

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Financial Support of the Kazakhs to Türkiye in the First World War*

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Abstract

The First World War significantly influenced the destinies of numerous peoples, nations, empires, and states throughout human history. The Ottoman Empire emerged as a major participant in this global conflict, engaging on multiple fronts against the Entente States. During the war, Türkiye conducted various political, military, intelligence, and espionage activities. Among these, the Ottoman Empire incited Muslim populations in the East to join in a religious war against the Entente States. Notably, religious and propaganda efforts were undertaken in Turkestan as part of the Pan-Islamist ideology among the Turkic-Muslim peoples under Russian rule. Conversely, the Turkic-Muslim peoples of Turkestan provided various forms of support to the Turks, including financial assistance from the Kazakhs. This study aims to examine the financial aid extended by the Kazakhs to the Turks during the war, conducting a historical analysis of the

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reasons, development, and outcomes of this support. The analysis delves into the motivations behind Kazakh financial aid to the Turks, its evolution over time, and its impact on the war effort. By exploring these aspects, we gain insights into the complex dynamics of support networks during the First World War.

Keywords

The First World War, The Ottoman State, Turkestan, Pan-Islamism, The Kazakhs, Financial support.

Birinci Dünya Savaşında Kazakların Türkiye'ye Mali Destekleri*

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Öz

Birinci Dünya Savaşı, insanlık tarihinde birçok halkın ve ulusun, imparatorluğu ve devletin kaderini önemli ölçüde etkilemiştir. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, büyük savaşın ana katılımcılarından biriydi ve İtilaf Devletlerine karşı birçok cephede savaştı. Savaş sırasında Türkiye tarafından çeşitli siyasi, askerî faaliyetler ile casusluk ve istihbarat faaliyetleri yürütüldü. Osmanlı Devleti, Doğu'nun Müslüman halklarını İtilaf Devletlerine karşı cihat başlatmaya teşvik etti. Aynı zamanda Rus İmparatorluğu'nun bünyesinde olan Türkistan'daki Türk-Müslüman halklar arasında Pan-İslamizm ideolojisi çerçevesinde onların da savaşa destek olması için örgütlü hareketler yapılmıştır. Buna karşılık Türkistan'ın Türk-Müslüman halkları Türklere farklı destekler verdiler. Bunlardan biri de Kazakların Türklere mali desteğiydi. Bu çalışmada, savaş sırasında Kazakların Türklere yaptığı mali yardımlar incelenmektedir. Kazaklar arasında Türklere sağlanan mali desteğin nedenleri, gelişimi ve sonuçları hakkında tarihsel bir analiz yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Birinci Dünya Savaşı, Osmanlı Devleti, Türkistan, Pan-İslamizm, Kazaklar, maddi yardım.

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Introduction

In the latter part of the 19th century, the local Turkic-Muslim communities of the Steppe and Turkestan General-Governorates, which were subjects of the Russian Empire in Central Asia, maintained close ties with the Ottoman Empire. Linguistic, cultural, and religious affinities between the Ottoman Empire and the peoples of Turkestan became particularly significant, with Pan-Islamism emerging as a central concept. Pan-Islamism aimed to foster mutual cooperation and unity among Turkic peoples based on Islam, with its primary focus on the Ottoman Empire and Turkic populations within Russia. It conceptualized Islamic unity as a political ideology transcending social groups, nationalities, or states (Avşar 167-168).

In recent years, Kazakh historical scholarship has extensively researched the history of Turkic peoples and their unity. The examination of the relationship between the peoples of Turkestan and the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the 20th century holds particular importance. This article centers on Kazakh-Turkish relations during the First World War, delving into the assistance provided by Kazakhs to Türkiye during this period. The article primarily relies on archival documents from Kazakhstan, supplemented by personal accounts and materials from Kazakhs who traveled to Türkiye or undertook pilgrimages. Through this analysis, the article seeks to explore the extent of Kazakh support for Türkiye during the war, drawing upon the insights of both Turkish and Kazakh historians.

Religious propaganda efforts by the Turks in the Turkestan province of the Russian Empire played a significant role in fostering mutual cooperation between Turks and Turkic-Muslim peoples in the region. This collaboration persisted into the early 20th century, cultivating strong relations among Turkic peoples. Muslims from Turkestan making pilgrimages to Mecca were warmly received in Istanbul, fostering deeper religious, cultural, and social ties. The proximity among Turkic peoples, initially rooted in religion, culture, and tradition, gradually evolved towards a political dimension (Alpargu, Mehmet et al. 402-403).

Due to religious and ethnic unity, conditions for political unification among Turkic peoples emerged. Gradually, integration between these peoples was strengthened, influenced in part by the ideology of Pan-Turkism (Landau

20-24), which ran parallel to Pan-Islamism. This integration altered the attitudes and positions of Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Turkmens, and other Turkic peoples in Turkestan towards Türkiye, drawing them closer together over years of mutual communication (Yalçınkaya 12-15). Jadidism, an idea advocating social reforms, particularly in education (Andican 25-26), served as a unifying force between Kazakhs and Turks, evolving into a broader concept encompassing all Turkic societies in Russia.

However, these burgeoning relations between Turks and the peoples of Turkestan faced opposition from Russian authorities. Pan-Islamism, viewed as a political threat, prompted efforts by the Russian government to suppress communication between the Turkestan peoples and Türkiye. Despite such efforts, the Tsarist regime found it challenging to entirely restrict contact between Central Asian Turkic Muslims and the Ottoman State (Abdukadyrov and Muldahmetova 162-164).

Before and during the First World War, Germany played a pivotal role in promoting Pan-Islamism. Allying with the Ottoman Empire, Germany sought to leverage Islamic sentiment to advance its military objectives, particularly in the Caucasus. German diplomats and politicians actively engaged with Muslim populations in the Russian Empire, as evidenced by documents such as ‘The project of revolutionizing the Islamic regions of our enemy’, prepared by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1916. This document outlines strategic and tactical approaches aimed at fomenting liberation movements among Muslim populations in Entente colonies (Kokebayeva 119).

In the period leading up to World War I, the German Empire sought to leverage the influence of the caliphate held by the Ottoman Sultan over Muslims worldwide for its own benefit. To achieve this goal, one of the largest propaganda campaigns in world history was orchestrated. Max Freyer von Oppenheim is credited with originating this propaganda effort (Saritaş 115-117).

Despite the obstacles imposed by the Russian authorities, contacts among Turkic peoples increased over time. Within the population of the Turkestan General-Governorate, many individuals regularly journeyed to Istanbul (Yeşilot and Çelik 84-85). Primarily undertaken for pilgrimage purposes,

these journeys also afforded opportunities for acquainting oneself with Istanbul's societal life and the political culture of the Ottoman state. It can be argued that these experiences solidified the religious pilgrimage and fostered allegiance to the caliphate, thereby centralizing the continuance of political and cultural ties between Turkistan and the Ottoman Empire (Sarinay 7-8).

Upon returning to their homeland, these pilgrims often became mullahs, delving deeply into Islamic traditions while maintaining their connections with Turks, ready to offer assistance when needed. For instance, during the Balkan Wars and the First World War, Turkic peoples in Turkestan provided significant social and financial support to the Ottoman Empire, mobilizing considerable funds.

Among the peoples of Turkestan, the Kazakhs demonstrated notable activities and offered substantial financial and social aid to Türkiye. Such reciprocal social assistance and interactions during the First World War were rare phenomena. At the time, the territory of modern Kazakhstan was part of both the Steppe General-Governorate and the Turkestan General-Governorate of the Russian Empire, with Kazakhs residing in both regions. Despite lacking an independent state, Kazakhs found various means to provide financial assistance, clandestinely sending funds through Turkish citizens residing in the Steppe General-Governorate, via scouts, or with the assistance of embassy personnel. Notably, assistance from Turks who had sought refuge in the region, fleeing Türkiye and acquiring Russian citizenship, proved effective.

“To My Distant Brother”

Despite the relatively modest scale of the assistance provided by Kazakhs during Türkiye's wartime struggles, it left a significant mark. Previously undisclosed, recent research has unveiled the close ties between Kazakhs and Ottoman Turks, elucidated through archival and historical materials. Such instances of social support exemplify the intimacy between these related peoples.

Prior to and during the war, the Ottoman Empire was a rival of Russia, complicating fundraising efforts among Turkestan Kazakhs. Russian authorities tightly regulated such activities, monitoring the arrival and

residency of Turkish citizens in the Kazakh steppes. Concerned about potential anti-authority sentiments, they sought to limit Turkish presence among the local population. Despite these measures, Turkish citizens in Turkestan and the Steppe General-Governorate increased notably, especially during the national liberation uprising of 1916 (Devlet 231).

Initially centered around pilgrimage trips, social contacts expanded into other domains over time. Notably, Kazakh intelligentsia propagandized studying in Istanbul, despite obstacles imposed by Russian colonial authorities. A growing number of Kazakh youths, including A. Gaisin, S. Shanov, D. Kulbayev, and M. Turganbayev, pursued education at Istanbul universities in the early 20th century, underscoring the persistence of Kazakh-Turkish relations (Kongyratbayev et al. 66-67).

Furthermore, it became evident that many poets from Turkestan visited Istanbul during this period, residing there temporarily (Kurnaz 35). This continuous social and cultural connection between the regions persisted through various channels. The presence of Kazakh poets in Istanbul underscored the deep cultural ties between the two peoples, with their works celebrating the affinity and urging mutual support during challenging times.

Among the Kazakh intelligentsia were poets who vividly portrayed the situation in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, advocating for substantial support. Notably, Magzhan Zhumabayev's poems reflected the hardships faced by Türkiye during the war and subsequent struggle for independence. His poem "To My Distant Brother" became emblematic of the special bond between Turks and Kazakhs, widely disseminated across Kazakh society (Bazarbaev et al. 117-119).

Magzhan Zhumabayev's formative years at the Galiya Madrasa in Ufa provided him with profound knowledge, shaped by Tatar intellectuals educated in Istanbul. These teachers instilled in him a deep love for Islam and Turkic heritage, fostering a strong affinity towards Turkic peoples. The nationalist, Turkic, and Islamic ethos of the Galiya Madrasa profoundly influenced Kazakh, Tatar, and Bashkir youths (Ojaiüly 2-3). It is evident that the perspectives of Kazakh poets like Shakarim Kudaiberdiuly and Magzhan Zhumabayev regarding Türkiye predated the First World War. Their profound understanding of Turkic unity and affinity between Turks

and Kazakhs was disseminated widely among the population, serving as a cornerstone for promoting closeness between the two peoples. As a result, certain Kazakh citizens harbored a distinct affinity for Türkiye, demonstrating readiness to extend social assistance to Turks facing economic hardship on the eve of the war. This sentiment was closely tied to the motto “To My Distant Brother”, as articulated by Magzhan Zhumabayev.

Assistance during the Balkan Wars

The pivotal engagement of the Kazakhs in extending financial aid to the Turks commenced during the Balkan Wars, which preceded the onset of the First World War. Kazakh youth fervently expressed their solidarity with Türkiye during this period. In this war, all people closely aligned with Turkey provided extensive support, albeit on a modest scale; each individual contributed to the best of their ability. In the 1930s, “Yash Turkestan” magazine, under the editorial direction of Mustafa Shokai and published in Berlin, featured numerous articles detailing the Kazakhs’ assistance during the Balkan Wars. One such account recounts the actions of Sadyk Utegenov from the city of Akmeshit (Perovsk) in the Turkestan General-Governorate, who arrived in St. Petersburg carrying two small bags brimming with gold coins.

Upon reaching St. Petersburg, Sadyk Utegenov sought out his compatriot Mustafa Shokai, who was studying there, and entrusted him with delivering the two bags of gold coins to the Ottoman Empire’s embassy. Upon arrival, Sadyk Utegenov, as a token of the affection and empathy of his Turkestan brethren, presented his assistance to the Ottoman ambassador, Permeti Turhan Pasha. Ambassador Turhan Pasha, visibly moved by the gesture, embraced both men and expressed his gratitude. He gratefully accepted the assistance and pledged to ensure its delivery to its intended recipients (Kara 74-75).

Furthermore, during this period, Kazakh students studying in Madinah pooled together 200 lira from their own pockets to aid Ottoman soldiers. As reported in the Kazakh newspaper “Ayqap” during the Balkan Wars, the students handed over the collected funds to Governor Basri Pasha of Madinah, requesting that the assistance be channeled through the International Red Crescent Organization. Although the amount of aid

was modest, its significance lay in demonstrating the Kazakh students' willingness to support Turks during the Balkan Wars (Subhanberdina and Dawitov 287-288).

This circumstance catalyzed the mobilization of young Muslim students studying in Russian universities in support of Türkiye. Kazakh students in St. Petersburg, alongside Bashkir, Uzbek, and Tatar students, actively participated in this endeavor. It is noteworthy that during this period, the number of Turkic-Muslim students in St. Petersburg universities experienced steady growth, indicative of the prevailing strength of Turkic-Muslim ideology both in the country and in Turkestan. A prominent exemplar of this ideological fervor was Mustafa Shokai, a student at the Faculty of Law of St. Petersburg University and a future Kazakh intellectual and public figure. Mustafa Shokai's advocacy for Turkism and his subsequent actions trace back to this period, with the concept of Turkestan's unity emerging as a central tenet of his ideology.

Reflecting on his involvement in providing support for Türkiye during the Balkan War, Mustafa Shokai remarked in his writings: "I studied at St. Petersburg University during the years when Russia was under the influence of reaction. At that time, higher education institutions, especially universities, were directly under the control of the police. Despite the difficulties of the situation, we showed up, organized marches in the streets. The difficulties of Türkiye in the Balkan War fueled the St. Petersburg students' movement. At this point, Russia was neutral. However, it would support the Slavic peoples in the Balkans, despite its neutrality. All this made us, Turkestan students, very excited. In addition, we thought about doing something else. To do this, we – Azerbaijani, Tatar and Turkestan students, separated from the Russians and tried to act on our own". (Shoqai 367). As evidenced, Mustafa Shokai provided a guiding light for those supporting the brotherly people during the Balkan War.

Kazakh youth in St. Petersburg were actively involved in fundraising and offering moral support to Türkiye during the Balkan wars. For instance, Sanzhar Asfendiyarov, a future Kazakh intellectual studying at the Imperial Military Medical Academy in St. Petersburg, recounted in his memoirs: "In the autumn of 1912, during the First Balkan War, a significant movement

took place in St. Petersburg among Kazakh, Tatar, and Uzbek students in support of Turkey” (APRK 811-fund., 20-list., 686-file, 238-240 p.).

Local government agencies in the Ferghana, Zhetysu, and Syrdarya oblasts of the Turkestan General-Governorate received widespread reports during the Balkan wars linking the Turks’ defeat to Russia’s backing of the Slavic peoples of the Balkans under the ideology of Pan Slavism. Consequently, opposition among Turkic peoples in Turkestan against Tsarist Russia’s policies escalated. Notably, initiatives promoting Muslim cooperation among Kazakhs gained traction in certain regions, amplifying resistance against the Russian administration.

In response to this climate, leaflets circulated among Muslims in the Turkestan region urged fundraising efforts in support of Turkish soldiers injured during the conflicts. These leaflets also promised to publish the names of contributors and the amounts donated in a Muslim publication (CSA RK 25-fund., 1-list., 372-file, 22 p.).

Since the outset of the Balkan War, the Tatar newspaper “Vakyt”, based in Orenburg, diligently disseminated information about the conflict to Muslim communities across Russia. Reports of support for Türkiye were widely propagated among the populace, facilitated significantly by the efforts of seasoned journalist Fatih Karimov. Karimov’s investigative work in Istanbul during 1912-1913 yielded a trove of materials related to the Balkan War, which he subsequently shared through newspaper publications (CSA RK 25-fund., 1-list., 372-file, 3 p.). This information significantly impacted Turkic communities in the Orenburg oblast, where Kazakhs played an active role in fundraising efforts to aid wounded Turkish soldiers and bolster the relatively weak Turkish Fleet in contrast to other empires.

In essence, Kazakh assistance to the Turks commenced prior to the First World War, with the Balkan wars serving as a poignant symbol of inter-ethnic unity. This support for the Ottoman Empire by Kazakhs and Turkic peoples of Turkestan during the Balkan wars endured into the First World War.

Assistance During the War (1914-1918)

From the onset of the war, Kazakhs demonstrated their commitment to aiding Türkiye both morally and materially. Financial support was mobilized

across the Steppe and Turkestan General-Governorate, with clandestine efforts organized to ensure the secrecy and security of the assistance provided. Particularly notable was the fervent support shown by Kazakh citizens residing in the uyezds and villages of the Turgay oblast. As early as December 1914, fundraising efforts were underway in the parishes of the Aktobe uyezd within the Turgay oblast. Reports indicated that villages in the Burty volost of Aktobe uyezd actively collected funds among local Kazakhs. Notably, gold, silver coins, and precious metal coins were among the contributions received (CSA RK. 25-fund., 1-list., 378-file, 1 p.).

The management of Aktobe uyezd further reported initiatives spearheaded by the khazirs (imams) of mosques in Karatogay and Aktobe volosts. Figures such as Karabek Baigarakov and Kali Yesenamanov, along with returning pilgrims from Mecca, mobilized local communities to contribute towards assisting Türkiye (CSA RK. 25-fund., 1-list., 378-file, 2 p.). However, these efforts faced opposition from authorities, as evidenced by charges brought against individuals involved, and subsequent protocols questioning the legality of mosques built in their villages by the acting head of the Aktobe uyezd, Captain Svalbard.

Despite such challenges, several Kazakh citizens persisted in their fundraising endeavors. Notable individuals such as Zhangazy Kosayev, Turkmen Kosayev, Turmaniyaz Kosayev, and Zhar Utebaliyev of the Aktobe parish, as well as Karamyrza Bekenbekov from the Karabutak volost, and Aidaraly Torebekov from the Karatogay volost, clandestinely collected funds for Türkiye. Aidaraly Torebekov even went as far as secretly constructing a mosque during winter months. Close relatives of the head of the Batbakty parish also participated in these efforts, contributing by selling meat from their animals in order to bolster financial support (CSA RK. 25-fund., 1-list., 378-file, 3 p.).

In foreign policy, citizens who financially supported Türkiye, which was considered an opponent of the Russian Empire, were persecuted. The decision was made by the Russian authorities to radically block attempts by Muslim peoples in Turkestan to help the Turks and to detain Turkish spies and agitators who organized such an event (CSA RK. 726-fund., 1-list., 8-file, 8 p.). Local citizens from the Ottoman Empire, whose nationality was Turkish, were under control. Since not only Turks were among them, but

also Greeks, Georgians and other representatives of Caucasian nationalities; it was a bit difficult to distinguish the real Turks themselves. It is worth noting that during the war there were many citizens who came from the Ottoman Empire to the inner regions of the Russian Empire. They mostly fled the war and came in search of work.

However, Kazakhs, who collected money among the population in various ways in order to help Turks, were the focus of attention of the authorities and the police. For example, Kazakhs who had ties with Türkiye in Karabutak, Araltobe, Tastybutak, Estemis and Kamsakty parishes of Aktobe uyezd of Turgay oblast were under control. Their contacts with the Greeks and Turks were checked (CSA RK. 25-fund., 1-list., 378-file, 5 p.). At this time, the collected funds were handed over to one or more citizens and sent to Orsk, where they were sent by train to St. Petersburg. In general, the goods exported to foreign countries were often transported abroad by foreign and local citizens traveling abroad through Omsk, Orenburg to St. Petersburg or border posts. In this case, the assistance of foreigners and Turkish citizens was effective. Therefore, citizens from the Ottoman Empire who were in the Russian Empire were under constant control.

In addition to Aktobe uyezd of Turgay oblast, in Kostanay and Irgiz uyezds, comments from the regional management were sent in advance to prevent such collection of money. Because there were a lot of Kazakhs in the parishes and villages of these uyezds, it was quite possible that they were also engaged in such matters (CSA RK. 25-fund., 1-list., 378-file, 6 p.). At this time, the facts of fundraising were observed not only in the Turgay oblast, but also in the neighboring province of the Ural oblast, which was adjacent to it. The main example of this was the movements of Turkish citizens who came to Temir uyezd of the Ural oblast from Karakobda parish of Aktobe uyezd of the Turgay oblast. They lived for some time in Temir county and were engaged in raising funds from local Kazakhs and other Muslim peoples (CSA RK. 25-fund., 1-list., 378-file, 7 p.).

Thus, work on raising funds for the Turkish army was also registered in the Ural oblast. In Temir uyezd and other surrounding parishes, the activities of mullahs were also great in raising funds for Türkiye by local Kazakhs. They deeply advocated Islamism among the people and promoted the need to help peoples whose religion and culture are the same among the people.

In Aktobe uyezd and Temir uyezd, information was recorded about the distribution of religious books brought from Türkiye among the population by a mullah named Mukhammetkaziyev. The work of such citizens was blocked (CSA RK. 25-fund., 1-list., 378-file, 26 p.).

After that, with the idea that Turkish citizens who were among the people might have been involved in such a case, they began to take measures to arrest them. In the course of the implementation of such a measure, doubts arose about the involvement of Turkish citizens living in Syrdarya and Zhetysu oblasts. Indeed, since the first years of the war, Turkish citizens came to Turkestan from the Ottoman Empire and were engaged in espionage and agitator work. Their mission was to turn the Turkic-Muslim peoples of Turkestan towards themselves, and at the same time to drive them against the local Russian authority. Such citizens were considered spies, and measures were taken to prevent their activities. Turkish citizens from the Syrdarya oblast of the Turkestan General-Governorate were arrested and taken under investigation (CSA RK. 145-fund., 1-list., 884-file, 78-80 p.).

At the beginning of the First World War, the Turkestan General-Governorate and the Turko-Muslim peoples of Bukhara and Khiva continued to have relations with the Ottoman Empire, communication between them continued in a very secret manner. Next, the Kazakhs in Turkestan also provided moral support to Turks as well as material assistance. Kazakhs who lived in the Syrdarya and Zhetysu oblasts under the Turkestan General-Governorate had a unique attitude towards the Ottoman State. For example, Kazakhs in Sozak, which belonged to the Syrdarya oblast, collected funds for Turks' achievements in the war.

In general, there were many Turkish citizens in the territory of Syrdarya oblast, and they helped to deliver aid collected from Kazakhs and other nations to Türkiye. They helped send funds. After such activities, the gendarmerie began to take measures to arrest those who might be Turkish citizens collecting funds for aid to Türkiye. During the implementation of this measure, among the Kazakhs in Sozak, Turkish citizens Mahmed Salih, Kamalatdin Ibrahim and Hasan Yahiyaoglu were arrested and taken into custody (Rüstemov 45-47).

After that, pressure on Turkish citizens on the territory of the empire was intensified by the Russian royal authorities. Imperial authorities decided not to allow citizens of states warring against Russia to work (CSA RK. 25-fund., 1-list., 388-file, 3 p.). Because there were many Turkish citizens in the regions belonging to the Turkestan region, they were considered with deep suspicion. For instance, in Shymkent and Aulieta uyezds of Syrdarya oblast, fundraising for Türkiye took place, and it was suspected that Turkish citizens were organizing it all. Indeed, at that time it was not easy to transfer funds collected from the local population across the border or to the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the help of Turkish citizens was very necessary.

If fundraisers for the Ottoman Empire were found among the Turkic-Muslim peoples, they were immediately arrested. When citizens of countries that were at war with Russia were expelled, their property was confiscated for the benefit of the state. On the basis of this instruction, the horses of the Turkish citizens Mevlyud Bayramogly and Shevki Meghushogly, who were arrested in Auliata uyezd, were seized and their property was confiscated (CSA RK. 146-fund., 1-list., 2-file, 15-16 p.). During the war, Auliata uyezd was considered one of the main uyezds of the Turkestan region, and Turkish citizens came and settled here. They were mostly refugees from the war fronts, but they had good relations with the local population (CSA RK. 146-fund., 1-list., 2-file, 9-10 p.).

During the First World War, numerous Turkish citizens migrated to the Turkestan region, including the Zhetysu oblast of the Turkestan Governorate, under varied circumstances (CSA RK. 44-fund., 1-list., 19742-file, 87 p.). They came voluntarily, i.e. for work, and citizens who fled the war. At the same time, those captured as prisoners of war also arrived. Turkish citizens were placed in different districts and were under strict control (CSA RK. 44-fund., 1-list., 19742-file, 81 p.). Local Kazakhs welcomed them very warmly. Mutual underground connections were established. One of the main examples of this is the city of Verny, the center of Zhetysu oblast, and money was collected for aid to Türkiye on behalf of the Kazakhs and Muslims living in this region (CSA RK. 44-fund., 1-list., 4764-file, 1-3 p.).

Assistance to Muslims in Kars during World War I

During the First World War, the most significant assistance provided by the Kazakhs to the Turks, as a fraternal nation, was their support for the Muslims in Kars in 1915. Throughout the conflict, the local population suffered immensely due to military operations in the Caucasus and the adjacent Kars oblast, leading to a severe deterioration in the social conditions of the Turkic-Muslim communities in Kars and its environs. Initial aid efforts were instigated by the Turkic peoples of the Caucasus, with messages of distress disseminated through embassies and consulates.

Despite Kars and its region being part of the Russian Empire before the war, a substantial Turkish presence had historically existed there. The Kars oblast held strategic importance for both the Ottoman Empire and Russia, resulting in intense territorial disputes. As the Kars oblast was under Russian control during this period, authorities did not impede Muslim fundraising efforts.

The primary objective of aiding Muslims in the Kars oblast stemmed from its significant Turkish population. Kazakhs from the Ural, Torgai, and Steppe oblasts coordinated fundraising activities through publications such as the “Kazakh” newspaper. Collected funds, published weekly, were directed to the Muslim Committee in Orenburg. Citizens from all walks of life, including the intelligentsia, actively participated in these efforts (*Qazaq gazeti*, №109, 4 p.).

In the Steppe General-Governorate, fundraising efforts intensified over time, with notable individuals like Khalel Dosmukhamedov, Akhmet Baitursynuly, and his wife Badrisafa Baitursynova actively involved. Funds were meticulously allocated based on a curated list of beneficiaries and were transferred to the Muslim Committee in Orenburg once or twice a week (*Qazaq gazeti*, №112, 4-5 p.).

Financial assistance to Turks in Kars primarily took a religious dimension, reflecting the stated aim of aiding Muslim communities. International organizations monitored support for Turko-Muslim peoples, prompting vigorous efforts from Kazakhs across the Steppe and Turkestan General-Governorates. Over time, financial contributions surged, with significant amounts being sent from the Steppe region, exemplified by the three

thousand rubles dispatched in April 1915 (*Qazaq gazeti*, №119, 7 p.). Over time, the amount of money collected for Muslims in Kars grew. This was because the number of people sending money also increased (*Qazaq gazeti*, №130, 3 p.). Kazakhs from the Steppe region sustained monetary aid to Kars Muslims and their Turkish brethren for six to seven months, with cumulative contributions exceeding a thousand rubles by June 1915 (*Qazaq gazeti*, №135, 6-7 p.). The amount of this money increased even more next month.

Turks in Kars received assistance from Kazakhs in Turkestan, particularly from the Zhetysu oblast, who were aware of the plight of Muslims in Kars and were prepared to offer support. The Muslims of Kapal uyezd organized a fundraiser to aid them. On May 23, 1915, the district head submitted a special report to the regional board on behalf of the residents of Altynevel uyezd within Kapal uyezd. The report indicated the readiness of Kazakhs and representatives of local Tatar, Sart, and other Muslim communities to raise funds for those affected by the war in the Kars oblast (CSA RK. 44-fund., 1-list., 4764-file, 1 p.).

This initiative, initially started by Muslims of Altynevel uyezd, garnered involvement from other settlements. For instance, on June 1, 1915, Kazakhs and Muslim residents of Gavrilov village expressed their support for the cause by signing special documents. All fundraising activities adhered to legal and transparent procedures. A detailed list of Kazakhs and representatives of other Muslim nations from Gavrilov uyezd was compiled, reflecting varying contribution amounts. This underscores the accessibility of assistance, allowing each individual to contribute according to their means (CSA RK. 44-fund., 1-list., 4764-file, 6-7 p.).

In total, Muslim citizens collected 25 rubles and 70 kopeks, with the collected amount and transfer information to be forwarded to the management of Zhetysu oblast. The collected funds were earmarked for delivery to the Kars oblast with the assistance of the Muslim Charitable Organization in Baku, with the primary objective of aiding Muslims in Kars (CSA RK. 44-fund., 1-list., 4764-file, 12-13 p.).

Several conclusions emerged from the analysis of Kazakh aid to Türkiye during the First World War:

- Firstly, Kazakhs who had a profound respect for Turkish culture and Islamic values, particularly those who had undertaken pilgrimages to the Ottoman Empire, organized and supported fundraising efforts. This group aimed to maintain religious and cultural ties with Turks in the future.
- Secondly, fundraising for Türkiye received backing from Kazakh citizens opposed to Russian imperial rule. They envisioned fostering positive relations with the Ottoman Empire and Central Powers to secure future independence from Russian dominance.
- Thirdly, individuals in close contact with Turks, despite not residing in Türkiye, shared similar Turkish principles and maintained strong kinship ties. This often included Kazakhs residing in regions under the Turkestan General-Governorate.
- Fourthly, the attitude towards Turks in Kazakh society underwent a positive transformation over time, influenced by the Turkic ideology promoted by Kazakh poets and writers. The concept of “Turkic unity”, widely advocated from the late 19th to early 20th centuries, contributed to the provision of aid to Türkiye.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the First World War left a profound impact on nations and empires, reshaping political and social landscapes, including within the Ottoman Empire. Despite being part of the Russian Empire at the time, Kazakhs extended significant financial and social assistance to Türkiye during the conflict. While this support did not occur at an international level due to geopolitical constraints, Kazakhs managed to organize aid for the Turks, symbolizing a powerful sense of brotherhood among Turkic people. The solidarity between Kazakhs and Turks during the war exemplified the close ties between Central Asian and Anatolian Turkic communities, reflecting mutual sympathy and love. This relationship underscored the high moral values and humanism shared among these people, reinforced by their religious, linguistic, and cultural affinities.

Moreover, Kazakh assistance to Türkiye had broader implications for the political and social dynamics in Turkestan, Turkey, and Russia during the war. The alignment of Turkic-Muslim peoples in Turkestan, including

Kazakhs, with the Ottoman Empire in its conflict against Russia signaled a distancing from Russian authority. This divergence could have been mitigated if Russian authorities had pursued policies of national equality and considered the aspirations of the people. Despite facing obstacles, Kazakhs successfully fostered diplomatic relations with foreign nations. A significant takeaway is that despite lacking independent statehood at the time, Kazakhs exhibited agency in establishing relationships with Türkiye. This underscores their distinct national identity and independent worldview. In essence, the assistance provided by Kazakhs to Türkiye during the First World War reflects a chapter of shared history and solidarity among Turkic peoples, highlighting their resilience, unity, and pursuit of self-determination.

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The authors' contribution rates in this study are equal. All authors equally contributed to the collection of scientific materials for the article, editing, and translation of the article. All three authors have a profound interest in the history of Turkic peoples. The authors jointly conducted scientific research and collected materials from archives and libraries.

Conflict of Interest Statement

There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of this study. There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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