

Training Problems of Religious Studies in Independent Kazakhstan

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Abstract

In the Republic of Kazakhstan training questions about religious studies still didn't receive enough attention since after statehood formation and before independence the Kazakhs endured a set of various historical events. Some of these events negatively affected people's consciousness. Seventy years of atheistic education changed people's spiritual and cultural basis, as a result religious concepts partially lost the importance. After independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan started raise questions about teaching religious studies.

However, heterogeneity in religious beliefs of the population to some extent negatively influences training in religious studies. Therefore study of the reasons for emergence of this problem turned into an actual problem.

Within this article the genesis analysis of modern training problems in religious studies was carried out and ways of their decision were considered.

Currently some religious studies teaching centers and preparation of the corresponding experts are formed. However, despite of the training standards are identical for all centers, ways of their implementation differ from each other. The reason for that – features of the outlook created under the influence of historical factors. These features cause necessity of teaching religious studies in high school. In article the questions on this problem was considered and necessary answers were given.

The main method used in research work is the comparative historical method. In summary it is necessary to specify that authors within article do the full analysis of questions of teaching of the subject "Religious studies" and offer solutions of these questions.

Keywords: religion, religion studies, religious education in Kazakhstan, teaching religion

1. Introduction

Religion occupies a considerable place in everybody's life. Atheism was established in the communistic period. However, the time of declaration of independence in Kazakhstan the interests to religion and its study began to grow among young people and now it's growing day by day. Freedom of honesty, conscious and religion restricted in the times of atheistic system soon became possible. Number of places for religious ceremonies is growing in number. An interest in the religion and demand on the religious education objectively has positive meaning but wrong religious education, delusion and improper regarding the problem can makes us meet the other one.

One of the laws which had been passed just after the declaration of independence in Kazakhstan, a law "About freedom of religious and religious unions" January 15, 1992. The law was passed because of the unwillingness to understand that religion is able to influence seriously the spiritual life of people. If there was understanding of the fact that religion has spiritual power which is able to change the life of a society then the law would not be passed that way. That law gave freedom to different religious streams on the republic's territory and the number of strange unknown religious streams had grew. Besides, they began involving local population. According to the article 9 "Religious union can be consisted of no less than 10 persons who came of age, who accepted rules on the general meeting of the union...; also".

"Religious unions have right to send their members abroad to study and with an aim to receive foreign citizens" – that statement made it simple to open, to register a function. That process brought to inner stratification according to religious views, appearance of different groupings. Negative influence appeared not only in the society, also in a family. Religious views of family members brought to its collapse. Religious sermon of other religious were able to influence that part of the Kazakh society which had shallow imagination about traditional Kazakh belief and culture. These who grew up in traditional Kazakh national culture could resist the influence of such religious sects.

2. Period before the introduction "Religion study" discipline into a school curriculum

Such steams as "Wahhabism", "Tablighi jamaat" sheltering behind Islam functioned more freely than other religious streams and as a result they could infect with their ideas people, especially the youth. Moreover, at the ideology of such streams differed from traditional religious concepts of Kazakh people. Only after the facts of counteractions among young people infected by Wahhabism, the organs of government became thoughtful.

While the government is introducing the discipline "Religion study" into the school curriculum those problems had been taken under the control of nontraditional religious streams. Those streams do all their best for forming religious nations among the youth. Of course such activity gained the results. For instance, a textbook "Abai study" written by a Kazakhstan representative of Krishnaites Dosym Omarov was included into a school curriculum and it was taught during some years (Omarov, 1999). That textbook connects

religious notions of a classical author of Kazakh literature Abai Kunanbaev with the outlook of Krishnaitis. Only when the specialists who dealt with the study of Abai's life and activity made an examination and proved that it destroys traditional religious nations of people, the textbook was removed from the school program (Shoimbet, 2008).

A representative of "Munn's Church of unity" A.Artemiev wrote a textbook "Religious study: [Religion study, history of religion, religion in Kazakhstan] which was used as a textbook some years [Artemiev, 2002]. The textbook wasn't aimed at giving general religious knowledge to students; actually it was aimed at to infect them with the ideas of Munn the representative of when was A.Artemiev. Here "Venerable Munn teaches that everyone's aim in life is to be a true son, a daughter of God, his church, to reach his perfectness about which was said in the Gospels by Matfei" be perfect as a Father of Heavens". Members of Munn's church believe that Munn and his wife have embodied that ideal in their family". "Church unites people irrespective of race, nationality, denomination. Its aim is to unite all Christians a later all people who accepted their true Father of Heavens" [Artemiev, 2008:546].

That textbook was criticized by some philosophers – theologists. V.Avanov, an ex-member of Munn's church is an effective combination of pseudo-Christian, mystic, philosophic and Charismatic elements. Munnists affirm that Bible is "not a truth", Original authority of Munn's followers one his works." (Trofimov, 2009:222).

These examples demonstrate that non traditional religious streams are aimed of Kazakhstanies' minds. Kazakhstan's scientists began writing articles against nontraditional religious streams publishing the in scientific literature a periodicals. That time the groups of direction began their activity. The government realized that complete religious freedom is dangerous and for avoiding possible problems it decided to introduce into a school curriculum a "Religion study" discipline. It was a right decision.

3. Introduction of "Religion study" discipline into a governmental school curriculum

In August, 2009 Ministry of education and science of Republic of Kazakhstan made a decision to introduce "Religion study" into a curriculum of the 9th form, two hours a week, 34 class hours totally. The main aim of it was to create an objective perception of any kind of religion and to protect a young generation from the influence of dangerous religious formations, to present their participation in anarchist and extremist religious activities (Shepiev, 2009). One more problem appeared – the absence of qualified specialists, it was not even clear who and how lessons would be taught. Talking into account that in Kazakhstan there are about eight thousand secondary schools and how to provide with well trained teachers? Besides, there was a need for a textbook on religion study. How to teach – as a compulsory or an elective one? If elective then what religion to teach? What if well – trained teachers with their teaching materials would propagate their religions? It would be a good chance for them. So, teaching religion became a critical point which caused numerous questions and their decisions (Tasbolatov, 2013).

Previously, in Kazakhstan 5 high schools began training specialists on theology. Firstly, specialists “Religion study” was opened in Turkestan, in 1991, A.Yassawi Kazakh – Turkish International University. The basis of Islam and western religions was taught to them, also researches in the field of traditional beliefs of Kazakhstan were conducted and result into a teaching learning process.

Starting from 1990s in Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and Eurasian University teaching religionists in the sphere of western religions began. But they were lack of information which caused contradictions. In Kazakhstan two streams of religion study appeared which also influenced on training specialists and textbooks. After ministry’s decision to introduce “Religion study” into a school program, a process of curriculum and textbook preparation began. Philosopher – senator G.Esim and a group colleague were authorized to work out a textbook. The textbook was published in 2010 under the title “Basis of religion study”. (Esim, Abuov and others, 2010).

It presented general information about principal religions of the world. Such a principle allowed giving different information about any kind of religion and a learner from his part can choose definitions necessary for him. (Esim, Abuov and others, 2010:15).

The analysis of the first part of the book shows that authors didn’t still set rid of marksistic influence. Besides the authors are not completely aware of traditional Kazakh beliefs for instance: “To read totem means to consider it saint and to respect those, who worship it...” Proceedings from it tribes and people form their own customs and traditions.

Kazakhs thought that a protector of horses is Kambar Ata, a protector of camels is Oysil Kara, a protector of cows is Zangi Ata, and a protector of sheep is Shekshek Ata. (Esim, Abuov, 2010:23). Formation of such nations is in tight connection with Turkic tendency of Sufism – society of Yassawi. All above mentioned persons were representatives of the Yassawi society – they were pirs (sheikhs). Only a protector of camels Oysil Kara was together with a founder of the society of Uvayisia Uvais Karany. (Alpysbes, 2006:307). Such contradictions are found throughout the textbook. In the chapter “Tengriism in Turkic outlook” (Kazakhs as well) it is said that according to religious belief a man lives for ever, after death he interferes into the deeds of people in the form of spirit and then he turns into a man at the end of the world. Islam differs from Turkic beliefs by ancestors’ spirits. There is a hypothesis that Turks had a tradition to erect stone figures in memory of dead people. (Esim, Abuov, 2010:83). Such a hypothesis was formed under the influence of the Rounder of Wahhabi stream Ibn Taimui. It proves the fact that Wahhabism penetrated into teaching materials. After the examination lots of mistakes were found out, the authors were said about them (Trofimov, 2010). Examination was made eleven times. Under the pressure of senator G.Esim that textbook was issued for schools.

Ministry of education and science refused to accept the textbook. Now, a theologian – religionist, professor D.Kenjetaev and his group wrote a textbook which was published in 2010 (Kenjetaev, Askarov, 2010). In comparison with G.Esim’s textbook this textbook has a number of advantages. There were exact notes concerning religions materials were in order

which allowed learners to form objective religious ideas. The second chapter was entitled “World religions and culture”. It contained information about indissoluble connection with world culture and civilization. There were special materials about traditional religion of Kazakh people, culture formation and their mutual influence. However the textbook had no future. Notwithstanding was taken from a school program now “Basis of religion study” textbook is in use which was written by G.Esim. Religion study is a discipline the main aim of which is to form learners’ comprehension of religion and to form an objective attitude to it. Therefore, specialists of religion are supposed to teach, unfortunately specialists of other spheres teach it. It is important to study the ways education and attracting religionists to school or to arrange courses of qualification for teachers who teach religion study of schools nowadays. (Kuzembaeva, 2013).

4. High schools of Kazakhstan offering religious education at present time in Kazakhstan

Specialists in the field of religion are being prepared in two directions – religionists and theologians. Religionists deal with research, regard theory and history of all religions of the world; theologians research the phenomenon of God from the religious point of view by a study of world religions based on belief in God. (Kuzembaeva: 2013). A standard of learning programs for high schools in “Social sciences” chapter of Ministry of education and science includes a program for Bachelor’s degree, M A, P h D according to specialty “Religion study and theology “(collection of specialties for under graduate and post graduate institutions of Republic of Kazakhstan, 2009: 5,10,16). Institutions willing to open that specialty ought to provide with specialists, library, facilities etc, then to apply to Ministry of education and science which verifies and gives out a license. There are 146 universities in Kazakhstan but only 5 of them were authorized to open a specialty “Religion study”. The Al-Farabi Kazakh State University, International University of foreign languages and professional carrier, Nur-Mubarak University, L.Gumilev Eurasian University, A.Yassawi Kazakh – Turkish International University.

This number is not enough. Specialists – theologians in Kazakhstan are prepared not only in Islamic direction. In 1997 a Supreme theological college at Eparchy of Saint Maria where catholic religious specialists are trained was opened, it is the only one in Middle Asia. Learning period is 8 month, more than 20 attendants of church studied there. But a number of missionaries from abroad prevail. (Kuzembaeva, 2013).

5. Conclusion

A process of introduction “Religion study” discipline into a program of secondary and higher schools have had several stages. The first stage was a period of textbook preparation by the representatives of nontraditional streams. Among them D.Omarov’s book “Abai study” and A.Artemiev’s book “Religion study”. Also supplementary books for higher schools of P.F.Dick “Basis of religion study” and Ya.F.Trofimov’s textbook “Religion study were

published that time too. Further G.Esim's textbook "Basis of religion study" was published under D. Kenjetaev's supervision.

In spite of the fact that "Religion study is included into a school program there isn't still suitable textbook. One of reason of it is a remained influence on the humanitarian sciences formed during 70 years in the time of the Soviet Union.

Religious education accepts a man as a supreme essence and it has a well formed structure which refers to a freedom of thoughts and beliefs, tolerant thinking. (Ashikoglu, 2011:49). The main aim of a religions education of school is creation of an individual who co – exists with a society, respects culture and common to all mankind values and to a true citizen of his own country. The government ought to state a question about the specialists in the field of religion. If higher schools could not organize religious education within given author, ties and possibilities then a danger of other organizations, streams would occupy vacant places.

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