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**ВЕСТНИК**

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## SHRINE SITES KEEPERS IN TRADITIONAL AND MODERN KAZAKHS' CULTURE: ASSUMPTIONS AND PROBLEM DEFINITION

**Abstract.** Some natural and man-made sites are considered as shrines in Kazakh culture. It became pilgrimage since ancient times and includes *mazars* (mausoleum graves) of the famous people, who are associated with the cult of *aulie*. Nowadays observations show that today a keeper is appointed to look after almost each holy site has its known site-keeper. The person who takes care of a *mazar* is named *shyrakshy*, while the natural sacred site keeper is named *kyzmetshi*.

Although the institute of sacred place keepers in the Kazakh culture is relatively late historical and cultural phenomenon, which associates with the transition from nomadic to settled lifestyle and Islam dissemination, the study shows a genetic continuity of much earlier forms of 'people selected by the holy spirit' in human consciousness. This article aims to review problem definition for this cultural phenomenon and discuss next research steps and prospects.

**Key words:** keeper, sacred site, *mazars*, natural and man-made holy sites, pilgrimage, Kazakhstan.

**Introduction.** Nomadic tribes have laid the foundation of the first Eurasian empire in the VI century of Christian era, but also it impacted greatly on the Great Steppe's culture. Traditional nomads' world perception considered a human being as a solid part of the environment. Ancient Turkic beliefs predominated the cult of Tengri (Heaven) and linked to it Zher-Suu (Earth - Water) cult. Tengrism had been the recognized the core of the state ideology of the ancient Turks, initially implemented by Xiongnu, and later on successfully competed with Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Nomadic culture (some researchers name it steppe culture) culture targeted the settlement and habitation of spacious steppes. Meeting with other confessions and religious cults, tengrism did not reject them, but incorporated meaningful markers for making the environment appropriate for human habitation and development.

The researcher Terletsky N. states that '...Central Asia puts forward quite ample material in the given context context, because the traditional institutes and rituals play an important role in the life of local population of the region up to nowadays, and the *auliya* cult of takes important place in local Islam attributes, which, probably, may not be a case at any other area of the Muslim world'[1, 71]. Some of *Mazars*' features have obvious pre-Islamic traditions attributes. One can mention the images of five fingers (*panjas*), mountain goat and ram (argalis) horn images, which are known to be the most ancient religious symbols of the Aryan tribes. The widespread use of snake, sun and moon symbols reflect universal concepts of confronting between the Lower and Upper Worlds. Obviously, the compositions of altars, snakes, trees and sun images of may refer to the interpretation of mythological subjects [2, 6].

In this case one can speak about homogeneity or unique features of the burial rites, local specificity of the steppe cultures in terms of nomadic social organization, ideology and creative arts. The landmarks and tokens of the nomads' living environment include both natural sites - mountains, groves, prominent trees, and the man-made objects – worship rite places (*obo*), local spirits shrines, and also stone sculptures. There is no rigid boundary between a nomad and a surrounding environment, the ethnos and nature

relationship can be found not 'in just a cultural adaptation to the habitat, but also in value-based orientations related to its protection' [3, 254].

While the variety of publications is concerned with worship of sacred objects and excessive saints pilgrimage throughout vast Central Asian region, the institute of a special category of people engaged in worshipping and performing sacred rites in nomadic societies in the ancient times and the Middle Ages continues to be one of the most complex study issue in research of nomadic perception and its social aspects<sup>1</sup>.

Dashkovsky K. is of opinion on reasonable suspect of existence of a specific religious elite group which was dealing with most significant sacred section of the ancient nomads' culture. He also indicates some evidences that medieval Turks had a group of priests to serve the diverse religious activities [4, 70]. Some researchers noted that the Yuan Hagan court established the position of an *ong sakigchi* - keeper of the saint figures of the spirits of ancestors (*ongons*) [5]. But Gumilev L. [6] believed that ancient Turks' priest combined functions of a healer and a *yagdachi* (obeah man). The Xiongnu priests conducted various ritual activities, especially those related to military, contact and healing magics [7, 8]. Small stone altars were found in burials, and researchers considered it to mark graves of nomadic priests in the Scythian era [9-11]. The mutton blades were widely used for divination. It was found at the Ivolginsky ancient settlement in Altai [12].

The concepts concerning the ancient Turks priests are beyond the scope of our study. However, many historians, ethnographers and archaeologists indicate on the fact-based links of the Central Asia cult of Islamic saints and the preceding confessions (Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism), and even more ancient sacral rites ascending to animism. The authors will refer to such evidences of facts sources of the revered places in further discussion. Some aspects of the sacral landscape of Kazakhstan in relation to the funeral rites and Islamic shrines were already discussed by the authors in the other article<sup>2</sup>.

**Methods.** The authors have analyzed the available historical and ethnographic sources in reference to the sacral sites of Kazakhstan. In addition, in 2016-2017 there was a field survey of the shrine keepers in selected areas of Kazakhstan. The survey was conducted in Uzynagash district of Almaty region, Ulytau district of Karaganda district, and also in Baidibek and Kazygurt districts (South-Kazakhstan region). Each keeper considered his service to be a sacred duty, and the choice was predetermined by the holy ancestors' spirits - *aruahs* and area spiritual masters.

**Results.** Castangne J., in his famous work on the Kazakh steppes' ancestries, underlined the respect demonstrated by the Kazakhs to the ancient graves: 'The Kirghiz - nowadays inhabitants of Turgai region - quite often bury their dead by setting -up graves in the middle or on the edge of the ancient burial mounds. Then this mound would bear the name of the buried Kirghiz: Almurat-oba, Temirbai-oba, Ahmet-oba' [13, 62]. Formozov A. noted in reference to this: 'Local population have an indistinct memory of ancestor worship so far and in some places even performed these rites. During forty centuries the esteem for distant ancestors... have been passing from grandfathers to fathers, from fathers to children and even to aliens' [14, 97]. He echoed the words of Goldtsier I., the Hungarian researcher of Islam of the beginning of the XX century: 'Local Muslim legends, being associated with a large number of graves, are always misty and vague. ... People can no longer explain the origin of sacred places, which they hold in esteem and reverence to, and they do not know the reasons for them of recognition as saints' [15, 103].

Proven faith in the spiritual power and strength of the deceased persons predicted the special reverence for graves and became the widespread specific feature of nomads of Central Asia. A human is always haunted by fear of an obscurity and death. This launch his/her soul feeling about extreme power of the deceased persons who have accessed the eternal knowledge and can provide demanded assistance and strength to the living persons [16, 328]. In Islam culture of central Asia this engrained perception transformed to the cult practice of *aulie* worshipping. In most cases, people have strong belief that by visiting the *mazar*, conducting in prayer and bringing sacrifice gifts, one can count on getting assistance in

<sup>1</sup> Publications by Knorozov Yu.V., Abramzon S.M., Petrushevsky I.P., Snesarev G.P., Basilov V.N., Mustafina R.M., Kubarev G.V., Dashkovsky K.P., Ogudin V.L., Terletsky N.S., Stasevich I.V., Seleznev A.G., Garustovich G.N., Litvinov V.P. and others.

<sup>2</sup> Shaygozova Zh.N., Muzafarov R.R., Sultanova M.E. (2018) Sacral Landscape of Kazakhstan: Culturological Consideration of the Funerary Monuments // Almanac Madaniet. Kultura. Culture. Astana, Issue 3: 62-75 (in Rus.).

troubles. In other words, a person could obtain the saint intercession and his mercy for awesome respect and memory of him [15, 46]. Hase K., who considered the issues of veneration of Christian saints, wrote about the believer's desire 'to fill a huge gap between people and their God', assuming that monotheism 'arose on the basis of the old world of gods' [17, 326].

Turkic people applied for the ancestors' assistance in case of livestock diseases; in this case, they used to drive cattle thrice around a burial [18]. Valikhanov Ch. noted that 'the Kirghiz, at the slightest sign of misfortune, would slaughter animal in the name of God ... or in the name of the *Arvakhs*, or they sacrifice victims not at *Obo*, but at their ancestors' graves. They call such victims *qurbandyk* and *saadaka*, thus, they mitigate the pagan meaning of rites' [19, 34].

It is well known that holy sites of public worship were existed long prior to the Arabs' invasion to Central Asia. Castagne J. in the above-mentioned work [20] devoted the first part for description of numerous funerary monuments of the pre-Islamic period. After adoption of Islam, not all of these sites were abandoned, many sacred places continued to be popular with people. It was gradually transiting into Muslim *mazars* and mausoleums while also included in the list of the most significant canonical Muslim sacraments. In steppes, the holy sites were quickly surrounded by the contemporary burials, even in remoted pastorals. Such cemeteries 'usually emerged around the saint grave, because in a folk opinion, a saint should assist those buried nearby to reach heaven' [21, 81]. 'There was no worship to saints' tombs and relics in early Islam. Such a cult, which existed in other religions (for example, in Christianity), has been established in Islam later'. Petrushevsky I. considered this fact to be encouraged by the later edict to 'believers to visit the graves of faithful Muslims, especially tombs of saints' [22, 87]. It is necessary to note the significant impact of Sufism had on the Muslims' ritual practice, moreover, in some frontiers of the Muslim world Islam penetrated and appeared only in its 'Sufi' format. Following trade routes, political conquests, overseas trainings and pilgrimage, Sufi brotherhoods spread widely throughout the Muslim East, especially where relatively favorable conditions for free cultural and demographic exchange were observed. This spread had made the Sufi orders the key factor in the Islamization of new lands [23].

Terletsky N.S. quoted Tazkira-yi Khwaja Muhammad Sharif: 'Hazrat The Great Khoja spent in Yarkend remaining years of his life. He went out daily and walked throughout the surroundings. The saint burials were found everywhere, but no one knew about it. In such places Hazrat the Great Khoja stuck *tug* (flag) into the ground, established a *mazar*, appointing a shaykh, a sweeper, an imam and a muezzin, and then continued his way on' [24, 235]. It should be noted that in the Tajik vocabulary the term *zorubkash* (sweeper) can be used for a *mazar* keeper [25], along with the terms *shaykh* (keeper, guardian) or *mutavalli* (trustee over the property donated by a charity institution). Yakubov Yu. estimated (based on folk history) that throughout the existence of the Saint Burkh holy site there were 35 shrine site keepers following each other. The estimates indicated the service duration in 1050 years total (at the rate of 30 years for each keeper) [26].

Rezvan M.E. provided a description of two holy caves under the same name *Konyr Aulieu*, which were located close to the ancient caravan routes - just off Bayan-aul and on Sergiopol'sky tract [27]. Each cave has been used by people since ancient times. In close location there were a lot of ancient petroglyphs, Andronovo burial grounds of the Bronze Age, the Saka burial mound, apparently of the late I millennium B.C.E., ancient Turkic mounds, which the Kazakhs called 'the graves of the *Kalmaks*' or 'houses of *mughas*' (fire-worshippers), and tombstones. In former times both caves were the sites for Buddhist ceremonies. The caves were also associated with the name of *Konyr*, the mythological person who was also saved by the Lord during the flood, irrespective of Nukha (Noah). These natural sites remain a place Muslims pilgrimage for centuries. The ethnographic record made in the first quarter of the 20th century from the Kazakh shaman (*baksy*) appeal to the spirits, included the words: "From the great Chingiz holy Mountains, // From the top of the Red Mountains // Holy Virgin, // From the top of Bayanaul // Holy Konyr" [29].

The 'Kirghiz Kray' newspaper published in 1903, that '...Aulie-Tas is a cave of ten *sazhen* long, which has a large stone with a hollow in its middle nearby the western wall. The whole was accumulating cool and clean water drained from the cave walls and ceiling. In the view of the Kirghiz this water possesses a healing features. The Kirghiz visitors drink this water, wash with it the sick parts of their bodies and use it for the ablutions prescribed for the Muslims. The Kirghiz's legend associated the cave with the saint person inhabitant long time ago. Many visitors were observed, and most of them were female, as the



Kirghiz believe in the specific fertile feature of the holy water from the cave' [27, 261]. At present, the cave is still a place of lively pilgrimage<sup>3</sup>. There is a house in close location, where pilgrims can stay for overnight, the wooden staircase has been constructed for easy cave access and a 'gangway' leading to the hole with water inside the cave. The keeper of the holu place, who has the knowledge of praying and rites, takes care of pilgrims [27].

Apparently this is can be one of first record mentioning a keeper of holy site in Kazakhstan. Castagne J., who provided a lot of ethnographic details, cited only one brief example: 'Sometimes it happens that some hermit, *'chirakchi'* who would like to encourage faithful offerings and tribute to the saint person after passing away, will inhabit close to the monument of certain *'aulie'* (saint person), even in the mausoleum. Heart touching compassion and blessings of nomads always support the life of such a descendant'' [13, 66-67].

As per our consideration, the Kazakh term *shyrakshy* may originate from the Iranian-Persian term *chirog* (*shirak*), which means a lamp/candle. Ogudin V.L. associated the tradition of burning a hanging vigil light on graves to follow the ancient Mazdaistic tradition. In this regard, the researcher wrote: 'The oil lamps *chirogs* or special candles *pilik* (with oil-proofed cotton wool wound around sticks) were burned in a special niches *chiroghona*, which were made within graves' [30]. One can undoubtedly link the custom of lighting fires on tombs and performing sacrifices on sites to the pre-Islamic traditions [18], since the custom of burning the sacred lamp (candlestick), called *charogdon*, still exists in memorial rites of the Ishmaelites of the Western Pamirs<sup>4</sup> as well. Probably, *shyrakshy* can be regarded as a keeper of the *aulie's* metaphysical light (the divine light), which refers to the Zoroastrian cult of a sacred fire.

We would like to acknowledge the study of the concept of Muslim saints burial in Siberia, designed by Seleznev A.G. The concept includes the known saint person who belonged to the first Muslim missionaries (*yohshilar*, *ayliyalar*, *ambiyalar*, *highbire/sher*) and a special service group of people associated with the functioning of a holy site. First to be mentioned they are the keepers of the tomb (*astana-karulche/karulce*, *astana-kurayte*), i.e. people who regularly organize *tawap* (rites associated with the tribute to this site) and the *astana-osh* regular rite meals in memoriam of the buried saint person [31, 338].

Most interesting is the tradition of cooking meal for pilgrims at some mazars, because this fact closely links to the food offering gifts. It is beyond the Shariati norms and can be considered in the context of the ancient cult of the kettle, which had been widely spread among the nomads and played its role in magical rites. This cult was incorporated into the solid entire system of traditional attitudes and concepts<sup>5</sup>. Snasarev G.P. suggested that the known prohibition of making fire and cooking food in a deceased's house for three or more days, had been linked to the idea of the rite sewage of a dead body and went back to Zoroastrianism [18].

In the modern Kazakh culture there are two main groups of the sacred places keepers: (1) *shyrakshy* - who are keepers of the saint persons (*auliye*) mazars; and (2) *kysmetshi* - keepers of the sacred natural sites<sup>6</sup>. The common people consider these two categories are identical, so all keepers are called *shyrakshy*.

The term *kysmetshi* was derived from the modern Kazakh word *kysmet*, which stands for service, i.e. it defines a person rendering service to a sacral natural site. The latter can include caves, mountains / mountain, rocks / rock, wood / grove, wells and springs, etc. According to the keepers, costs associated with shrine care are defrayed by *sadaka* – pilgrims' donation.

Mustafina R. who in fact made a valuable contribution in documenting of rites practice in Kazakhstan, identify *shyrakshy* in the list of so-called priests (*hodzhi*, *duan*, *sopa*) [32]. In particular, she gave description of the *shyrakshy* kin of Kara-Bura keepers. The kin originated to Appak-hoda, the famous Kashgar saint person. Two brothers, Shakarim and Shakasim, left Kashgariya and moved to the South

<sup>3</sup> One can observe a lot of graffiti on cave's walls left by pilgrims. There is a handwriting of Abai Kunanbayev, the distinguished Kazakh enlightener. The dates indicate that the pilgrims visited the cave in the period of Semipalatinsk nuclear test zone (quote from M. E. Rezvan, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> See Lashkariev A.Z. Memorial rites of house purifying and burning the sacred lamp by the Ishmaelites of the Western Pamir // Ethn. Obozr. 2008. N 1. P. 97-109.

<sup>5</sup> Terletsky N.S. noted about the temptation to associate this understanding with a huge bronze kettle, which Amir Timur (736-807 / 1336-1405) ordered to cast and place in the central area of the Khodzha Ahmad Yassavi mausoleum.

<sup>6</sup> Rustembekuly A., the keeper of the Ak-Meshit considered eligible the use of term *kysmetshi* in relation to natural sacred sites. However, the keepers of underground mosques - *kyluet* - (derived from *hilvet*) falls into a separate category.

Kazakhstan. Shakarim was settled in Turkestan, near the Khodzha Ahmad Yasawi holy site, while Shaka-sim inhabited at the Kara-Bura shrine. Since that time, all successors of Shakasim served as *shyrakshy* of the Kara-Bura shrine. The elements of the archaic tradition, which goes back to animistic views, could be observed at the natural sacred site *Aulie Bastau* ('The Holy Spring') in Zhambyl region. The keeper of it for many years was residing in Karashal. His son, Azbergen Karashalov, was born in 1923, told that in previous time the water flowed from numerous splits in the rock and its supply was abundantly enough for the whole village. Two big snakes lived in the split of the rock and they never bite anybody. There was a big hole in the rock, a kind of shelter, where people hid in case of mucky weather. They could also cook meals there. In Suzak district (South Kazakhstan) there is a small pond with the holy fish, as the local people say [32, 100-101]. It was close to the Turkestan road passed, and a caravanserai nearby was called Balykshi-saray. The holy place keepers - Eginberdi and Shaykhi - met wayfaring men, and provided food and overnight accommodation to them, and also took care of the animals. They say that these keepers had some extraordinary abilities, for example, they could change streamway of the river.

Also in Suzak, Mustafina R.M. recorded a story from the 88-year-old Pari-Molda. When he was a child (12-13 years old), he saw a very tall man 'neither Uzbek, nor Kazakh - who does not smoke or use *naswar*'. This man built on his own a mosque nearby the Koshkar-ata sacred place and became a *mullah* [32, 102]. Lykoshin N.S. described in 1917 an old half-ruined flagstone construction, which had been recognized as the burial place of the saint patron of sheep husbandry [33]. The Kazakhs, who passed by, always paid a rite tribute to their ancestor; they dismounted a horse and walked to the grave. There was a *mullah* (sart), who lodged at a small mosque proximate to the grave. He read a *Korani* chapter in honor of Koshkar-ata and got a small reward.

The authors conducted the field expeditions in 2016-2017 within the UNESCO cooperation programs on preservation of intangible cultural heritage/ These field missions allowed to study the institute of modern keepers in some areas of Almaty region ('Bes Ata'<sup>7</sup> and 'Ungurtas' cult sites<sup>8</sup>), Karaganda region ('Aulietau' site<sup>9</sup>), and Southern Kazakhstan region ('Ak-Meshit Aulie' cave and 'Adam-Ata and Jer-Ana' rocks<sup>10</sup>). The results of the field expedition to Ulutau region were discussed in the earlier publication [34].

At the 'Bes Ata' site, every keeper has a house for permanent residence or a small room for temporary stay in direct proximity to the mausoleum. An exception is Zhambyl Zhabaev mausoleum, as it is a part of the Zhambyl state museum. At Sarybai bi mausoleum there is an utility room built for *shyrakshy* (the keeper lives in the village located in direct proximity to the *mazar*). At burying places of Kainazar Ata, Tuktibai Ata and Suyunbai Aronuly the keepers live with their families at the mausoleums and serve to pilgrims throughout the daylight. All the keepers, judging by their stories, were urged by call in their sleep from the Ancestral Spirits to look after the graves. At the same time, the process of "calling" to a sacred place could last a long time. For example, Usen Dairbaev told that his distant ancestor Suyunbai Ata first 'sent an agent' to him with a prophetic revelation. Later Usen began to see him in his sleep dreams until the moment when Usen could fulfill the request of the saint and assume the functions of the mazar keeper. Up to the moment Usen had not been to this holy site before. Over time, the *shyrakshy* found out a poetic power and started to give the saint's blessings and advices to pilgrims in a verse form.

A similar case happened with Bakbergen Ayashev, the keeper of the Aulietau sacred mountain (Ulytau, Karaganda region). After being settled in the proximity of the holy mountain, Bakbergen conducted healing practice and assisting pilgrims in visiting the saints graves on the top. Baksy believes that he is a tool of his ancestor's spirits and the mountain spirits-hosts. And it is with them to conduct the healing and blessing. He merely aims to provide a 'contact' between *Aruah* and a pilgrim. The informant B.Kozhakhmetov indicated that Bakbergen Ayashev has been invoked by local spirits and saints to serve this worship site. Need to say that the common people call the Ulytau surroundings - 'baksy ordasy' (the

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<sup>7</sup> The 'Bes Ata' ('Five Fathers') complex includes five mazars located in close proximity to each other, which are named as follows: Sarybay bi (1821-1890), Kainazar Ata (1850-1913), Suyunbai Aronuly (1815-1898), Zhambyl Zhabaev (1846-19945), Tuktibay Ata (1700-1781).

<sup>8</sup> 'Ungurtas' ('Stone-Cave') is a combination of a revered natural complex with a man-made underground mosque (heelvet).

<sup>9</sup> 'Aulietau' ('Sacred Mountain') site combines a sacred natural object and burial places of revered persons.

<sup>10</sup> 'Ak-stirs Aulie' ('Holy White Mosque') cave and the 'Adam-Ata and Jer-Ana' ('Father Adam and Mother Earth') sacred place belong to the revered natural places.

shaman center). Bifatima Dawletova, the keeper of Ungurthas site told that she was called by the sacred Dragon - *Aidahar*. Askar Rustembekuly, *shyrakshy-kyzmetshi* of the *Ak-Meshit Aulie* cave informed about seeing prophetic dreams – ‘*ayan*’ since 1992. Over time he settled closer at the cave proximity and committed himself for meeting pilgrims and informing them about the unique character of the sacred place. In our field surveys the procedure of succession of the keeper position was confirmed only in two cases, hence there are other evidences apart [35].

The researchers are aware about the fact of prophetic dreams of the respondents about their intended mission at a sacred place site or about receiving a sacred gift from the saint person. Mustafina R.M. described one case of the urging keeper for his future mission. ‘.. his was on military service and then in his dream he saw 10-15 camels on the way. After being discharged from military service... he went to the Mamet-Calpe holy site, where he primarily has had his dreams’ [32, 53] and settled there. Pilgrims consider the call of keeper through prophetic dreams justifies his/her mediator capability between the world of people and the world of spirits. Stasevich I.V. noted that ‘pilgrims believe that *shyrakshy/shayiki*<sup>11</sup> possesses extraordinary capabilities, they can predict the future, heal people, interpret dreams. As a matter of fact, a keeper for sacred place is beings elected by the spirit of the sacred place [36, 112].

The keeper’s main responsibilities include: safeguarding and routine care of a sacred site, welcome of pilgrims, sounding praying, and combine this service with introduction of rituals, stories and legends about the saint person, local history and phenomenon of sacral power in this locality, etc. The Siberian Islam studies noted the certain procedure in transferring authoritative responsibilities and sacred text (*sezera/shedzere*) between the keepers [37]. It is fixed in a handwritten text about the buried saint persons. Those interviewed *shyrakshys* do not have the written procedures, but there is a tradition of verbal conveying of information about the sacred place and the saint personality. This procedure coincides with the written *shezhire* (genealogies) of Kazakh *kozha*.

**Conclusion, discussion, findings.** Literary sources’ studies and field survey’s findings demonstrate the present changes of the saint personalities’ beliefs. During initial decades of the Islam dissemination within the steppes (XVIII-XIX centuries), the saint personalities were acknowledged inside Muslim community - *mullahs*, *imams*, *ishans* (Sufi mentors). Most of the saint nominees were the Islam missionaries, and the majority of them had sacrificed their lives to the glory of the God. At the same time, some of shamans-*bakhisy* (traditional healers) declared themselves as *auliea* in their lifetime because of their extraordinary abilities [18, 32, 38].

The authors share the opinion about two concurrent lays of Islam existence during the Soviet era and followed independence period. The first, official lay, include formal Islam procedures - *muftiats*, *mad-rassas*, *hajjs*, etc. The other lay, ‘*folk Islam*’ has been hiding among the common population indirectly. It was not associated much with the theological tradition, but fully preserved and translated the ritual practices [39, 109]. There was a social group that one could call righteous men: the group members had a strong belief on God, it observed the universal ethical standards; the members performed religious rituals (*sunnet*, *azan*, *janaz*); some of the group members were recognized traditional healers. The community was confident with these righteous personalities, the people applied for their assistance, in case of sickness (especially mental illnesses), the righteous men were considered as advocate for common people in the God presence. They left good memory, and next local generations intensified their merits and dignity only intensified in the community opinion. The burial place quickly acquired a sacral status and became the object of pilgrimage. This attitude normally was translated to the *shyrakshy* (keepers) of the righteous burials. In our view, the concept of folk Islam coincides with the concept of the so-called regional or local cults. It include local holy sites, religious worship places, *mazars*, traditional local sites for paying and sacrifices, etc.

Apparently, it is hard to consider the details of the institute of sacred sites keepers within the scope of the small-scale study. A lot of important research issues were left beyond for next studies: consideration of the Sunni and Shiite holy place keepers in historical and cultural retrospective; comparative analysis of sacred place keepers in bordering areas of Kazakhstan; gender issues of the institute of sacred place

<sup>11</sup>The term shayiki in Kyrgyz culture is equal to shirakshi.

keepers and other. The authors believe that further studies of the ‘steppe historiography’ to be handled with the introduction of the still unknown ethnographic sources will contribute to better understanding of the ways of the Kazakh nomadic perception and mindset. It will also improve the understanding of the *shyrakshy* important role in establishment of the eligious landscapes of Kazakhstan.

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**ҚАЗАҚ ХАЛЫҚЫНЫҢ ДӘСТҮРЛІ ЖӘНЕ ЗАМАНАУИ МӘДЕНИЕТІНДЕГІ  
ӘУЛИЕ ТҰҒЫРЛАРЫН КӨРУШІЛЕРДІҢ ИНСТИТУТЫ:  
ӨЗЕКТІ МӘСЕЛЕЛЕР ҚОЙЫЛЫМЫ**

**Аннотация.** Кейбір табиғи және жасанды жерлер мен орындардағы яғни атап айтқанда, қазақ мәдениетіндегі әйгілі адамдардың мазарлары ежелгі уақыттан бері белсенді қажылықтың нысанасы ретінде танылып, олар бүгінде қасиетті де, әулие санаттардың қатарына жататыны баршамызға мәлім. Осыған орай, біздің бақылауларымыз көрсеткендей қазіргі уақытта барлық дерлік және әрбір беделді нысананың өз қамқоршысы бар екені аңғаруға болады. Мысалы, мазарды бақылайтын адамды «шырқшы» - деп атаса, ал табиғи нысанды қорғап жүретін бақылаушы күзетшіні «қызметші» - деп атайтын болған.

Қазақ мәдениетіндегі әулие орын тұғырларын бақылаушы мен көрушілердің институты негізінен бұрынғы өмірде исламды нығайтудағы ежелгі тарихи және мәдени құбылыс ретінде танылып болғанымен, халықтық түсініктегі жиналған материалдар олардың танымал мағынадағы «таңдаулы әулие рухтардың» ерте кездердегі формасының генетикалық сабақтастығының тығыз байланысы болғандығын көрсетеді.

Жалпы алғанда мақалада осы мәдени құбылысты зерттеу мәселесін қалыптастыру мен оларды әрмен қарай дамытып зерттеудің көкжиегін анықтауға арналады.

**Түйін сөздер:** көруші, әулие орындар, мазарлар, табиғи және жасанды нысандар, қажылық, Қазақстан.

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**ИНСТИТУТ СМОТРИТЕЛЕЙ СВЯТЫНЬ  
В ТРАДИЦИОННОЙ И СОВРЕМЕННОЙ КУЛЬТУРЕ КАЗАХОВ:  
К ПОСТАНОВКЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ**

**Аннотация.** Некоторые природные и рукотворные места, в том числе и мазары знаменитых людей в казахской культуре относятся к категории святых – аулие, являющиеся объектами активного паломничества с давних времен. Наблюдения показывают, что сейчас практически на каждом почитаемом объекте присутствует смотритель. Человека, следящего за мазаром принято называть шырақшы, а смотрителя природного объекта - қызметші.

Хотя институт смотрителей святынь в казахской культуре является гораздо более поздним историко-культурным феноменом, преимущественно связанный с оседлостью и укреплением ислама, собранные материалы показывают его генетическую преемственность с более ранними формами «избранников духов» в народном понимании. Настоящая статья посвящена постановке проблемы изучения данного культурного феномена и определения дальнейших перспектив его исследования.

**Ключевые слова:** смотритель, святые места, мазары, природные и рукотворные объекты, паломничество, Казахстан.

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