of protest moods

vii. Understanding of the religious identity

The adult population of the country is quite definitely self-identified in the sphere of religiosity. The prevailing trend is the choice of a worldview in accordance with ethno-cultural roots, which is positive for strengthening the traditional ethno-confessional identity associated with the Hanafi madhhab, Russian Orthodoxy, as well as with other beliefs directly determined by the culture of the peoples living in Kazakhstan.

Ethnicity is preserved as the main determinant of the choice of denomination (82.0% of Kazakhs consider themselves Islam and 75.9% of Russians - Orthodoxy). In general, in the arrays studied, 79% of respondents say that they adhere to the religion of their ethnic group. Religion is perceived by Kazakhstan people primarily as part of the ethnos culture, ethnicity remains the main determining factor in the confessional choice.

Religious identification is one of the available channels of socialization, both at the level of an individual and groups. The growth of self-identifying with believers occurs at the expense of people who are more focused on external factors of religiosity.

Factor and situational analysis of the changing religiosity of the population shows that in the mass consciousness there is a misunderstanding of the phenomenon of religious faith. This is manifested in the fact that respondents describe the external characteristics of the believer's attribution, deny the importance of spiritual authority, that is, they consider religiosity not fundamentally, but superficially.

The involvement (as self-identification) of an impressive number of respondents to "believers" without immersing them in the relevant doctrines, cult practices and religious lifestyle in general is noted. The religiousness of Kazakhstani society is "mosaic", it combines such statuses of nominal believers as "believers who do not read sacred texts", "unbelievers, but observe religious rites," "atheists are celebrating religious holidays," "believers who do not believe in God", "Believing in God, but not belonging to any religion."

Due to the lack of knowledge and unformed ideas about religion as a system of beliefs based on spiritual experience, cultural matrix, spiritual mentoring, etc., the danger of extensive distribution of quasi-religiosity arises. Модель религиозности населения

viii. Religiosity model of the population

The Kazakh mentality is dominated by the paradigm of the advantages of religious faith as such over its absence, the majority of the population who receive a positive assessment comes from unbelief to faith, and on the contrary, rejection of religious faith is predominantly negatively perceived.

Among those who belong to the believers, several subgroups are fixed: Truly believers, passively believers, imaginary believers. If we apply the classical scheme of religious self-identification, defined on the scale of "convinced believer - rather believer - hesitant - rather unbeliever - convinced unbeliever", projected on Kazakhstani realities, then it shows that convinced believers in modern Kazakhstan are no more than 15-17%, rather believers - about 35-40%, those who are vacillating - about 18%, most likely unbelievers - 12%, convinced non-believers - 13%.

Religious identity is formed not only due to internal conditions, but also under the factor influence of globalization processes. Some

characteristics of religious identification are commensurate with global and regional trends, they are a complex phenomenon, multi-component in their structure, essence, character and manifest as the simultaneous functioning of confessional and non-confessional religiosity.

Religious identity is formed in the context of the secular state and secularity of society, giving rise to a phenomenon outside of confessional identity (Table 7).

- ix. Ideologemes about religion have become important means of forming worldview concepts and transmitting in legislative acts, programs and concepts (Table 8).
- x. The ideologemes of traditional and new religions is rooted in the mass consciousness: there is a clear perception, distinction, appreciation of traditional and new religions, a differentiated understanding of their role and impact on society.

Table 7 Matrix of religious self-identification (in general, in relation to religion, without differentiation on confessions) (2014 N = 2500; 2019 N = 1800, % of the number of respondents)

	2014	2019
Believer (s), a member of the community, following religious norms	10,3	14,5
Believer (s), but not participate in religious life	56,2	65,5
Non-believer (s), but adhere to rituals	7,2	5,0
Unbeliever, but respect believers	10,6	1,4
I am indifferent to religion	7,6	4,7
Non-believer and negative attitude toward religion	4,1	0,4
A believer, but not a member of religious denominations	-	5,4
Not sure	4,0	3,2

Table 8 Assessment of the ideologemes adoption of the state-confessional policy (as a whole, according to the masses of respondents, the value "YES, I agree", %)

Ideologemes of state-confessional policy	2011	2013	2014	2018
Kazakhstan due to the demographic majority of Muslims can be attributed to the countries of the Islamic world	39,1	60,5	68,3	50,4
Kazakhstan is a multi-confessional country in which the attitude of the State toward different religions is equal	64,3	72,0	77,5	76,6
In Kazakhstan, priority is given to two main faiths - Islam and Orthodoxy	53,6	68,3	63,4	67,1

Religions, called and perceived as “traditional,” are identified with the national way of life, with the culture and type of civilization, belonging to which is natural for representatives of the ethnic group. Traditional religions have deep roots in psychology, mentality, being, the system of holidays and ceremonies, the type and way of thinking of ethnic groups, in customs. The assessment of the influence of traditional religious movements is clearly positive (72.1%). On the contrary, a distinctly negative attitude (41.6%) is recorded in relation to new religious organizations, to which the majority of the population is distrustful and cautious.

New religions are more focused on the processes of adaptation to rapidly changing sociocultural and political conditions. The main function in the conditions of transforming societies, which lose their decisive influence on the worldview, on the socialization and adaptation of individuals, is the compensatory one, since it provides “visible” protection of the individual from the consequences of depression,

despair, aggression, social vices, helps to overcome meaninglessness, gain explicit or imaginary statuses in new communities.

The high demand for effective sociotherapy generates a proposal in the format of new religions, cults and movements, the doctrinal content of which is marked by syncretism and eclecticism, axiologically diversifies.

In the context of the transformation of the social structure, the religious institutions of the new formation performed a number of socializing functions, gained many supporters from among three generations of Kazakhstanis, have strong support from international observers, patronage of Kazakhstani experts, and even claim to be traditional in the domestic sociocultural environment.

New religions and cults displace traditional religions, using modern forms and methods of manipulative influence and using the need to implement relevant functions that are not provided for one reason or another by secular and traditional religious institutions (Table 9).

Table 9 Assessment of the impact of traditional and new religions, movements and denominations in general for the array and from the position of confessional / non-confessional affiliation (2019, N = 1800,%)

Confessions, denominations	Impact Assessments	Total for an array % of respondents	Confessional identification of respondents,%		
			Islam	Orthodoxy	Do not relate to denominations
1) Islam (traditional)	Positively	73,8	81,9	62,2	25,0
	Rather positively	12,0	8,9	18,5	26,8
	Rather negatively	1,3	1,0	1,5	3,6
	Negatively	0,9	0,7	1,5	1,8
	No effect	7,2	5,1	8,1	23,2
	Not sure	4,9	2,4	8,1	19,6
2) Orthodoxy	Positively	45,5	43,7	60,0	28,6
	Rather positively	19,2	17,9	21,5	26,8
	Rather negatively	1,8	2,1	1,5	,0
	Negatively	3,8	4,7	1,5	1,8
	No effect	13,8	13,6	8,9	26,8
	Not sure	15,9	17,9	6,7	16,1
3) Catholicism	Positively	15,5	13,4	25,9	3,6
	Rather positively	13,8	13,2	14,8	21,4
	Rather negatively	4,5	5,2	3,0	1,8
	Negatively	7,0	7,7	5,9	3,6
	No effect	22,6	23,7	12,6	37,5
	Not sure	36,6	36,8	37,8	32,1
	Positively	5,9	5,4	8,9	1,8
	Rather positively	8,4	7,7	7,4	21,4

Table Continued...

Confessions, denominations	Impact Assessments	Total for an array % of respondents	Confessional identification of respondents,%		
			Islam	Orthodoxy	Do not relate to denominations
4) Judaism	Rather negatively	5,9	6,6	4,4	3,6
	Negatively	11,5	12,0	13,3	3,6
	No effect	26,3	26,7	21,5	35,7
	Not sure	41,9	41,6	44,4	33,9
	Positively	4,2	3,7	7,4	1,8
	Rather positively	5,6	5,6	2,2	14,3
5) Protestantism	Rather negatively	6,9	8,2	4,4	1,8
	Negatively	12,7	14,3	10,4	3,6
	No effect	24,2	24,2	20,0	33,9
	Not sure	46,4	44,1	55,6	44,6
	Positively	3,5	3,7	3,7	,0
	Rather positively	3,3	3,8	,0	5,4
6) Salafism	Rather negatively	7,0	7,3	7,4	5,4
	Negatively	29,0	32,6	21,5	17,9
	No effect	13,8	12,5	13,3	25,0
	Not sure	43,4	40,1	54,1	46,4
	Positively	2,2	2,4	1,5	1,8
	Rather positively	4,0	4,0	1,5	10,7
7) Krishnaites	Rather negatively	6,8	6,4	8,9	5,4
	Negatively	16,4	17,6	17,0	5,4
	No effect	21,7	21,4	20,7	28,6
	Not sure	49,0	48,1	50,4	48,2
	Positively	2,2	2,6	1,5	,0
	Rather positively	3,1	3,0	,7	7,1
8) Scientologists	Rather negatively	6,3	6,1	8,9	3,6
	Negatively	24,7	26,5	22,2	17,9
	No effect	16,2	15,7	14,8	23,2
	Not sure	47,6	46,2	51,9	48,2
	Positively	1,9	2,3	1,5	,0
	Rather positively	3,5	3,8	,7	5,4
9) Jehovah's Witnesses	Rather negatively	7,9	8,0	9,6	5,4
	Negatively	34,0	34,8	31,9	33,9
	No effect	16,0	15,0	17,0	21,4
	Not sure	36,7	36,1	39,3	33,9

xi. The phenomenon of quasi-religiosity and the risks of radicalization

Despite the high level of tolerance for different faith, a disagreement in the meanings of life is formed in society, which is due to rapid stratification, liberalization, openness to other cultures, and waste from traditions, including secular and religious.

An area of societal risks is being formed, associated with the disagreement of worldview positions, behavior, the meaning of life along the line of demarcation, secular / religious. The regions are scaled up (western and southern), where the secular context of life is narrowing. It requires a search for a balance of secular and religious in Kazakhstan, the development of effective state approaches, the unification of the interests of the state, society, religions. It is important to update the educational and worldview functions of the Institute of Education, strengthen the role of the media (printed and electronic) in the disclosure of the value bases of life.

Secular experts draw the attention of imams to enhancing the enlightenment and information work on the Internet of imams.¹² They has mentioned that there is no counter-propaganda work of the state in the Internet space, which at present has become the dominance of the ideology of various destructive movements. Today, traditional Muslim organizations have a great opportunity in information resources and personnel to organize work to promote their activities on social networks, in particular the opening of youth channels and communities

to promote and explain traditional Islam, especially in Russian, this would limit the influence of foreign content Salafi channels and would provide additional popularization of our theologians and imams, who in their charisma and knowledge are in no way inferior to their foreign to fellow colleagues.

xii. The main trends of religious conversion

The breakdown (or significant weakening) of interpersonal contacts in the post-socialist period (in the process of transition to the market) acts as an objective condition for predisposition to conversion as a way and channel of socialization through the establishment, first of all, of social, economic, and not religious, commutations.

The reconstruction of the conversion reveals that the motivations for religious conversion of Kazakhstanis are connected (in decreasing order) with the search for a way out of the existential situation, act as a means of socialization and resocialization, appear as a way of finding spiritual supports, synchronous with following the “fashion for religiosity”, and they are also the focus of resolving psychological conflicts at the individual-group level (for example, conflicts between spouses, misunderstanding between generations).

In the context of weakening the socializing influence of the family, lack of access to education and employment, lack of worldview maturity, independence and criticality of perception, religious conversion is “reachable” in the rational choice of an identification matrix (Table 10).

Table 10 How did the religious beliefs of the people who are in your circle of communication change? (2019, N=1800, %)

Connections / Subjects	Relatives and close friends	Colleagues, study comrades	Neighbors, familiar
The attitude to faith and religion has not changed, they are believers	62,1	36,8	33,1
They changed their worldview to religious, became believers	7,7	14,3	7,9
Changed the religious faith, moved to another religious community	2,2	6,8	8,1
Lost their religious views, became atheists	2,9	3,5	5,0
Do not change beliefs, were and remain atheists	3,7	3,7	3,7
They are neither believers nor atheists.	3,9	4,2	7,7
Not sure	17,5	30,7	34,4

Despite the predominance of conversion on the vector of involvement in traditional Islam and in Orthodoxy, other types of conversion receive a stable tendency to consolidation, which inevitably not only contributes, but also provides significant transformations of religious mentality. Religious identity significantly affects the lifestyle choice of an increasing number of Kazakhstanis, with three main trends associated with religious conversion:

Islamization of both potentially Muslim and traditionally non-Muslim populations, evangelization of the potentially Muslim populations and the involvement of different population groups (with potentially prescribed ethno social and cultural statuses, including traditional confessional statuses) in neo-orientalistic cults and practices (spiritual healing, psycho-training) (Table 11).

Table 11 What changes in attitude to religion or religious preferences could you mention among your immediate environment (relatives, friends, colleagues), as well as in Kazakhstan society as a whole? (2019, N=1800, %)

Conversion vectors / subjects of conversion	In their family, at relatives	Among friends, neighbors, colleagues	In Kazakhstan society
The process of conversion of unbelievers to traditional Islam	25,4	19,7	23,7
There is a transition from traditional Islam to non-traditional Islam	4,6	9,0	13,8
There is a conversion to Orthodoxy of those who previously professed other religions or did not profess any religion	4,8	10,3	4,4
There is a conversion to Protestantism of those who previously professed other religions or did not profess any religion	2,0	3,9	4,6

Table Continued...

Conversion vectors / subjects of conversion	In their family, at relatives	Among friends, neighbors, colleagues	In Kazakhstan society
There is a conversion to neo-Orientalist cults	2,4	1,3	3,7
There is an appeal to pseudo-religious organizations	2,4	2,9	5,5
Involvement in various industries with its near-religious ideology	2,4	,9	3,7
There is a departure from religion with the transition to atheism	1,8	2,4	1,8
No changes are made	38,6	28,3	14,7
Not sure	15,6	21,3	24,1

Discussion

The problem of inter-confessional consent and preservation of the unity of society is increasingly perceived in Kazakhstan society. The influence of the religious factor on the achievement of identity in Kazakhstan through worldview socialization already has far-reaching consequences because the religious worldview has multidirectional influences, which leads not only to the loss of the traditional cultural landscape, but also represents a serious societal risk of instability of society and the state.

Religiosity of the population and religion (used as a political tool) have become the main “lines of attack” on the authentic, historically established in Kazakhstan model of ethno-cultural, confessional, civic and political identity based on factors of stability and harmony.

There are serious risks due to the fact that new religious beliefs (cults, movements, organizations, communities) often take the form of alternatives to those rooted in the traditional mentality, act as countercultural (in the political and institutional aspect) strategies aimed not only at confrontation existing traditional religious institutions, but also to counteract the system of social relations, to break the traditional ties (family – first of all).

The use of special techniques, techniques, which include not only the achievements of psychology and psychiatry in the field of manipulation of consciousness and behavior, and the use of special medicines, procedures, the use of the possibilities of influence and recruitment on the Internet significantly enhances the effects of influence not only on consciousness, but also on sub consciousness.¹³

Dynamic variability leads to the radicalization of the worldview, its politicization and to social confrontation.

Traditional religions are loyal to the state, to believers, open to dialogue, do not use methods of totalitarian control of consciousness and behavior, based on traditional values, their influence is assessed as extremely positive. Accordingly, conversions from unbelief - to traditional religiosity, from non-traditional faith - to traditional religions have a positive effect not only on the individual, but also on the family group, society as a whole. In these conversion vectors, there is no conflict with the system of values rooted in the mentality of Kazakhstan people, there is no disagreement with the goals, interests, strategies of the common Kazakhstan path.

Conclusion

The institute of religion in public opinion and expert assessments receives ambivalent (both positive and negative) assessments. Religion is perceived in a wide range of statuses (in decreasing importance):

As a traditional historical and cultural attribute; as a space of ethno-cultural identification; as a sphere exclusive to understanding the essence of human spirituality; as a means of personal salvation and a niche of communication with God; as the truth and meaning of life; as a moral imperative and a regulator of the way of strengthening the spirit; as necessary for execution of rites; as a means of controlling mass consciousness, delusion and self-deception, obsolete ideology. The following trends should be noted:

- i. liberalization of the perception of religion by the population (both in personal and group dimensions and in social dimensions),
- ii. the increase in the number of Kazakhstanis who manifest their disagreement with the vectors of state policy in the field of religion, in particular, with statements about the need to adhere to historical and cultural paradigms and traditions,
- iii. scaling up the public discourse through the expansion of regions that critically assess the activities of traditional religions and positively assess the activities of new religious practices, increase the expectations of the possibility of religious radicalism.

The manifestation of religion as a political institution and one of the channels of socialization leads to the accentuation of the process of traditional ethno-confessional identity, as well as to the expansion of the possibilities of religious conversion, which becomes one of the obvious trends of religiosity. Among Kazakhstanis, the hierarchy of contexts of religious conversion is built along the line in decreasing order of motivational significance in this way: social, cultural, religious, and personal (mainly - existential-psychological).

Religious conversion is becoming the main channel for involving young people and socially disadvantaged people, as well as citizens striving for socialization, for new collectivity, and those who are searching for spirituality, the meaning of life - in quasi-religious structures.

Staying in such organizations dramatically changes the lifestyle of converts; they become carriers of a new worldview, often not directly correlated with the values of Kazakhstani society, the tasks of achieving unity of the Kazakh people.

The basis of conversions to non-traditional religions, cults, movements is the goal of separation of converts from historical and cultural traditions, a change in the state of consciousness, redefinition of the meaning of human activity. The impact of the religious factor on the achievement of modern identity through socialization in non-traditional communities has ambiguous consequences. Through a

religious worldview, multidirectional impacts are carried out on the social situation, family, civil position, which leads to the loss of the traditional influence of society on cultural, and in the long term, political processes.

We can expect the growing contradictions between the traditional religions of Kazakhstan and the new religions (currents, associations, movements). There is no open confrontation and fixation of the conflict, but the number of fellow citizens is growing with a tolerant attitude to the religious choice of relatives and friends, with an indifferent reaction to the loss of traditional value-semantic regulators. There is a growing danger in society of the hidden spread of fanatical forms of religiosity, which are fraught with the extremist nature of life. Religiosity in Kazakhstan is formed with a greater degree of uncertainty of the final result.

In the study of religious conversion, an unsatisfactory state of the worldview component of public consciousness was manifested, which was not supplemented by secular means, in particular, the family parenting system, the education system, the educational/enlightenment system, and ideology.

The question arises of the time to reach the “threshold” criteria and the corresponding markers that accompany the processes of diverse ideological identification. The volumes and vectors of religious conversions indicate that Kazakhstani society is on the verge of serious risks of a lost ideological identity, moreover, manifested not only at the micro level, but also in society as a whole. The immersion of an increasing number of Kazakhstanis (including women, youth) in marginal quasi-religious practices and an appropriate lifestyle does not correlate with the tasks of developing competitiveness, intellectualism, and progress as vectors of the Kazakhstani way.

In this regard, it is important to know, understand and direct the unfolding processes of religious conversion towards the harmonious socialization of individuals, to orient all groups of citizens and especially young people to a socially significant system of values and maintaining the unity of society. Thus, the sociology of religion in Kazakhstan is practically in demand and contributes to the development of new approaches to social management.

In Kazakhstan practice, the legal regulation of religious activities is being implemented. The state develops concepts of interaction of state bodies and religious associations. There is a systematic training of religious scholars to teach the relevant disciplines in schools, colleges and universities. There are theological educational institutions where training of clergy is carried out. Research centers for the study of religion contribute to the manifestation of a general picture of the changing role of religion in the life of Kazakhstan society. Sociology of religion in Kazakhstan has not yet become an institutionally developed scientific discipline. Therefore, integration of the activities of all stakeholders, public presentation of scientific results and

discussion of practices in a professional environment is now required. This will contribute to greater efficiency in the development and decision-making of public policy in the field of religion.

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

Funding

None.

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