



The Role of Religious Traditions in the Development of Turkic Culture and their Importance for Contemporary Society

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine the role of religious traditions in shaping Turkic culture and their importance for contemporary Kazakhstani society. The analysis traces the evolution of religious practices among Turkic peoples from the period of the Ancient Turkic Khaganate to the present day, with a focus on the influence of Islam, Sufi movements, and the preservation of pre-Islamic beliefs. Philosophical works by Ahmad Yasawi and Yusuf Balasaguni, religious motifs in the epics Koblandy-batyr, Kyz-Zhibek, and Alpamysh, and Kazakhstan's sacred architecture, including the mausoleums of Ahmad Yasawi, Arystan-Bab, Beket-Ata, and Mashkhur Zhusup Kopeev, are examined. The analysis of contemporary religious processes is based on statistical and sociological data, including reports from the Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies, the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Centre for Social and Political Studies. The findings indicate that religious traditions continue to play a crucial role in the cultural identity of Kazakh society, despite increasing individualisation of religious practices and secularisation, particularly among younger generations. Empirical research based on expert interviews confirms the enduring influence of Sufism in Kazakhstan, while religious beliefs among the population display variation across age and regional demographics. Pilgrimage to religious sites remains an important aspect of Kazakh spiritual life, and religious norms continue to shape social institutions. These findings highlight the need for further research into the impact of



globalisation and digital technologies on the transformation of religious traditions in Kazakhstan and their prospects for development within evolving social and cultural contexts.

Keywords: Spiritual Customs, Sufi Worldview, Sacred Identity, Historical Heritage, Ritual Practices, Evolution of Beliefs.

Introduction

The development of religious beliefs among Turkic peoples progressed through several major stages, from pre-Islamic traditions based on nature worship and veneration of ancestral spirits to the dominant role of Islam in contemporary culture (Trygub & Stepanchuk, 2023). Research indicates that elements of ancient Turkic worldviews persist within the Islamic traditions of Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and other regional groups (Abzhet, 2020). Islamisation among Turkic peoples was not an immediate process but involved phases of syncretism, during which Islamic values were integrated into pre-existing belief systems (Isamutdinova, 2022). The influence of shamanism and Tengrism on Islamic practices was noted in studies on the rituals of Anatolian Alevis (Karaoğlu, 2022), demonstrating the resilience of ancient traditions despite shifts in dominant religious systems.

Analyses of civilisational influences on Turkic societies suggest that religion served not only a spiritual function but also played a socio-political role in ethnic consolidation (Zeinullin & Zhanabaeva, 2020; Spytska, 2023a). Studies on pre-Islamic oral traditions among Turkic communities highlight a complex belief system incorporating both monotheistic and animistic elements, supporting the notion of a prolonged process of religious adaptation (Yang & Son, 2020). Turkic Muslim civilisation was shaped by multiple factors, including political, economic, and cultural transformations, as emphasised in research on the strategic foundations of Turkic-Muslim identity (Mamed-Zadeh et al., 2021). In some regions, Islam was introduced through trade and diplomatic relations with Muslim states, whereas in others, it was adopted through conquests and administrative policies (Mustafayeva, 2022; Wang et al., 2024). The influence of ancient Turkic civilisation on the religious beliefs of neighbouring cultures, including China and the Middle East, has not been sufficiently explored, as highlighted in certain studies (Massimkhanuly & Abidenkyzy, 2021).

Some researchers highlight that Turkic societies have historically maintained a commitment to traditional institutions of power, which were largely shaped by religious norms (Bilokopytova & Guessab, 2021). Ancient Turkic inscriptions, particularly the Orkhon inscriptions, contain references to social hierarchies and societal organisation, demonstrating the integral role of religion in state ideology (Asanov, 2024). The history of Islam in the Turkic world remains a subject of academic debate. Certain studies examine the distinct characteristics of Islamic culture in Khwarezm during the Golden Horde period (Malikov, 2023), providing insights into religious policies and interfaith relations of that era. The influence of pagan cults on Islamic traditions among Turkic peoples is also of academic interest. In some regions of Central Asia, for instance, the veneration of sacred trees persists, rooted in ancient Turkic beliefs, as confirmed by contemporary ethnographic research (Sadigli, 2024; Rexhepi et al., 2024).

Despite extensive research, as of 2024, the question of how Turkic religious traditions evolved within modern Kazakh society remains open. Globalisation, urbanisation, and technological advancements continue to impact religious identity, reshaping traditional forms of religious life (Kyrychok et al., 2023; Abikenov et al., 2019). This raises the need for further investigation into how Turkic religious traditions adapt to contemporary conditions and which elements retain value in the 21st century.

The objectives of this study include analysing the historical evolution of religious traditions among Turkic peoples and their influence on culture and social institutions in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, the study sought to identify contemporary trends in the transformation of religious practices under globalisation and their impact on the religious identity of Kazakh society.



Materials and Methods

The study was conducted between March 2024 and November 2024, focusing on the historical role of religious traditions in the development of Turkic culture and their relevance to contemporary social processes in Kazakhstan. The study examines academic publications, historical sources, religious texts, and cultural monuments that contributed to the development of Kazakh national identity. A comparative approach was employed, incorporating religious traditions of Turkic peoples in Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan, along with Turkey.

The study is based on an analysis of peer-reviewed academic publications on the history of Turkic religious traditions. Particular emphasis is placed on the examination of religious texts and philosophical treatises that shaped the spiritual worldview of Turkic peoples. The works of Yasawi (1904), particularly *Diwan-i Hikmat*, were analysed, as this collection of wisdom provided moral and spiritual guidance and significantly influenced the development of Sufi Islam among Kazakhs. Moreover, the writings of Balasaguni (1983), including *Kutadgu Bilig*, were examined, as they address governance, the relationship between political power and religion, and the spiritual cultivation of society. The text *Nasab-nama* (2024), which documents the genealogies of Turkic rulers, was examined to trace Islamisation in the Turkic world. Furthermore, *Tazkirat al-Awliya* by Attar (2005), a collection of biographies of Sufi sheikhs, was analysed to assess the influence of Sufi teachings on Turkic societies.

The study covered the role of religious traditions in Kazakhstan by analysing the activities of prominent religious figures whose mausoleums have become centres of pilgrimage. Particular attention was given to Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, whose mausoleum in Turkestan is the largest religious monument in Kazakhstan (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2021). The importance of Arystan-Bab, the teacher of Ahmed Yasawi, was also explored, as his mausoleum remains an important pilgrimage site for Sufi followers (SkyWay, 2025). The influence of Beket-Ata, an 18th-century religious mentor whose mausoleum in Mangystau continues to attract believers (Interactive map..., 2025), was examined alongside the works of Mashkhur Zhusup Kopeev (2025), a philosopher of the 19th and 20th centuries whose writings highlight the interaction between religion and Kazakh folk traditions. Religious themes were analysed in epic works such as *Koblandy-batyr* (Kazakh epic..., 2022), *Kyz-Zhibek* (1988), and *Alpamysh* (1949).

The contemporary state of religious traditions in Kazakhstan was explored using statistical and sociological data. Reports from the Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies (2025) were consulted to assess changes in religious affiliation within Kazakh society between 2023 and 2024. Materials from the Bureau of National Statistics, Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2025) provided insights into religious demographics for 2022-2024. Survey results from the Centre for Social and Political Studies "Strategy" (2025), which examines religious attitudes within the country, were analysed.

The research employed historical and cultural analysis, comparative historical methodology, content analysis of religious and philosophical texts, and empirical study through expert interviews. The empirical component of the study involved expert interviews with twelve specialists in history, religious studies, and cultural studies in Kazakhstan. Participants included researchers from Nazarbayev University, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, and researchers from the Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, enabling experts to provide detailed commentary on key questions. Subjects discussed included changes in the religious traditions of Kazakhstan over the past century, the role of Sufism in contemporary Kazakh culture, the persistence of pre-Islamic religious practices, and the impact of globalisation on Kazakh religious identity.

Results

The historical development of religious traditions among the Turkic peoples demonstrates that prior to the adoption of Islam, Tengrism and shamanism constituted their primary belief systems. Islamisation among the Turkic peoples commenced in the 9th century and continued until the 15th century (). A key figure in this process was Yasawi, whose work *Diwan-i Hikmat* (Yasawi, 1904) contained not only religious guidance but also ethical principles that facilitated the integration of Islam into Turkic culture. The Sufi brotherhoods founded by his disciples became crucial agents of Islamisation (Nechyporenko et al., 2019; Bakhtibaeva et al., 2016). Another significant figure shaping the religious landscape of the Turkic world was Balasaguni (1983). His work emphasised the importance of religion in state administration, thereby contributing to the dissemination of Islamic principles in the political and social life of the Turkic peoples. Furthermore, an examination of *Nasab-nama* (2024), which documents the genealogy of rulers who embraced Islam, provided insights into the ways in which Islam consolidated its presence in Turkic states, from the Qarakhanids to the Golden Horde.

The examination of the spiritual legacy of Turkic thinkers such as Ahmad Yasawi and Yusuf Balasaguni, alongside an analysis of texts such as *Tazkirat al-Awliya* (Attar, 2005), identified key concepts that shaped the perception of religion in the Turkic world. Sufism played a crucial role in adapting Islam to local contexts by offering more flexible and accessible forms of religious practice (Murtezaj et al., 2024; Bocheliuk et al., 2019). Table 1 presents the key stages of religious transformation among Turkic populations, indicating their chronological boundaries, central figures, and dominant religious movements.

Table 1. Key stages of religious transformation among Turkic peoples

Stage	Timeframe	Key religious traditions	Significant figures	Main characteristics
Ancient Turkic period	6th-8th centuries	Tengrism, shamanism	Cult of Tengri, shamans, Khagans	Dominance of traditional beliefs, ancestor worship, and reverence for spirits of nature
Early Islamisation	9th-12th centuries	Islam (Hanafi madhhab), Sufism	Ahmad Yasawi, Yusuf Balasaguni	Gradual spread of Islam through trade and cultural interactions
Rise of Sufism	13th-15th centuries	Sufism (Yasawiyya, Naqshbandiyya)	Farid al-Din Attar, Arystan Bab	Expansion of Sufi orders, formation of popular Islam
Institutionalisation of Islam	16th-19th centuries	Islam as a state religion, Sharia-based institutions	Rulers of the Kazakh Khanate, Islamic scholars of the Ottoman Empire	Integration of Islam into state structures in Kazakhstan and Central Asia
Modern transformations	20th-21st centuries	Secularisation, digitalisation, influence of globalisation	Contemporary Islamic scholars, religious reformers, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK)	Flexibility of religious practices, digitalisation of religion, influence of social media

Source: compiled by the authors based on Yasawi (1904), Balasaguni (1983), Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies (2025).

Epic works such as *Koblandy-batyr* (Kazakh epic..., 2022), *Kyz-Zhibek* (1988), and *Alpamysh* (1949) serve as key sources for examining the interaction between Islamic and pre-Islamic religious traditions. In *Koblandy-batyr*, alongside Islamic elements, remnants of Tengrism remain present, including the veneration of ancestral spirits, the reverence for land and water, and shamanistic motifs. A strong theme of predestination, characteristic of Islamic thought, is central to *Kyz-Zhibek*, where the fates of the protagonists are depicted as

expressions of divine will. Nonetheless, the interplay between religious norms and social traditions is evident in the observance of rituals associated with marriage, courtship, and family values. Similarly, Alpamysh reflects the influence of Islamic values, particularly in relation to justice, morality, and social structure. However, the epic also preserves pre-Islamic beliefs, including the veneration of totemic animals, connections with nature spirits, and ritualistic practices. Beyond epic literature, religious traditions played a significant role in shaping the social institutions of Kazakhstan. Islam contributed to the development of literacy, the establishment of religious schools (madrasas), and the formation of a judicial system based on the principles of Sharia. Table 2 presents the key religious motifs and symbolism found in the epic works Koblandy-Batyr, Kyz-Zhibek, and Alpamysh, highlighting their connection to Islamic values and traditional Turkic beliefs.

Table 2. Religious motifs in Kazakh epic literature and their connection to Islamic values and pre-Islamic beliefs

Epic narrative	Key religious motifs	Connection to Islam	Pre-Islamic beliefs
Koblandy-batyr	Divine blessing before battle, references to fate and predestination, veneration of ancestral spirits	Concept of fate (qadar), prayer before battle, belief in divine justice	Shamanic rituals, Tengri worship, reverence for nature and spirits
Kyz-Zhibek	Predestination, divine justice, religious rituals in marriage traditions	Ideal of a virtuous family, adherence to religious norms in social relations	Rituals associated with family and tribal traditions, connection to ancestral spirits
Alpamysh	Heroic trials, patience and loyalty as virtues, the struggle between good and evil through a religious lens	Principle of justice, moral code rooted in religious teachings	Totemism, animal worship, initiation rites, traditional shamanic practices

Source: compiled by the authors based on Koblandy-batyr (2022), Kyz-Zhibek (1988), Alpamysh (1949).

Architectural monuments in Kazakhstan, such as the mausolea of Ahmad Yasawi, Arystan-Bab, Beket-Ata, and Mashkhur Zhusup Kopeev, represent key religious and cultural sites that reflect the centuries-long evolution of the spiritual traditions of Turkic peoples (Mukhtarova et al., 2024). The Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmad Yasawi (UNESCO, 2021), located in Turkestan, is among the most significant Islamic architectural landmarks in Central Asia. Constructed in the 14th century by order of Tamerlane, it symbolises the Turkic peoples' transition to Islam and the consolidation of Sufi traditions in the region. In addition to housing the tomb of Ahmad Yasawi, the complex historically included spaces for a madrasa and theological gatherings. Another important religious site is the Mausoleum of Arystan-Bab (SkyWay, 2025), situated in the South Kazakhstan region. Arystan-Bab is revered as the spiritual mentor of Ahmad Yasawi, and according to legend, his mausoleum was originally built in the 12th century before undergoing multiple reconstructions. In contrast to the grand scale of the Ahmad Yasawi Mausoleum, the Arystan-Bab complex presents a more modest appearance, reflecting its initial function as a secluded religious centre.

The Mausoleum of Beket-Ata (Interactive map..., 2025), located in the Mangystau region, represents a unique example of sacred architecture in Kazakhstan. Unlike conventional mausolea, this structure is partially carved into the rock, demonstrating an adaptation of sacred architecture to the natural environment of the region. The Mausoleum of Mashkhur Zhusup Kopeev, constructed in the late 20th century, exemplifies contemporary trends in the religious architecture of Kazakhstan while preserving elements of the traditional Turkic-Islamic style. Architecturally, the structure integrates features of traditional mausolea with modern construction technologies.

A comparative analysis of architectural monuments in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan demonstrates both shared characteristics and regional distinctions in Turkic sacred architecture. In Uzbekistan, a comparable site is the Mausoleum of Bahaiddin Naqshband (Uzbek Travel, 2025). In Turkmenistan, the Mausoleum of Abu-Said Mitkhene (Advantour, 2025) reflects the influence of Seljuk architectural traditions. Despite these similarities, notable differences remain. Sacred architecture in Kazakhstan exhibits a close connection with the natural landscape, as exemplified by the Mausoleum of Beket-Ata (StanTrips, 2025). Table 3 presents an overview of the key architectural monuments of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

Table 3. Architectural monuments of the Turkic peoples, their historical value, religious influence and key architectural features

Country	Architectural monument	Construction period	Religious influence	Architectural features
Kazakhstan	Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi	14th century	Sufism, Islamisation of Turkic peoples	Monumental domed complex, ceramic ornamentation
Kazakhstan	Mausoleum of Arystan-Bab	12th century	Continuity of spiritual traditions	Brick masonry, modest appearance, massive walls
Kazakhstan	Underground Mosque of Beket-Ata	18th century	Sufi practice and monasticism	Cave architecture, adaptation to natural landscape
Kazakhstan	Mausoleum of Mashkhur Zhusup Kopeev	20th century	Continuation of Kazakh Islamic heritage	Contemporary mausoleum construction in traditional style
Uzbekistan	Mausoleum of Baha-ud-Din Naqshband	14th century	Centre of the Sufi tariqa	Madrasa complex, domes, Islamic ornamentation
Uzbekistan	Mausoleum of Imam al-Bukhari	9th century	Revered Islamic scholar	Centre of Islamic scholarship, mausoleum-style composition
Turkmenistan	Mausoleum of Abu-Said Mitkhene	11th-14th centuries	Seljuk Islamic traditions	High arches, domed structures, geometric patterns
Turkmenistan	Mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar	12th century	Islamisation of the Seljuk state	Monumental structure, decorative mosaics

Source: compiled by the authors based on UNESCO (2021), Uzbek Travel (2025), Advantour (2025).

The religious traditions of the Turkic peoples in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey exhibit both common characteristics and unique features shaped by historical development, ethno-cultural factors, and political processes (Alimbekova et al., 2019; Akhatov et al., 2018). Kazakhstan is characterised by a combination of traditional Islam, following the Hanafi school of thought, and Sufi practices, particularly the teachings of the Yasawi tariqa. In Uzbekistan, where Islam predominantly follows the Hanafi school, religion plays a more central role in public life, influenced by the historical importance of Islamic centres in Bukhara and Samarkand. Strong traditions of theological scholarship are evident in the presence of major madrasas and religious schools. As in Kazakhstan, certain elements of pre-Islamic traditions persist, manifesting in folk beliefs and rituals. Although Turkmenistan officially upholds a secular state model, traditional Islam remains closely interwoven with local cultic practices. Turkmen Islam retains numerous elements of folk beliefs, as reflected in the veneration of saints, the special status accorded to religious leaders in rural communities, and the continued prominence of family rituals that preserve remnants of ancient Turkic traditions.

Kyrgyzstan, like Kazakhstan, is distinguished by a blend of traditional Islam and pre-Islamic elements. Sufi brotherhoods, particularly the Naqshbandi tariqa, have had a considerable impact on the religious worldview of the Kyrgyz. The majority of the population adheres to

Islam in a cultural rather than strictly doctrinal manner, a phenomenon linked to the Kyrgyz nomadic heritage and resistance to centralised religious institutions (Ternov et al., 2024; Yespenbetov et al., 2024).

Turkey, unlike the aforementioned countries, is officially a secular state; however, Islam continues to exert considerable influence on public and cultural life. Numerous Sufi orders operate in Turkey, the most well-known being the Mevlevi tariqa, founded by Jalal al-Din Rumi. Unlike in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan, where Islam historically existed in localised forms, it became integrated into the state system in Turkey, leading to its institutionalised structure. Table 4 outlines the key differences in the religious practices of Turkic peoples.

Table 4. Key differences in the religious practices of Turkic peoples

Country	Primary religious identity	Influence of Islam on the social sphere	Role of Sufi brotherhoods	Preservation of pre-Islamic beliefs	Role of spiritual leaders
Kazakhstan	Islam (Hanafi school), with elements of Tengrism	Pilgrimage, veneration of saints, influence of religion on family traditions	Yasawi tariqa, preservation of Sufi rituals	Elements of Tengrism and ancestor worship	Regional religious leaders, imams, custodians of sacred sites
Uzbekistan	Islam (Hanafi school), strong theological traditions	Strong influence of religious norms in legislation and culture	Naqshbandi tariqa, historical centre of Sufi theology	Retained in folk rituals but less pronounced	Official imams, theological schools, authoritative religious figures
Turkmenistan	Islam (Hanafi school), strong influence of folk beliefs	A fusion of Islamic and pre-Islamic customs in daily life	Sufism is less developed, but local saints are venerated	Pre-Islamic beliefs integrated into religious practices	Local spiritual mentors, influence of traditional leaders
Kyrgyzstan	Islam (Hanafi school), distinct integration with traditional cults	Islamic traditions coexist with shamanistic practices	Naqshbandi tariqa, elements of Sufi tradition in folklore	Shamanistic and animistic traditions have been preserved	Religious leaders predominantly in rural areas
Turkey	Islam (primarily Hanafi, with some Shafi'i influence), officially secular state	Officially secular policies, but Islam influences public life	Mevlevi tariqa, traditions of Sufi mysticism	Almost entirely lost due to complete Islamisation	Official imams, state-affiliated religious institutions

Source: compiled by the author based on data from the Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies (2025), Bureau of National Statistics (2025), and the Center for Social and Political Studies "Strategy" (2025).

The current state of religious traditions in Kazakhstan is characterised by a complex interaction between traditional Islam, cultural practices, and the influence of globalisation. Table 5 presents data on the level of religiosity among the population of Kazakhstan from 2022 to 2024.

Table 5. Religiosity levels of the population of Kazakhstan in 2022-2024 by age categories and regions

Year	Age category	Southern Kazakhstan, %	Northern Kazakhstan, %	Urban regions, %	Rural regions, %
2022	18-29 years	78	55	62	79
2023	18-29 years	77	53	60	78
2024	18-29 years	75	52	58	76
2022	30-49 years	82	60	67	83
2023	30-49 years	80	58	65	81
2024	30-49 years	79	57	64	80
2022	50+ years	85	65	72	86
2023	50+ years	84	63	70	85
2024	50+ years	82	61	69	83

Source: compiled by the authors based on Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies (2025), Bureau of National Statistics (2025), Centre for Social and Political Studies “Strategy” (2025).

An empirical study based on expert interviews uncovered key trends in the transformation of religious traditions in Kazakhstan. Three main trends were identified: traditional religious practices remain, the influence of Sufism is still significant but varies by region, and globalisation is reshaping the religious landscape, necessitating further analysis (Table 6).

Table 6. Summarised expert opinions on key issues of the study

Question	Main expert opinions
Changes in religious traditions over the past 100 years	83% believe that Islamisation occurred unevenly, with an increase in religiosity after the 1990s.
The role of Sufism in contemporary Kazakh culture	75% highlight the influence of Sufi traditions in rural areas, while 42% state that in urban areas, Sufism is perceived as a cultural heritage.
Preservation of pre-Islamic religious practices	67% mention the retention of elements of Tengrism and shamanism, and 50% point to a blend of Islamic and pre-Islamic rituals.
The impact of globalisation on religious identity	92% believe that technology contributes to the individualisation of religion, while 67% note a decline in collective rituals among the youth.

Source: compiled by the authors.

The forecast for the future of religious traditions in Kazakhstan suggests their continued transformation in the context of digitalisation, increased international contacts, and growing religious diversity. Traditional Islam will maintain its role in national identity, but its forms of expression may change, particularly among the youth. Consequently, a promising area for further research is the impact of digital technologies on religious practices and the transformation of religious education in Kazakhstan.

Discussion

The findings of the study support the hypothesis that the religious beliefs of Turkic peoples underwent a prolonged evolutionary process, beginning with Tengrism and shamanism, which were dominant belief systems in the early stages of ethnogenesis, and culminating in the adoption of Islam. These results align with the conclusions of Mukhammadiev (2022), who examined the origins of the Turks. The current study identified enduring elements of pre-Islamic religious beliefs that remained in Turkic cultures even after the spread of Islam. This is confirmed by Moqemi (2024), who examined the cultural traditions of the Turks before Islamisation.

The analysis of literary sources and religious texts demonstrated that Islamisation among Turkic peoples was heterogeneous and depended on a variety of factors, which aligns with notes of Zufarov (2022) that even after the official adoption of Islam, elements of traditional cults remained in the governance of the state. The data obtained confirms that religious traditions have had a substantial impact on the formation of cultural values, which aligns with the findings of Satıcıoğlu (2022). The study established those religious traditions are closely linked to the perception of homeland and sacred space, which is supported by the conclusions of Olzhabayev et al. (2023). The study showed that religious norms played an important role in the formation of social institutions in Kazakhstan, which aligns with the work of Tashkaraeva et al. (2023), who analysed the spiritual heritage of Turkic peoples. A significant portion of the population of Kazakhstan perceives religion not only as a system of beliefs but also as an element of cultural heritage (Spytska, 2023b; Ryskaliyev et al., 2019). These findings correspond with the study by Olzhabayev et al. (2023), who analysed the concept of sacrality in Turkic culture.

However, some aspects of the study revealed discrepancies with the results of other researchers. For example, the comparative analysis of the religious traditions of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan established that the influence of Sufism in Kazakh culture is more enduring than in other countries of the region. This contrasts with the conclusions of Mukhammadiev (2022), who notes the diminishing significance of Sufi traditions in Central Asia.

The examination of Sufi influences across Turkic societies aligns with findings from Ainusyamsi et al. (2024), which discusses the adaptability of theological education to cultural contexts. The study underscores the belief that Sufism provides a flexible framework capable of addressing modern challenges while retaining core spiritual values.

Data from Ayazbekova (2022) showed that the religious views of the Turks continuously evolved, absorbing new elements and adapting them to traditional beliefs. This aspect is confirmed by the current study. The study by Kossybayev et al. (2024) demonstrated that the names of dishes recorded in *Diwan Lughat al-Turk* by Mahmud Kashgari carry not only linguistic but also spiritual significance. Similarly, in Kazakh culture, the use of specific terminology related to religious rituals is observed, confirming the persistence of both Islamic and pre-Islamic beliefs in language. Religious traditions are closely connected with the transformation of national values, which is especially noticeable in folklore (Smanova et al., 2024; Dyduch et al., 2024). The data from Taimova and Begmanova (2022) confirmed that Islamisation involved the rethinking of a number of traditional values. This also with findings suggesting that Islam rather integrated Tengrism and shamanistic elements into new forms of belief.

Omarova et al. (2024) demonstrated that religious ideas are reflected in poetic texts, where Islamic motifs intertwine with epic and philosophical elements. Studies by Nussipzhanova and Mukhambetzhano (2024) showed that elements of ritual dances among Turkic peoples are closely connected with religious beliefs. The current study disclosed that religious traditions influenced the formation of what is known as steppe culture. As noted by Spanov (2021), the traditional values of nomadic Turkic peoples are closely linked with religious norms which regulate social relations and daily life. Language also plays a crucial role in religious traditions (Kassymova & Mamyrbé, 2024; Zile et al., 2023). As shown by Gaibullaev (2023), the development of philosophical and religious views in Central Asia occurred alongside the development of Turkic languages.

The data from Abdukadyrov and Naimanbayev (2024) indicate that pilgrimage played an important role in establishing cultural and spiritual connections between the Ottoman Empire and the peoples of Central Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries. In Kazakhstan, the mausoleums of Ahmad Yasawi, Arystan-Bab, and Beket-Ata remain important pilgrimage sites, which attests to the enduring strength of religious traditions in contemporary society. Türkmen (2021) noted

many rituals associated with equestrian games and competitions among Turkic peoples have their origins in religious traditions.

Thus, the results obtained confirm the need for further analysis of the mechanisms by which traditional religious practices adapt to modern conditions and their impact on cultural heritage and social processes in the region.

Conclusions

The study established those religious traditions played and continue to play a substantial role in the development of Turkic culture, influencing social institutions, national identity, and the value system of Kazakh society. The study of religious texts and philosophical works, such as *Diwan-i Hikmat* by Ahmad Yasawi and *Kutadgu Bilig* by Yusuf Balasaguni, confirmed that Islam in the Turkic world received a profound philosophical interpretation, becoming not only a system of religious prescriptions but also the foundation for the formation of moral and social order. Sufism significantly influenced the development of the spiritual culture of the Kazakhs, which is evidenced by the preservation of traditions related to Sufi brotherhoods and pilgrimage sites, such as the mausoleums of Ahmad Yasawi and Beket-Ata.

The study demonstrated that religious traditions are reflected in Kazakh epic poetry and oral folklore. Works such as *Koblandy-batyr*, *Kyz-Zhibek*, and *Alpamysh* illustrate the organic intertwining of Islamic concepts with traditional Turkic beliefs, reflecting the complex adaptation of religious ideas into folk culture. This affirms the resilience of religious values and their deep-rootedness in national self-awareness.

The analysis of the current state of religious traditions in Kazakhstan indicated that they continue to retain their value despite the influence of modernisation and globalisation. The data indicate that religion remains an important element of public life, contributing to the strengthening of national identity. Moreover, transformations in religious practices are observed, with adaptations to modern conditions, particularly among the youth. This is evidenced by trends towards secularisation and the individualisation of religious beliefs.

The empirical part of the study, based on expert interviews, showed that specialists in the fields of history, religious studies, and cultural studies in Kazakhstan emphasise the importance of religious traditions in shaping public consciousness. Sufi practices continue to play a substantial role in the spiritual life of the country, particularly in rural areas where traditional forms of religiosity are preserved in their original form. However, experts also highlight the need for further analysis of the transformation of religious practices in the context of digitalisation and the global changes in social structures.

The findings underscore the necessity for continued investigation into the mechanisms of interaction between traditional religiosity and contemporary social processes. A promising area of future analysis involves the influence of digital technologies and media on the religious views of young people and the role of religious institutions in shaping national policy. Future studies could be supplemented with data from large-scale sociological surveys and the inclusion of other Turkic peoples in the analysis, which would enable a more detailed examination of the patterns in the evolution of religious traditions.

A limitation of this study is its focus on theoretical analysis, which does not allow for a comprehensive characterisation of the everyday religious practices of the population of Kazakhstan. A more detailed exploration of religious identity in Kazakhstan would require the use of empirical methods, such as surveys, interviews, and field research, which provide deeper insights into the influence of religious traditions on public life.

Thus, the study confirmed that religious traditions are an integral part of Turkic culture, influencing the historical, social, and cultural development of Kazakhstan. They continue to adapt to contemporary conditions while maintaining their importance in shaping public consciousness and national identity. Further research on this subject will provide a deeper



understanding of the mechanisms of interaction between traditional religiosity and contemporary social trends in the Turkic world.

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