

RELIGION LITERACY IN THE CONTEXT OF KAZAKHSTAN'S CIVIL DISCOURSE

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Abstract. The formation of a civil community takes place in the process of statehood formation and involves the development of a system of communication between communities and social groups that have different characteristics of economic, ethnic, linguistic, confessional, settlement, and demographic plans. In the light of the above, one of the most important functions of the state is to promote the formation of a civil discourse that is understandable to all social groups without exception. Depending on the characteristics of the community, the civil discourse can coincide with the national, confessional discourse or represent a supra-corporate, supra-group integral. Since the 2000s, in Kazakhstan (which also reflects the global trend), concepts that set the principles of orientation of modern man in the post – secular world – a world in which a large-scale return of religion to everyday life and the practices of individuals, social communities and institutions began to actively penetrate into civil discourse. To fully participate in the communications conditioned by the discourse of this type, individuals need religious literacy. The request for its formation is received by the education system, which acts as an instinct for the socialization of individuals. The article examines the transformation of Kazakhstan's civil discourse from the point of view of the presence in it of concepts reflecting the principles of state-confessional relations at various stages of Kazakhstan's development over the years of independence. The authors undertake a special analysis of what challenges the education system faces and how it solves them in the context of the formation of civil discourse.

Keywords: state-confessional relations, civil discourse, communications, consolidation, independence of Kazakhstan, religion literacy, religion education, religious education.

Introduction

Civil communities, which are formed by the institution of the state, integrate representatives of various social groups into the processes of the common life. The idea of citizenship sublets the moments of ancestral, ethnic, confessional, professional and other accessories, assumes that a person fits into the solution of non-daily, strategic tasks together with other people. One of the conditions for the existence of such a

community is the presence of a civil discourse that captures the basic attitudes of the community that ensure its preservation, as well as forms a language that functions in the sphere of discussion and adoption of decisions that are generally significant for this community. This implies the presence of social communication channels, dialogue platforms, and the presence of civil discourse – an acceptable system of language constructs that can be understood and applied by most representatives of the civil community.

If in micro-communities the development of discourse as a communicative system occurs spontaneously, then in large and complex communities it involves the presence of an special institutes. Participants in the development of civil discourse can be politicians, ideologists, media representatives, religious leaders, civil activists, scientists, teachers, etc., who are involved in solving various tasks related to aspects of its functioning. Namely, with its design, translation, consolidation in the public consciousness, and, therefore, with the preparation of fellow citizens to participate in a constructive dialogue about the solution of various socially significant tasks.

The education system is one of the key institutions for the socialization of the general population, the formation of individuals ‘ ability to integrate into the space of civil dialogue and political participation. The education system, receiving an individual “at the entrance” (brought up in a more or less isolated family environment), “at the exit” releases an individual who is ready for independent orientation in the system of social interactions, functioning in the labor market. In complex communities with confessional differentiation, the education system should promote the ability of representatives of different religious / non-religious groups to interact with each other on the basis of civil discourse. This implies the presence in the education system of orientation to the formation of literacy in matters of religion, the ability of an individual to implement it in their behavior, communication, and activities.

It should be noted that in the modern world, the formation of literacy in the field of religion has two main forms: intra-confessional (religious education) and non-confessional (religion education) [1]. At the same time, Peter Schreiner, President of the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School (2003-2020), moderator of the Coordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe (until 2020), notes that in the modern world, the transition of public schools to non-denominational education, which is more in line with the needs of the global world, prevails [2, p.18]. As for the Kazakhstan education system, it was formed from the very beginning (in the 1990s) on the basis of the principle of separation of churches from the state, and literacy in religious matters was formed as religion literacy. This reflected the peculiarities of state-confessional relations, and allowed the multi-confessional Kazakhstan community to build constructive interaction on various issues.

The concept of “religion literacy” is well-established in the Kazakhstan social studies and assumes the obligation of basic knowledge about the issues of religion for each person, allowing him to fit into the requirements of the common life. Religious literacy has a twofold significance for the formation of civil discourse: 1) to involve representatives of confessional / non-confessional groups in non-conflict practices of

resolving issues related to the implementation of the right to freedom of religion; 2) for correct interaction with representatives of different religions on issues of the widest range, which implies the presence of consideration of cultural specifics as a condition for mutual correctness in communication.

The specifics of the tasks for the Kazakhstan education system were largely determined by the fact that religious ideas, institutions, and practices gained a significant place in public life after the seventy-year history of Soviet-style secularism. Religion was returning to a society in which the continuity of religious traditions had been interrupted. At the same time, religious ideas, institutions, and practices of the last decades were formed and integrated into the system of public relations based on the principles of the market and conditioned by the existence of a national state in the global world. This meant that Kazakhstan was in search of its own model of state-confessional relations, and the education system faced a significant challenge-to prepare a new generation for orientation in life in the conditions of repeated revision of the issue of the status of religion and reformatting of civil discourse.

The purpose of this article is to consider religion literacy as a condition for the formation of civil discourse in Kazakhstan during the independence era.

Methodology

The authors consider the logic of the formation of the Kazakhstan's civil discourse in connection with the presence in it of concepts that orient fellow citizens in the sphere of religious life. The basis of the review is the discourse analysis of documents, scientific and educational literature as sources reflecting the experience of the formation of civil discourse in Kazakhstan. Discourse analysis, which was formed as a method of linguistics in the early twentieth century, later became widespread in other areas of scientific research. In this regard, it is even customary to talk about a linguistic turn in philosophy and social studies.

The Austrian scholar R. Wodak, known as the author-developer of the discourse-historical approach, recommends considering discourse as a language used in speech or writing, and more precisely – “as a form of social practice”. The discourse socially constitutive, as well as socially constituted – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, social identities of people, groups and their relationships. It constitutes-in the sense of helping to maintain and reproduce the social status quo and, at the same time, contributes to its transformation [3, p.15].

The analysis of the discourse involves the identification of the socio-cultural foundations of its formation, the identification of institutions that ensure its design, translation, functioning, understanding of its communicative potential in concrete historical conditions, and correction. In the context of the undertaken research, the authors identify the most popular concepts, consider them as indicators of the activity of the Kazakhstan political and expert community in the development of communication practices by correcting or reformatting civil discourse at different stages of the formation of the Kazakhstan model of state-confessional relations.

The Birth of Civil Discourse and Religious Literacy

Kazakhstan's civil discourse, which ensures the communication of individuals, communities and groups, determines the functioning of social institutions, has passed a thirty-year period. Due to the special significance of religion in the life of Kazakhstan, civil discourse implies the presence of concepts that provide communication within the multi-confessional community, the harmonization of relations and processes in it.

Already at the first stage, which covered the 1990s, Kazakhstan determined the general direction of its formation in the direction of secularism, the inadmissibility of mutual interference of religion and politics, respect for the rights and freedoms of citizens regardless of their religion. The legislation of the 1990s laid the necessary legal foundations for state-confessional relations and provided equal opportunities for religious associations to exercise their functions [4; 5; 6]. In general, until the late 1990s, Kazakhstan was dominated by the position of the indifference of the state in relation to religion. Thus, in the 90s, the supervisory bodies for religious affairs were disbanded – the Council for Religious Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Council for Relations with Religious Organizations under the Administration of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the issues of coordinating relations with religious associations were transferred to the Ministry of Information and Public Consent.

The civic discourse of this period was largely determined by the politicization of vast social strata inspired by the independence of the country. It was dominated by the concepts of economic and political nature: “sovereignty”, “independence”, “international recognition”, “self-determination”, “market”, “democracy”, “rights and freedoms”, “consolidation”, “interethnic harmony”, “equality of all nations and nationalities”, “reforms”, “political stability”, “modernization” [6; 7; 8]. The attitude to religious issues was shaped by the functioning of the concepts of “secularism “and”freedom of religion”. These concepts were developed on the basis of Western socio-political thought and rhetoric. The theories of “open society”, “consumer society”, “modernization”, etc. were particularly popular among Kazakhstan authors. The scientific community of Kazakhstan supplemented the sphere of civil discourse with ideas and concepts developed during the research of religion in new historical conditions, reconstruction of religious views of thinkers of the past, etc. The appeal to the historical experience of the Kazakh people and the reconstruction of the views of its spiritual and intellectual leaders contributed to the solution of the strategic task of the independent state – the formation of a new Kazakhstan identity, building continuity with the historical past.

During this period, the education system did not have any special tasks regarding the formation of religion literacy. This position can be largely explained by the non-religious nature of the population in the public space, inherited from the Soviet past. The values of democracy and market society, as well as Kazakhstan's identity, were brought to the fore in the formation of civil discourse.

The situation changed in the late 1990s, when there was a sharp activation of religious extremist organizations tried to establish their influence on the territory of

Kazakhstan, which caused the need to review the state policy in the religious sphere. In connection with the spread of religious radicalism on an international scale, Kazakhstan politicians and scientists in public discussions offered many options for changing the legislation. As a result, the path of further development of the secular principle was chosen, which was to ensure the formation of a modern stable multinational state [10; 11; 12]. At the same time, the idea of secularism and freedom of religion has already been understood not as these values once and for all, but as values that need to be defended, protected through the development and implementation of special programs in the field of religion, the implementation of information and educational activities, and the activation of religious research. The

Kazakhstan's civil discourse of the "zero years" was gradually filled with elements of rhetoric related to the problematization of the status of religion and provided concepts for the education system. Thus, along with the concepts of "Kazakhstan's identity", "Mangilik El", "Eurasianism", "secular state", "consolidation around the Kazakh people", the concepts of "religious extremism", "Kazakhstan's model of inter-ethnic and interfaith harmony", "multiethnic and multi-confessional Kazakhstan", "tolerance", "dialogue of religions", "Kazakhstan as a dialogue platform of world religions" were strengthened in the civil discourse.

It should be noted that during this period, the world as a whole was deeply concerned about the intensification of international terrorism, the ideology of which organizations was often formed on the basis of religious doctrines. During this period, the issue of the crisis of secularism, overcoming xenophobia, and building a dialogue between representatives of various faiths became more active in world philosophy and science, as well as in international forums and platforms. In the field of philosophy and social sciences, a sharp discussion is unfolding in connection with the concept of post-secularism.

One of the most significant international documents of this period was the Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools (2007), addressed to the governments of the OSCE participating states [13]. This document focused on the non-denominational teaching of religions, taking into account the principles of respect for the rights of everyone to freedom of religion and belief, focusing on creating a climate of tolerance and mutual respect.

In Kazakhstan, at this stage (or rather, in 2004), an elective subject "Fundamentals of Religious Studies" appeared in schools. The introduction of the subject was accompanied by heated discussions around its content. In particular, the discussion of the issue of the school textbook received a special resonance. A series of accusations of bias of one kind or another fell on the authors of the first textbooks [14]. Today it seems obvious that there could not have been a different situation with the textbook and the content of the course "Fundamentals of Religious Studies". In the absence of clear certainty about teaching approaches, and in the context of ongoing discussions about the relationship between religious freedom and national security, any textbook has the potential to become the target of criticism. In the context of public discussions of the "zero years", which often took on a dramatic character, there was a development of approaches to the formation of competencies in the field of religion, presented in the conditions of a secular public schools in the form of religion literacy.

It should be noted that during this period, the term “religion literacy” becomes commonly used in Kazakhstan social studies. The use of the word “*religion*” (religion studies) is noteworthy, indicating the confirmation of the secular nature of Kazakhstan’s education and society as a whole. As mentioned above, the transfer of competencies in the field of religion can be carried out both along the confessional (religious education) and non-confessional (religion education / religious studies education) path [1]. There are similarities between religious and religion education. It consists, first of all, in the fact that there is a common object of study – religion, the manifestation in public life of its features that have left an imprint on historical events, traditions of the people, rituals and customs. But religious and religion education have different goals, objectives, principles, means, methods, and content. The most significant difference between them is that the purpose of religious education is to educate a believer through religious actions and the creation of a certain way of life.

Religious education is the formation, the consecration of a believer, accompanied by the formation of a way of life. In Kazakhstan, religious education at the stages of the country’s development was possible only for those who consciously choose their own religious affiliation for themselves or for their children and cannot be carried out within the framework of general education institutions.

Religion education presupposes a scientific and research attitude to religion as a socio-cultural phenomenon. The solution of pedagogical tasks within the framework of a secular educational institution is not connected with the promotion of the entry of a citizen into the “right” religious denomination. Religion here is viewed as an integral part of culture in its connection and interaction with other areas of human life and activity. The transfer of such knowledge is aimed at improving the secular culture of interfaith communication.

It is also noteworthy to use the word “*literacy*” in relation to religion competence, which is understood as a set of basic knowledge and skills necessary for life in society, comparable, for example, to reading and writing.

It is important to note that knowledge about religion, information about religious traditions, values, and holidays alone do not give a person a sufficient basis for orientation in modern society. It is important to be able to relate them, to fit them into the real historical and cultural conditions of the present, the current moment, based on the importance of the civil community as a real social unit, of which we are a part. This is due to the development and development of principles as attitudes of cognizing thinking and active attitude to the world, which are included in the conceptual core of the worldview, constituting it. Already in the “zero years”, the principles of orientation in society, assumed by religious literacy, were formed. Through the education system and other institutions of civil discourse formation, the principles of civic responsibility, a secular culture of interfaith communication, and tolerance began to be established. In the context of Kazakhstan’s civil discourse, they provided the ability to carry out a productive dialogue between representatives of various confessional worlds, and to adequately critically assess various religious positions.

***Reformatting the Requirements for Religious Literacy in the Context
of the Reset of State-Confessional Relations***

By the end of the 2000s, Kazakhstan had developed a deep understanding that the secular nature of the state does not exclude active interaction with religious associations, coordination of their activities, and promotion of the involvement of the population in civil discourse as a field of communication in which representatives of groups with different status are guided in relation to the issue of religion. In the next period, which covers the period *from 2011 to 2017*, the institutional vertical and horizontal coordination of religious life were built: 1) May 18, 2011. under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, an authorized body has appeared – the Agency for Religious Affairs. Special control by the president became an indicator of the importance of religious issues during this period; 2) in the regions, departments for religious affairs under akimats were gradually transformed into departments.

At the same time, in accordance with the requests of practice in Kazakhstan, there is a further institutionalization of religious studies that serves as a sphere for the development and translation of concepts of an updated civil discourse. It should be noted that its core was the idea of cooperation between the state and traditional religions. Since 2011, republican forums of religious scholars have been held, the purpose of which was to form platforms that integrate experts, provide a conceptual framework that guides the intellectual flow of civil discourse.

The year 2011 was also marked by the adoption of a new law on religion, which is still in force (if there is criticism) [15]. Its wording is no longer focused on the absolutization of the idea of secularism, but on the clear regulation of the status and activities of religious associations, the establishment of the necessary legal restrictions. Based on this law, the State has started systematic work on the registration of religious associations. In addition, the 2011 law on religion focuses on the special role of traditional religions and, above all, Sunni Islam of the Hanafi persuasion and Orthodox Christianity. The authors of the law assumed that the support of traditional religions would become a kind of shield from external influences, as evidenced by the practices of the subsequent period up to 2017.

Civil discourse at this time was colored mainly by religious tones. The concepts of “traditional religions”, “consolidation potential of traditional religions”, “traditional religions against extremism”, “universal values”, “dialogue of religions”, “tolerance” (understood as cautious, limited tolerance) become decisive in the issues of ideological justification of the mechanisms of consolidation of society. At that time, secondary and higher schools were actively involved in the formation of religion literacy among young people and various groups of the population. At the state level, the question was raised about the staffing of the education system by specialists with religious studies competencies, who could become effective agents of socialization for both students at various levels of education and representatives of various professional categories. For example, religion literacy courses were held en masse for teachers, civil servants, representatives of law enforcement agencies, ministers of religious cults, etc.

In 2017, the Kazakhstan's civil discourse was mainly determined by the ideas of the state program "Rukhani Zhangyru" [16]. This program does not pay special attention to religious issues. Objective changes in the status of religion in the Kazakhstan model of public consent can be characterized based on the formulation of the Concept of State Policy in the religious sphere of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2017-2020 [17], which as a guideline notes that it is aimed at consolidating efforts to develop state policy in the religious sphere, developing guidelines for the further development of the Kazakhstan model of state – confessional and inter-confessional relations, based on the features of the historical and cultural heritage of the Kazakhstan people. It is also symptomatic that in Kazakhstan's schools, the elective subject "Fundamentals of Religious Studies" has been replaced by the subject "Secularism and fundamentals of religious studies" since 2017.

The civil discourse of this period is defined by the concepts of "cult of knowledge", "openness of consciousness", "pragmatism", "competitiveness", "preservation of national identity", "evolutionary development", "sacred geography", "Tugan Zher", "Great Steppe", "Turkic civilization". The attitude to religious issues in the context of Kazakhstan's civil discourse is determined by the concepts of "secularism", "freedom of religion", "civil and confessional identity". The difference in the formation of the content of these concepts in comparison with previous periods is related to their functioning in the context of a post-secular society, in which the return of religion has already taken place.

The undertaken analysis of the formation of civil discourse in Kazakhstan and the status of the sphere of development of religious concepts that supplement it, makes it possible to conclude that the formation of religion literacy in the period of independence took place in changing conditions. The concepts of civil discourse that formalize the attitude to religious issues occupied a different status in it, moving from the periphery to the core and again to the periphery. They were filled with different meanings in connection with the change in social practice, each time forming new constellations with old and new concepts. This significantly complicated the tasks of the education system, which was primarily entrusted with the task of forming religion literacy of students.

Conclusion

Understanding the tasks of the education system in connection with the need to form religion literacy through the prism of the formation of civil discourse in Kazakhstan is useful for teachers, methodologists, managers involved in the socialization of students. Taking into account the way of formation of civil discourse gives an understanding of its historicity, conditioned by the challenges that arise at new stages of the development of society. This knowledge helps to adequately navigate in a changing context, to form their own pedagogical strategy and adjust the educational process based on strategic, legal and other regulatory documents, as well as taking into account the needs of students – real living people with their life goals, upbringing characteristics and different social origins. Understanding pedagogical goals and objectives both in the context of cross-cutting cultural perspectives and universal values, and in the context of specific historical circumstances set by life here, in Kazakhstan of the XXI century,

will help not to become a hostage of unpredictable changes in circumstances, individual situations, and also to provide students with a decent preparation for real life, to participate not only in the functioning of civil discourse, but also in its development.

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Қазақстанның азаматтық дискурс аясындағы дінтанулық сауаттылық

Аңдатпа. Азаматтық қоғамдастықтың қалыптасуы мемлекеттіліктің құрылу процесі негізінде жүреді және экономикалық, этникалық, тілдік, конфессиялық, қоныс аудару, демографиялық жоспарлары бойынша әртүрлі сипаттағы қауымдастықтар мен әлеуметтік топтар арасындағы байланыс жүйесін дамытуды қамтиды. Жоғарыда айтылғандарды ескере отырып, мемлекеттің маңызды қызметтерінің бірі барлық әлеуметтік топтар үшін түсінікті азаматтық дискурстың қалыптасуына ықпал ету болып

табылады. Қауымдастықтың ерекшеліктеріне байланысты азаматтық дискурс ұлттық, конфессиялық дискурсқа сәйкес келуі немесе корпоративтік, топтық интегралдық сипатта болуы мүмкін.

2000-шы жылдардан бастап Қазақстанда (әлемдік трендтің көрсеткішіне де сәйкес) азаматтық дискурсқа заманауи адамды постсекулярлық әлемде - яғни, дін ауқымды түрде жеке тұлғалардың, әлеуметтік қауымдастықтар мен институттардың күнделікті өмірі мен практикасына қайта оралған әлемде бағдарлау қағидаттарын белгілейтін тұжырымдамалар белсенді түрде ене бастады. Осындай үлгідегі дискурстан туындаған байланыстарға толық қатысу үшін жеке тұлғаларға дінтанулық сауаттылық қажет. Оны қалыптастыру индивидтердің әлеуметтенуіне қатысатын институт ретінде білім беру жүйесіне жүктеледі.

Мақалада Қазақстанның тәуелсіздік жылдарындағы әртүрлі даму кезеңдеріндегі мемлекеттік-конфессиялық қатынастардың принциптерін көрсететін тұжырымдамалардың болуы тұрғысынан қазақстандық азаматтық дискурстың трансформациясы қарастырылады. Авторлар азаматтық дискурстың қалыптасуы контекстінде білім беру жүйесінің алдында қандай мәселелер тұрғанына және оларды қалай шешетініне арнайы талдау жасайды.

Түйін сөздер: мемлекеттік-конфессиялық қатынастар, азаматтық дискурс, коммуникациялар, консолидация, Қазақстанның Тәуелсіздігі, дінтанулық сауаттылық, дінтанулық білім, діни білім.

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Религиоведческая грамотность в контексте гражданского дискурса Казахстана

Аннотация. Формирование гражданской общности происходит в процессе складывания государственности и предполагает выработку системы коммуникаций между сообществами и социальными группами, обладающими различными характеристиками экономического, этнического, языкового, профессионального, поселенческого, демографического планов. В свете вышесказанного одной из значимых функций государства является содействие формированию гражданского дискурса, понятного всем без исключения социальным группам. В зависимости от особенностей сообщества гражданский дискурс может совпадать с национальным, профессиональным дискурсом или же представлять собой надкорпоративный, надгрупповой интеграл.

С 2000-ых годов в Казахстане (что отражает и мировой тренд) в гражданский дискурс начинают активно проникать концепты, задающие принципы ориентации современного человека в постсекулярном мире - в мире, в котором состоялось масштабное возвращение религии в повседневную жизнь и практики индивидов, социальных общностей и институтов. Для полноценного участия в коммуникациях, обусловленных дискурсом такого образца, индивидам необходима религиоведческая грамотность. Запрос на ее формирование получает система образования, выступающая институтом социализации индивидов.

В статье рассматривается трансформация казахстанского гражданского дискурса с точки зрения присутствия в нем концептов, отражающих принципы государственно-конфессиональных отношений на различных этапах развития Казахстана за годы независимости. Авторами предпринимается специальный анализ того, какие вызовы стоят перед системой образования и как она их решает в контексте формирования гражданского дискурса.

Ключевые слова: государственно-конфессиональные отношения, гражданский дискурс, коммуникации, консолидация, независимость Казахстана, религиоведческая грамотность, религиоведческое образование, религиозное образование.