

G.A. Mambetova 

K. Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University, Aktobe, Kazakhstan
e-mail: guldanamambetova@gmail.com

ISLAMIC POLICY OF THE SOVIET STATE IN 1917-1953 (based on materials from the Aktobe region)

The purpose of the article is to consider and analyze the main aspects of the Soviet state policy towards the Islamic religion and believers in 1917-1953 based on materials from the Aktobe region. The article examines some issues of the Soviet government policy towards Islam in the Aktobe region. Since 1929, merciless persecution of all confessions in the Soviet Union began. During this period, mosques were closed and church valuables were confiscated by decrees and orders from above. The state archive of the Aktobe region contains minutes and excerpts from meetings devoted to this issue. One of the organizations engaged in anti-religious propaganda is the Union of Militant Atheists. This organization was founded in 1925, branches were created in all regions, including the Aktobe region. In the course of preparing the article, were used documents from the Central state archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Almaty) and the state archive of the Aktobe region. To ensure objectivity in working on sources, the author conducted a comparative analysis of documents and materials from other regions of Kazakhstan, which also carried out this policy concerning a religious nature. In this case, the author used the following methods: specific analysis, comparative historical, problem-chronological and statistical. Using the comparative-historical method, we identified the objective relationship between historical facts and events occurring in the USSR and in the Aktobe region, and also compared events occurring in different territories of Soviet Kazakhstan. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the experience of studying the relationship between the Soviet state and religious organizations in 1917-1953 using the example of the Aktobe region. Based on extensive data from archival sources and monographs, as well as materials from the state commission for the full justification of victims of political persecution in the Aktobe region in the 20-50s of the twentieth century, it is substantiated that Soviet policy was carried out very deeply and systematically on the territory of the Aktobe region due to its border proximity.

Key words: Islam, repression, OGPU, tactics of "religious tolerance", anti-religious propaganda, Union of Atheists.

Г.А. Мамбетова

Қ. Жұбанов атындағы Ақтөбе өңірлік университеті, Ақтөбе қ., Қазақстан
e-mail: guldanamambetova@gmail.com

1917-1953 жылдардағы Кеңес мемлекетінің исламдық саясаты (Ақтөбе облысының мысалында)

Мақаланың мақсаты – кеңес мемлекетінің 1917-1953 жылдардағы ислам діні мен діндарларға қатысты саясатының негізгі аспектілерін қарастырып, Ақтөбе облысы материалдарына негіздеп, талдау болып табылады. Сонымен қатар, ислам дініне қатысты шектеулер мен қуғындау саясатының Ақтөбе облысы бойынша ерекшеліктері мен большевиктер билігінің орнауы кезіндегі қоғамдық-саяси жағдайын, одақтас республикаларда жүргізілген саясаттың Ақтөбе өңіріндегі көрінісі мен облыс территориясында ислам дінін жоюға арналған жарлықтар мен қаулыларды талдау болып табылады. 1929 жылдан бастап Кеңес Одағының барлық конфессияларын аяусыз құдалау басталды. Бұл кезеңде жоғарыдан келген жарлықтар мен қаулылармен мешіттер жабылып, шіркеу құндылықтары тәркіленді. Ақтөбе облысының мемлекеттік архивінде осы мәселеге қатысты төралқалардың хаттамалары мен үзінділері бар. Дінге қарсы үгіт-насихатпен айналысқан ұйымдардың бірі – «жауынгер Құдайсыздар» ұйымы. Бұл ұйым 1925 жылдан бастау алып, бөлімшелері барлық облыстарда, соның ішінде Ақтөбе облысында да құрылған. Мақала дайындау барысында ҚР-ның Алматы қаласындағы Орталық мемлекеттік архиві мен Ақтөбе облысының мемлекеттік архивінің құжаттары, Ақтөбе өңірінде шығарылған ғылыми зерттеулер қолданылды. Дереккөздермен жұмыс жасауда объективтілікті қамтамасыз ету үшін автор осы діни сипаттағы саясатты жүргізген Қазақстанның басқа аймақтарынан алынған құжаттар мен материалдарға салыстырмалы талдау жүргізді. Бұл жағдайда автор келесі әдістерді пайдаланды: нақты талдау, салыстырмалы тарихи, проблемалық-хронологиялық және статистикалық. Салыстырмалы тарихи әдісті пайдалана отырып, біз КСРО мен Ақтөбе облысында болған

оқиғалардың объективті байланысын анықтадық, сонымен қатар Кеңестік Қазақстанның әртүрлі аумақтарында болған оқиғаларды салыстырдық. Зерттеудің ғылыми жаңалығы – бұл 1917-1953 жылдардағы Кеңес мемлекеті мен діни ұйымдардың қарым-қатынасын Ақтөбе облысының территориясы мысалында зерттеудің тәжірибесі. Мұрағат дереккөздерінен және монографиялардан алынған кең көлемдегі мәліметтерді, сондай-ақ Ақтөбе облысындағы 20 ғасырдың 20-50 жылдарындағы саяси қуғын-сүргін құрбандарын толық ақтау жөніндегі мемлекеттік комиссияның материалдарын пайдалану арқылы, Ақтөбе облысы территориясында шекаралық жақындығына байланысты кеңестік саясаттың өте терең әрі жоспарлы түрде жүргізілгені негізделді.

Түйін сөздер: ислам, репрессия, ОГПУ, «діни толеранттылық» тактикасы, дінге қарсы үгіт-насихат, құдайсыздар одағы.

Г.А. Мамбетова

Актюбинский региональный университет имени К. Жубанова, г. Актобе, Казахстан
e-mail: guldanamambetova@gmail.com

Исламская политика советского государства в 1917-1953 гг. (на примере Актюбинской области)

Цель статьи – рассмотреть и проанализировать основные аспекты политики советского государства по отношению к исламской религии и верующим в 1917-1953 гг. на материалах Актюбинской области. С 1929 года начались беспощадные гонения на все конфессии Советского Союза. В этот период указами и распоряжениями сверху были закрыты мечети и конфискованы церковные ценности. В государственном архиве Актюбинской области имеются протоколы и выдержки заседаний, посвященных этому вопросу. Одной из организаций, занимающихся антирелигиозной пропагандой, является организация «Союз Воинствующих безбожников». Эта организация была основана в 1925 году, филиалы были созданы во всех регионах, в том числе и в Актюбинской области. В ходе подготовки статьи были использованы материалы из Центрального государственного архива Республики Казахстана (г. Алматы) и государственного архива Актюбинской области. Для обеспечения объективности в работе с источниками автором был проведен сравнительный анализ материалов различных регионов Казахстана, раскрывающих меры по борьбе с религиозными руководителями и организациями. При этом автором были использованы следующие методы: сравнительно-исторический, проблемно-хронологический и статистический. Используя сравнительно-исторический метод, мы выявили объективную связь между историческими фактами и событиями, происходившими как в СССР и в Актюбинской области, а также сравнили события, происходившие на разных территориях Советского Казахстана. Научная новизна исследования заключается в опыте изучения взаимоотношений советского государства и религиозных организаций в 1917-1953 годах на примере Актюбинской области. На основе обширных данных архивных источников и монографий, а также материалов государственной комиссии по полному оправданию жертв политических преследований в Актюбинской области в 20-50-х годах XX века обосновано, что советская политика проводилась очень глубоко и планомерно на территории Актюбинской области в связи с ее приграничной близостью.

Ключевые слова: ислам, репрессия, ОГПУ, тактика «религиозной терпимости», антирелигиозная пропаганда, Союз безбожников.

Introduction

The history of religion under Soviet rule is full of very sad events in the history of our country. In the 20s of the 20th century, anti-religious propaganda began to be carried out gradually. The Soviet government, under the pretext of developing the country's culture and traditions, literature and art, began to actively destroy religion. A letter from the Central Committee of Russia, sent to all party committees, indicated that religiosity and nationalism reign in the countries of the East, which harms their cultural progress, and it was necessary to carry out propaganda work to ex-

plain the harmfulness of religious beliefs among working people.

Islam is the second-largest religion in Russia after Orthodox Christianity. The development of relations between the Muslim population and the Bolsheviks has been studied by numerous foreign, Russian, and Kazakh authors. This article examines certain aspects of the process of Islamic-Soviet relations using the example of the Aktobe region from 1917 to 1953.

We conditionally divided the period under study into three periods, each of which corresponds to a separate stage in the development of the Soviet state's policy towards the Muslim population.

Materials and methods

The methodological basis of the study is based on the historical approach to the problem of state Soviet policy towards religion and believers in the Aktobe region in 1917-1953. The historical approach involves the use of the principles of historicism and objectivity in the work. The principle of historicism made it possible to study the sources, stages of development, and content of the party-state policy towards religion and believers during the years of Soviet power. And also using this method, the authors showed the essence of the policy of the party and the Soviet state on issues of atheism and religion, the course of implementation of Islamic policy in the conditions of the Aktobe region over thirty years.

To ensure objectivity in working on sources, the author conducted a comparative analysis of documents and materials from other regions of Kazakhstan, which also carried out this policy concerning a religious nature. In this case, the authors used the following methods: specific analysis, comparative historical, problem-chronological, and statistical. Using the comparative-historical method, we identified the objective relationship between historical facts and events occurring in the USSR and in the Aktobe region and also compared events occurring in different territories of Soviet Kazakhstan. The problem-chronological method allows us to highlight the characteristic features of the historical experience of religious policy in the Aktobe region.

1917-1953 on the topic of religious policy that interests us. The scientific works of domestic and foreign researchers can be divided into several main areas. The first group of works includes the works of Soviet researchers. According to these researchers, religion is often presented as a reactionary, anti-people institution that does not serve the interests of the people and the state P.K. Kurochkin (1971), N.S. Gordienko (1987), and V.A. Alekseev (1991).

In general, it can be noted that the changes in the religious policy of the Soviet government in the 20-50s of the twentieth century and its positions still need to be studied at the regional level. An important source of information on the relationship between the state and religion are the data of the state archive of the Aktobe region. The term “anti-religious propaganda” began to be used frequently only after the 1950s in reports and definitions of meetings and congresses organized by branches of anti-religious organizations of the Aktobe region. Before that, archival materials prove that in the years 1917-1953 we are considering, religion was initially supported,

and then in 1937-1940, persecution of religion and representatives of religion reached its peak.

The source of the research is the reports and papers of Zh. A. Amirov, the authorized representative for religious affairs of the Soviet government in the Aktobe region, which are stored in the state archive of the Aktobe region. The state policy pursued in the Aktobe regional branch of the “Union of Militant Atheists,” their decrees and orders, and information about religious organizations in the territory of the Aktobe region can be found in the following funds. For example, the 3rd fund (Aktobe district executive committee of Muslim deputies), the 4th fund (Aktobe governor’s executive council of workers, peasants, and the Red Army deputies committee), as well as materials from Fund 13 (Proletarian district committee of people’s control of Aktobe) concerning religious policy in the region were received.

Recent years of work and the memoirs and works of religious figures themselves provide more accurate information, and these sources can be considered more objective than Soviet sources. One of these is the work of the famous Qazi Saduakas Gylmani, professor, historian Muminov Ashirbek Kurbanovich, and an American scientist A.J. Frank who has been studying the religion of Central Asia in the Soviet period for many years.

Gylmani Saduakas approached the compilation of the “Biographical Dictionary of Kazakh Ulama” (Zamanymyza bolgan ulamalaryn omir tarikh-dary) more thoroughly. For this purpose, correspondence with religious figures of Kazakhstan was organized (a folder with letters of 120 pages has been preserved in his archive), and the author’s memoirs, notes, etc. were also used. The dictionary contains biographies of 52 religious figures of Northern Kazakhstan in the 19th and 20th centuries. Of close importance to this work is a collection of four photo albums, in which Gylmani Saduakas collected more than 200 historical photographs reflecting the history of SADUM and Islam in Kazakhstan. [A. K. Muminov, A.J. Frank, 2015]

Discussion

Many authors in modern Kazakhstan historiography explore this problem, dividing it into several periods. For example, many historians, including B.M. Auanasova [Auanasova, 2007:56], conditionally divide the policy towards the clergy into 5 periods.

1. Depriving them of the right to vote;
2. Closure of mosques and cessation of religious education;

3. Confiscation of their property;
4. Link to foreign countries near and far abroad;
5. Death sentence.

Another historian researcher A.S. Zhanbosinova [Zhanbosinova, 2010:48], in her doctoral dissertation, taking into account the chronology of legislative acts and relevant events, identifies several stages of repressive religious policy:

1. 1917–1920 – directly covers revolutionary events, the “Red Terror” during the Civil War;
2. 1921–1923. – The famine years and the associated campaign to confiscate church valuables;
3. 1928–1933. – forced collectivization and associated peasant uprisings;
4. 1937–1938. – peak of terror, new and repeated arrests of clergy with a sentence of capital punishment (capital punishment);
5. 1945–1955 – the fight against religious concessions allowed during wartime, and a new round of repression.

The first two stages turned out to be the most tragic in terms of senseless murders. The author mentioned that Eastern Kazakhstan, like many other regions of the Soviet state, turned out to be an arena for the manifestation of “red” and “white” terror. At the initial stage, the arrests of religious ministers were not a mass phenomenon; these were most likely isolated cases; with the intensification of repressive policies, mass arrests and persecutions began with accusations: anti-Soviet agitation, counter-revolutionary propaganda, participation in counter-revolutionary groups and organizations, preparation of an armed uprising, agitation among believers against the collective farm movement, etc. All charges corresponded to Article 58 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR. [Goldin, 2000:254]

The first period (1917-1928) is characterized by a “sympathetic” attitude of the authorities towards Muslims, as evidenced by the Appeal to the Muslims of Russia and the East. This can be explained, on the one hand, by the precarious military situation of the Soviets at the time, and on the other hand, by the recent establishment of Bolshevik power. The appeal helped to solidify their position among broad segments of the population. Additionally, the first period saw the emergence of dual faith, as well as the cult of personality surrounding Lenin. Following the leader’s death, busts of Lenin were installed in all organizations, monuments were erected everywhere, and his images in the form of portraits and posters were displayed in many public places. Citizens of the Soviet Union were first obligated to extol V.I. Lenin, after which they could worship their own gods [Arapov, 2010: 20].

The second period (1928-1941) can be described as a time of ruthless eradication of all religious denominations in the Soviet Union. Harsh and total control was imposed over all representatives of the clergy, including those of Islam, throughout the territory. All religious institutions were subjected to closure, church property was confiscated, and other establishments took their place. Mullahs and church officials were persecuted, and the celebration of religious holidays was prohibited. State religious structures also fell victim to similar actions. The Central Spiritual Institution of Muslims was closed, which was revealed after the Second All-Union Congress of Muslims was repeatedly postponed, leading to the announcement of the suspension of this structure. Control over Islam during this period was exercised by organizations such as the USPD, and from 1934 onwards, by the PCIA [Arapov, 2010:13].

The third period (1941-1953) can be characterized as a period of the Soviet leadership’s softening stance towards the religious population. The Great Patriotic War forced the authorities to shift from a policy of “hard stick” to a more flexible approach, with certain concessions and attenuation. Religious institutions were reopened, the celebration of some religious holidays was permitted, and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SAMCA) was reinstated. However, alongside these changes, the Soviet government established the Council on Religious Cults in 1944, which implemented a series of measures to control religious practices and institutions [Arapov, 2011:25].

The initial step of the Soviet government in pursuing an anti-religious policy went in two directions. The first is to weaken and destroy the long-standing owners of spiritual traditions (saints, ishans, mullahs, etc.) who are responsible for the religion. Thus, the function of religion and the self-awareness of people will be radically changed and weakened. And secondly, to destroy the attitudes and will formed by religion and religious figures. To do this, they issued special decrees on the re-registration of mosques and on the mullahs paying taxes.[Sarsembina, Sarsembin, 2023:91] This point of view is written in more detail in the monograph «Policy of destruction of spirituality and persecution of representatives of religion» which was published recently in Aktobe.

Results

The history of Soviet researchers in solving problems of the national history of the USSR, as

well as of the union republics, was understudied for a long time. In 1917, the arrival of the Communists marked a significant moment for Kazakhstan and Russia. In the early days of their rule, the Bolsheviks published the “Address to All Working Muslims of Russia and the East,” clearly outlining their benevolent attitude towards the Muslim population. This address was the first Soviet official document addressing the “Muslim question.” It’s significant to remember that Russia was in a state of war at the time of the publication of this address. There was a division of spheres of influence of superpowers in former colonial territories. The Soviets, through their Address, called on the Muslims of the East to show “sympathy” and “support.” All religious institutions were declared “free” and “inviolable.” The decree of the Sovnarkom on the adoption of the “Address” also announced the decision to reproduce and translate this document into the languages of the Muslims of Russia and the East, indicating the Bolsheviks’ desire to make this document accessible to all layers of the population, characterizing it as populist and aimed at the masses (Valk, Obichkin, 1957:113-115).

Such actions can be explained by the fact that the leaders of the Bolshevik party and the Soviet state actively sought to mobilize Muslim peoples in the fight against their enemies, especially the countries of the Entente. For example, the Soviet People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, G.V. Chicherin, emphasized the extreme desirability of the swift movement of the “Muslim world against imperialism” [Goldin, 2000:117] On January 20th, the Bolsheviks published their next document – the Decree on the Separation of Church and State. This decree included provisions such as freedom of religious belief and non-interference of the government in education, among others [Arapov, 2010:371-372]. Analyzing the above-mentioned document, it can be concluded that when the Soviets came to power, their first step was to publicly announce the Appeal calling on Muslims to provide “support” and “sympathy.” The consolidation of Bolshevik positions provided impetus for further actions to control the situation in the Muslim world. The Decree on the establishment of the Commissariat was adopted, followed by the Decree on the separation of schools from the church. The introduction of socialism and the ideology of the Bolsheviks into the masses was intended to be carried out through the education of the younger generation. Four-tiered primary secular education became mandatory. Religious foundations took a back seat. However, it is worth noting that the implementation of the “school separation”

Decree occurred slowly in the challenging conditions of the Civil War of 1918-1920 and the early years of the New Economic Policy (NEP).

The Soviets, upon coming to power, first made public their Appeal calling on Muslims to provide “support” and “sympathy” to strengthen the Bolsheviks’ positions. This catalyzed further actions to control the situation in the Muslim world. Following this, the Decree on the separation of schools from the church was issued. In a report from the Aktobe City Archive titled “On the Work of Separating the Church from the State in the Aktobe Region,” the following information is provided. The received circular with instructions on implementing the decree emphasized the importance of timely execution. Accordingly, this information was disseminated to all districts and soon came into effect. Directives were given on the appropriation of church property at the local level, as well as on the prohibition of teaching religious laws in schools [SAAR, f. 3, op. 1, d. 265, p. 2]. The implementation of socialism and the ideology of the Bolsheviks was to be achieved through the education of the younger generation. Four-tiered primary secular education became mandatory, shifting the focus away from religious foundations. The transition from the Arabic alphabet to Latin script, and later to Cyrillic, became one of the key measures in the government’s secularization policy. The Kazakh population, predominantly practicing Islam, had a strong connection to the Arabic alphabet. Interpreters of the “Divine Law” written in Arabic script were held in deep respect and reverence. However, the abolition of the Baytursynov’s alphabet in 1929, along with the shift towards secular education and the separation of the church from schools as per the Decree of January 20, 1918, led to a decline in the authority of Islamic clergy and a gradual estrangement from them.

Analyzing the archival documents of the Aktobe region regarding the introduction of Cyrillic script, it is evident that mastering the new literacy was a top priority. It was mandatory to ensure that every resident, down to the smallest villages, received this knowledge. To achieve this, the establishment of “likpunks” – literacy elimination points and elementary literacy schools – was approved. To firmly establish the principles of full-fledged atheism and unwavering patriotism towards the Soviet Union among the population, a clear and well-planned effort was undertaken, encompassing all spheres of life. Educational institutions such as schools and technical colleges played a significant role in ensuring the younger generation was devoted to the party’s ideals. Starting from 1925, the study of the

“Foundations of Marxism-Leninism” which was a fusion of dialectical materialism and the history of the Communist Party became a mandatory subject. Furthermore, youth organizations were established, including the Octoberists, pioneers, and Komsomol members. Joining these organizations was seen as an honor, and it was viewed with respect and recognition by every citizen of the country. This served as another effective tool in the hands of the authorities for managing the population. The archival documents regarding the implementation of Marxist-Leninist education in the Aktobe region include plans, reports with lists of citizens involved, and information about agitators [SAAR, f.13, op. 3, d. 172, pp. 7-9].

The Bolsheviks carried out extensive work in the socio-political life of the country. Regional Agitprop boards (agitational propaganda) annually established plans for conducting propagandist lectures, readings, and seminars. Reports with summaries of the work conducted were submitted, and courses were created to train party workers to enlighten the population, particularly the indigenous inhabitants. Below are documents reflecting the situation in the Aktobe region.

One of the organizations engaged in anti-religious propaganda is the militant atheist organization. This organization was founded in 1925.

“The Charter of the Kazakh Union of Militant Atheists,” registered in the Central Administrative Department on June 28, 1928, under No. 30/8.

The goals and objectives of the union are:

1. The Union of Militant Atheists sets the task of uniting all conscious workers to organize active resistance against religion in all its manifestations and forms.

2. The Union of Militant Atheists sets the task of instilling in the consciousness of its members the necessity of conducting anti-religious propaganda in a form that would contribute to the fulfillment of the main goal of Soviet power, the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and its alliance with the peasantry.

3. To achieve this goal, the Union:

A) Organizes its cells in factories, plants, military units, educational institutions, villages, settlements, and rural areas.

B) Organizes and supports anti-religious propaganda in all forms: lectures, clubs, libraries, museums, courses, cinema, theatrical performances, etc.

B) Promotes the introduction of a new non-religious way of life among the broad masses.

The charter clearly outlines the structure of the organization, which consists of cells. These cells, in

turn, must consist of a minimum of 5 individuals. The document also specifies the activities that UMA members are required to carry out for the purpose of anti-religious propaganda [SAAR, f. 13, op. 3, d.172, pp. 3-5].

The central leadership clearly emphasized the necessity of conducting anti-religious education for students in educational institutions and political-educational establishments. A set of requirements and responsibilities for carrying out anti-religious work was imposed. To achieve these goals, it was necessary to provide thematic literature for reading rooms and educational institutions. For this purpose, it was recommended to supply them with the newspaper and magazine “Atheist,” as well as the monthly “Anti-Religionist” [SAAR, f.13, op. 3, d.172, p. 7].

In addition to printed publications, in 1929 textbooks and educational programs were published, including: «Textbook for Workers’ Anti-Religious Circles» with a preface by Em. Yaroslavsky, edited by A. Lukachevsky, “Anti-Religious Peasant Textbook” with a preface by Em. Yaroslavsky, “Lesson Plan for Workers’ Anti-Religious Circle”, “Lesson Plan for Peasant Anti-Religious Circle”, “Bashkir-Chuvash Program.” Furthermore, a list of recommended literature was provided in various categories: for schools and teachers, children’s and youth reading, anti-sectarian literature, and literature for educators [SAAR, f.151, op.1, d.17, pp. 12-13].

The categorization and the all-union organization of reading rooms, as well as the involvement of the entire population and the organization of UMA cells, indicate a clear orientation of the ideology towards all layers of society.

On March 20, 1930, the Central Council of the Union of Militant Atheists of the USSR presented the “Temporary Regulations on Work among Nomads.” Regarding the organizational aspect, it was instructed to establish communication with the nomads, create a favorable environment, and utilize local scientific resources for the expansion of anti-religious work in the field. Mobile red tents, yurts, and other similar structures would continue to be the primary means of cultural and educational work among the nomads. Clear instructions and practical tasks for anti-religious work were provided for these mobile structures. The main tasks included: explaining the class essence and nationalist-chauvinistic nature of the ideologies of tribalism, promoted by the clergy; popularizing the goals and ideas of the Union of Militant Atheists; providing assistance and organizing cells of the Union of Militant Atheists, among others. Anti-religious lectures and presen-

tations, and distribution of anti-religious posters, which were intended to replace literature for the less literate population, were to be conducted through these mobile structures in districts and villages [SAAR, f.151, op.1, d.17, pp. 15-16].

On the same day, "Development of Anti-Religious Work Issues in Women's Artels in the East" was published. In implementing the decisions of the 2nd Congress of the Union of Militant Atheists (Society of the Godless) regarding the integration of anti-religious propaganda into all types of work, women's artels played a significant role. The living conditions of female laborers in the East provided a favorable environment for their economic emancipation and facilitated the expansion of anti-religious propaganda." Upon joining the artel, a woman begins to live a somewhat different life than she did before. Being in the company of other women, connected with them by common interests of production and the interests of the new life, the Eastern laborer is already separating herself from seclusion, gravitating towards knowledge, culture, and public life. She is moving away from the influence of the Muslim clergy; the changed economic foundation contributes to the transformation of ideology..."

These conditions entailed a gradual alienation of women from traditional laws and customs, which was favorable for the expansion of anti-religious work. The first organization to address such issues was the Union of Militant Atheists (Society of the Godless). It was tasked with enlightening female members of artels, explaining that wearing the paranja and chadra was a significant obstacle to women's emancipation and detrimental to both the woman's and her child's health. In addition, the Union of Militant Atheists was responsible for involving women in fundamental concepts such as socialist structure, organizing excursions to factories, familiarizing them with industrialization, collectivization, and the restructuring of agriculture. [CSA RK, f.151, op.1, d.17, d.17] The fragment from the correspondence with the Council of People's Commissars of the Kazakh SSR and other organizations and institutions on matters of anti-religious propaganda, dated 1937 from the city archive of Almaty, characterizes a shift from a policy of tolerance towards believers to more stringent anti-religious propaganda. It emphasizes the importance of actively promoting atheism and combating religion in all its forms, especially in the context of preparations for the elections to the Supreme Soviet based on the Stalinist constitution. The Union of Workers of Higher Education and Scientific Institutions, comprising some of the best representatives of science, is urged to take a lead-

ing role in the fight against religious obscurantism. [CSA RK, f. 1648, op.1, d.3]

Starting from 1929, there were brutal persecutions against all religious denominations in the Soviet Union. During this period, mosques were closed, and religious valuables were confiscated through decrees and resolutions from above. In the city archive of the Aktobe region, there are preserved protocols and extracts from the Presidiums regarding this issue.

One of the organizations engaged in anti-religious propaganda is the organization of militant atheists. This organization had its origins in 1925. Cells of the Society of Militant Atheists (UMA) were formed across all regions, including in the Aktobe region.

Since 1930, information and questionnaires for religious figures of the Muslim faith have been collected in the Aktobe region. From some materials, it can be seen that some religious leaders had already been repressed or shot. The Aktobe district department of the OGPU has stored a lot of information about the persecution of mullahs and religious leaders of the Aktobe region. For example, Balmagambet Takan. Shoot, personal property confiscated. Case No. 9497 of the Temir RO NKVD on Balmagambet T, arrested on 20.11.1937, born in 1889, native of No. 13 aul of the Temir district of the Aktobe region. By social status – bai-mullah. Accused of being a member of a counter-revolutionary pan-Islamist organization, among collective farmers conducted defeatist counter-revolutionary agitation. [Esenbetova and others, 2023:291]

Along with the confiscated bai-kulaks, religious figures, mullahs, ishans were also accused of participating in and creating counter-revolutionary organizations in the Aktobe region. In one of the reports of the Aktobe regional department of the OGPU, one can find lists of names of mullahs who were accused of being members of counter-revolutionary bourgeois-nationalist, rebel organizations. For example, in Aktobe, Kanalin led the work of uniting anti-Soviet-minded people – bais, mullahs, etc. in Temir, Aktobe, Uilsky, Tabynsky districts, with the goal of renewing the rebel movement. [Abenov and others, 2023:226-229]

The issue of negligence in carrying out anti-religious work at the local level was raised by Comrade Liskovets at a meeting with the secretaries of the Communist Party cells in 1929. It was reported that there was weak leadership in atheist circles, which resulted in their dissolution and a lack of leaders. The meeting decided to conduct an urgent inspection of the state of work in the atheist circles and also

to convene a party meeting of atheists to address the organization of anti-religious work. [SAAR, f. 9-P, op.1, d.193, p.1]

In response to this report, a meeting was held, and attached to Protocol No. 31 of the Bureau of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party from August 3, 1929, was the following resolution: "... In connection with the advance of socialist elements against the capitalist elements in cities, villages, and towns, with the intensification of class struggle, class enemies actively oppose all measures of the party and Soviet power, hiding behind a religious facade, using religious communities and sects, where they engage in counterrevolutionary activities and oppose any cultural initiatives of socialist construction..."

The resolution noted cases of high activity among sectarians, who are actively working among the poor, taking advantage of their economic situation. Under the pretext of "fraternal" assistance, wealthy peasants, village elders, and Muslim clergy involved the poor population and actively used them, thereby blunting class struggle in the villages. [SAAR, f.151, op. 1, d. 17, p. 1]

Regarding the anti-religious work in the Aktobe Region, Protocol №40 of the Meeting of the Bureau of the Aktobe Regional Committee of the Communist Party in 1935 reports the following. In the region, there is a complete absence of anti-religious propaganda and cells of the Union of Militant Atheists. It is noted that there is a weak implementation of anti-religious education for children and adoles-

cents in schools. Meetings occur sporadically and lack proper guidance, creating a favorable environment for the development of religious activities by Muslim and Russian religious communities. It is important to highlight the ideological nature of the report, where the Regional Committee emphasizes: "Underestimating anti-religious work means underestimating the ideological education of the working masses and failing to implement the decisions of the 17th party conference, which has set the crucial political task of 'Overcoming the vestiges of capitalism in the economy and in people's consciousness'."

A decision was made during the meeting to establish a regional bureau of the Council of the Union of Militant Atheists, consisting of Mr. Kaspakbaev (Chairman), Mr. Artykbaev (Vice-Chairman), Mr. Abrashikhin, Mr. Golovko, Mr. Zhiloboy (Secretary), Mr. Sharipov, and Mr. Alibaev, to expand anti-religious efforts in the region.

It was noted that in Aktobe, due to the absence of anti-religious work, religious communities demonstrate the highest level of activity in the region. [SAAR, f. 13, op. 4, d. 22, pp. 384-386] In 1938, the organizing committee of the Union of Militant Atheists was approved, and a new leadership was appointed with Comrade Zhigunenko as the chairman. They were tasked with convening a conference of the Union of Militant Atheists no later than August 20, 1938. [SAAR, f. 14, op. 1, d. 803, p. 38]

Below is a table on the work done by the UMA in 1938-1939.

Diagram of the Aktyubinsk regional council of the union of militant atheists

Members of the Union of Militant Atheists in 1938.	Work done in 1938.	Members of the UMA in 1939.	Work done in 1939.
Total members in the region: 2562	Organized branches of the UMA: 137	Total members in the region: 10000	Organized branches of the UMA: 371
Male members: 2219	Lectures conducted: 9 Reports given: 86	Male members: 7526	Lectures conducted: 160 Reports given: 215
Female members: 343	Reading sessions and discussions: 232	Female members: 2474	Reading sessions and discussions: 627
Party members and candidates: 296	Artistic performances: 13	Party members and candidates: 1362	Artistic performances: 23
Members and candidates of the Komsomol: 374	Total attendance at events: 3264	Members and candidates of the Komsomol: 2237	Total attendance at events: 14300

[SAAR, f. 13, op. 9, d. 297, p.5]

We managed to find out some of the centers of Ishanism and Muridism and the preparation of mullahs. Thus, in the Temir district in the aul where the seichaks kolkhoh “Kozhasay” lived, Ishan Mullagazy Kultuma Ogly, who had 10 mosques, a large madrasah and hundreds of murids in different places. He was in Mecca three times and had influence on the entire region. Many mullahs came out of his madrasah, who became imams of the mosque in the auls, one of them Khudaibergenov Zakaria lives in the settlement. Emba of the Jurun district, and one of his murids Akhmediyev Sultangali lives in the village Alga. [SAAR, f. 13, op. 19, d. 200, p.1-8]

Despite the increase in the number of participants in the region, ideologically, this organization did not yield significant results, as seen from the protocols and reports of UMA meetings. For example, in Protocol No. 1 of the Aktiubinsk Oblast Conference of UMA dated January 8, 1939, several comrades representing different districts (Makhonov – Chelkar district, Dogarev – Temirtau district, Sokolova – Novorossiysk district, Bisenov – Tabyn district, etc.) reported on issues such as poor UMA work in the districts, insufficient anti-religious propaganda, lack of literature, public ignorance, and inadequate support from above.

From the protocol, as told by Comrade Minyailo from the Kluchevoy district: “When I was tasked with organizing an SVB cell, I didn’t even know what UMA was. Out of 1500 students, only 75 joined UMA. The District Committee of the Party does not and did not provide us with any practical assistance. The District Conference of UMA was held in a haphazard manner. It was supposed to be held on January 5, 1939, postponed to January 6, and both times it did not take place.” As told by Comrade Shabelnikov from the Steпноy district: “To say that anti-religious propaganda is conducted here regularly would be a stretch. For example, in our district, it happens on a case-by-case basis. There have been cases in our district where Komsomol members took their children to be baptized in the city of Orenburg. In the district, there are many instances of religiosity.” [SAAR, f. 13, op. 8, d. 272, p. 2-4]

In some organizations, the work of the UMA is well organized. An example is given of the UMA cell at the Regional Police, where the secretary consistently conducts readings and lectures among the members of the collective and their families. Additionally, the districts of Uil, Temir, and Djurun have achieved good results in anti-religious activities. [SAAR, f.13, op.10, d. 257, pp. 1-2, 6-7]

In the 1930s, there was an intensified effort to disseminate Marxist-Leninist theory among all layers of the population. However, in the local implementation, especially in the depths of the country, various difficulties arose. For instance, in the Aktiubinsk region, the situation contradicted the plans, as can be inferred from an excerpt of the resolution of the regional committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on the results of political education for 1931-1932. According to the document, the region showed an exceptionally weak coverage of Marxist-Leninist education, with a significant shortfall in the control figures set by the Central Committee for the growth of party organization (set at 132,609 individuals, but in reality only 38,221 individuals). The forms of political education, particularly in rural areas, were not well established and often organized spontaneously. Current affairs circles, initial and candidate schools, in reality, were primarily reading circles for newspapers and the study of the party charter. The document states that all of this undermines the achievements in expanding the political education network in the 1931-32 academic year and to a certain extent is the result of insufficient growth in the cadre of candidates, among others. This leads to the lowest level of Marxist-Leninist education at all levels, and consequently, the distortion of Marxist-Leninist theory and the political party. The implementation of the Soviet government’s plans was also justified by a lack of qualified personnel for political education propaganda (the completion rate for Comvuz was 60%, plus a significant percentage dropped out, leaving only 25 out of the initial 114 individuals in two years), as well as the prioritization of economic campaigns at the expense of education. (SAAR, f. 13, op. 1, d. 210, p. 2-3).

The resolution of the Bureau of the Kazakh Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) dated October 28, 1934, regarding the organization of Marxist-Leninist education reports the following. Despite Stalin’s emphasis at the 17th Party Congress on the importance of ideological work and raising the theoretical level of the party organization, in the majority of regional and district organizations, insufficient attention is given to this crucial issue. The work of the cultural and educational departments in the South Kazakhstan and Aktiubinsk regions is particularly unsatisfactory. They do not carry out their duties, show no systematic concern for party education, and mechanically staff the party bodies without taking into account the level and desire of each candidate. (SAAR, f.13, op.3, d. 172, p. 1-2).

As a result of poor performance, in 1936, according to the decision of the fifth plenum of the Kazakh Regional Committee, the Aktiubinsk Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) decided to organize a 2-year school for propagandists in Aktiubinsk to train highly qualified personnel for the party and Komsomol education network. (SAAR, f. 13, op.5, d. 286, p.P 1)

According to a report sent to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan regarding the state of anti-religious propaganda in the Aktiubinsk region in 1939, it was found that printed anti-religious work was underdeveloped. There were articles and anti-religious notes, but there was no daily struggle against religious vestiges on the pages of newspapers.

Regarding the work of the UMA, it is mentioned that there were 312 cells organized in councils and collective farms, totaling 8610 members. District conferences of the UMA were held promptly, and lecture groups were formed to deliver lectures on anti-religious topics and conduct discussions. However, despite all the efforts, there were still instances of counter-revolutionary actions by church officials in the region. It is reported that mullahs and psalmists engaged in agitation during the spring plowing season celebrated various religious holidays, and performed religious rites. Those responsible were punished with forced labor, some received educational work, and some of the "obscurantists" were even expelled from the collective farm. (SAAR, f. 13, op. 8, d. 246, p. 7-10)

With the onset of the third period, there was a relaxation of religious policy. The Soviet state was engaged in a war against fascist forces, and efforts towards anti-religious initiatives took a back seat. Previously closed mosques and church institutions were reopened. Spiritual administrations of Muslims resumed their activities, and the celebration of certain religious rites and holidays was permitted. While anti-religious measures were somewhat eased, they did not go entirely unnoticed. In 1944, the Council for Religious Affairs was established, later renamed the Council for Religious Affairs in 1965, which implemented a series of requirements. These included directing all efforts towards limiting the activities of religious institutions; preaching, prayers, and worship were to take place only within the walls of religious establishments; the need for constant monitoring of spiritual centers; prohibiting any organizations deemed overly fanatic or radical in nature; and establishing communication between state spiritual structures and regions only to the ex-

tent permitted by the government. These requirements remained in force until the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

Analyzing the events of 1917-1953 using archival materials and trying to understand what factors determined the cruelty and repressive persecution against ministers of religious worship in a country that has always believed and respected the faith, it is not difficult to understand that the higher political leadership that came to power declared a course towards the eradication of religion and created conditions for the mass closure of temples and mosques. However, the political attack went further; it began to be subjective, and the subject-bearer of religious spirituality began to be destroyed. The ideological significance of the repressive policy towards clergy was the destruction of subjects capable of influencing the content of individual and public consciousness. To establish total control over the mentality of the Soviet people, it was the clergy who were subject to repression.

Demographic statistics on those repressed who have direct and indirect affiliation with religion indicate that the peak of arrests occurred in 1937-1938 (53%).

Indeed, one can conclude that Soviet policy towards religion was not consistent, with periods of both increased and decreased pressure on the clergy. The implementation of decrees had its nuances and shortcomings. The population reacted to the innovations with caution, but ultimately, the Communists achieved their goal – to create a unified nation – the Soviet people.

Two centuries of atheism consigned to oblivion the tradition of treating religion with a preference for morality and moral responsibility, eliminating from the consciousness of people that which had a certain value. The lack of meaningful ideological work among the population today is exploited in the best possible way by destructive religious organizations, which have so many negative consequences for Kazakh society because of its "trustfulness" and the lack of formation of a confident religious worldview.

Sources:

CSA RK – Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan
SAAR – State archive of Aktobe region

References

- Auanasova, B. M. (2007). History of the evolution of religious relations in Kazakhstan (using the example of Islam 1941-1991) (Doctoral dissertation abstract). Uralsk.
- Mukhtarova, G. D. (2007). Islam in Soviet Kazakhstan. Aktobe.
- Zhanbosinova, A. S. (2010). The repressive policy of the Soviet state in the 20-50s of the XX century (on the example of East Kazakhstan). Ust-Kamenogorsk.
- Arapov, D. Yu., & Kosach, G. G. (Eds.). (2010). Islam and the Soviet State. Issue 1: (based on materials of the Eastern Department of the OGPU. 1926). Moscow: Marjani Publishing House.
- Ghilmani, S. (2015). Biographies of the Islamic Scholars of Our Times (Vol. I, 2nd ed., A. K. Muminov, A. J. Frank, A. Nurmanova, S. Mollaqaanaghatuli, U. Utepbergenova, & T. Zhumanov, Eds.). Almaty.
- Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan (CSA RK), f.151, op.1, d.17.
- CSA RK, f.1648, op.1, d.3.
- State Archive of the Aktobe Region (SAAR), f.13, op.19, d.200, pp.1-8.
- SAAR, f.13, op.3, d.172, pp.1-2.
- SAAR, f.13, op.5, d.286, p.1.
- SAAR, f.13, op.8, d.246, pp.7-10.
- Arapov, D. Yu. (Ed.). (2010). Islam and the Soviet State (1917-1936): Collection of documents. Moscow: Marjani Publishing House.
- Arapov, D. Yu. (Ed.). (2011). Islam and the Soviet State (1944-1990): Collection of documents. Moscow: Marjani Publishing House.
- Valk, S. N., & Obichkin, G. D. (1957). Decrees of the Soviet Government (Vol. 1). Moscow.
- Goldin, V. I. (2000). Russia in the Civil War. Arkhangelsk.
- Kurochkin, P. K. (1971). Evolution of modern Russian Orthodoxy. Moscow: Thought.
- Gordiyenko, N. S. (1987). Modern Russian Orthodoxy. Leningrad: Lenizdat.
- Alekseev, V. A. (1991). Illusions and dogmas: Relationships between the Soviet state and religion. Moscow: Politizdat.
- Sarsembina, K. K., & Sarsembin, U. K. (2023). Policy of destruction of spirituality and persecution of representatives of religion (1918-1938). Aktobe.
- Abenov, D. K., Abenova, B. S., & Beyskaliyeva, N. A. (2023). Repression of rich people, kulaks, and middle peasants in the Aktobe region. Archival documents (Materials of the regional commission for the full rehabilitation of victims of political repression). Aktobe.
- Espenbetova, A. M., Ganibaeva, Z. A., Begimbaeva, Z. S., Maden, A., & Sainov, D. A. (2023). Echo of terrible years (1928-1950) (Collection of archival documents). Aktobe.

Information about the author:

Guldana Abaykyzy Mambetova – PhD student of the Faculty of History, Aktobe Regional University named after K. Zhubanov, Aktobe, Kazakhstan. E-mail: guldanamambetova@gmail.com

Автор туралы мәлімет:

Гүлдана Абайқызы Мамбетова – тарих факультетінің докторанты, Қ.Жұбанов атындағы Ақтөбе өңірлік университеті, Ақтөбе қ., Қазақстан. E-mail: guldanamambetova@gmail.com

Сведения об авторе:

Гүлдана Абайқызы Мамбетова – докторант исторического факультета, Актюбинский региональный университет имени К. Жубанова, г. Актобе, Казахстан. E-mail: guldanamambetova@gmail.com

Поступило: 22.05.2024

Принято: 20.08.2024