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## Morality and religion in the context of Kazakh philosophy

The article is written within the framework of the dissertation research topic “The problem of the relationship between morality and religion in Kazakh philosophy”. This study deeply analyzes the problem of morality and religion in the context of Kazakh philosophy. The author connects the relevance of this topic with the spiritual needs, cultural features and historical experience of Kazakh society. The research is aimed at understanding the spiritual foundations of the Kazakh worldview, raising important topics. The author pays special attention to the fact that Kazakh philosophy is based on spiritual heritage and moral and ethical values inherent in Eastern traditions. Oral tradition, folklore elements, epics, and legends are described as the main tools of philosophical thinking. The collective consciousness of the Kazakh people and their harmonious existence with nature are considered the foundation of the philosophical worldview. After the arrival of Islam in Kazakhstan, the Sufi movement strengthened the ideas of spiritual purification and moral perfection in Kazakh philosophy, leading to a syncretic nature of Kazakh philosophy—the fusion of shamanic, Islamic, and rational elements. The author, evaluating this peculiarity of Kazakh philosophy as a spiritual and cultural phenomenon, associates its essence with the wisdom of life passed down from generation to generation.

*Keywords:* spirit, ethics, continuity, spirituality, Zoroastrianism, Tengrism, Sufism, syncretism, Islam.

### *Introduction*

The stated topic designates the expansion and complexity of the spiritual world in Kazakh society. This issue is important for the philosophical understanding of the spiritual and cultural values of the Kazakh people. Through the examination of the interrelation between the concept of morality and philosophies of ethics and religion, it becomes possible to identify the distinctive features in the formation of ethical norms and religious principles in society. Moreover, such an inquiry contributes to enriching national philosophical thought with contemporary perspectives, reflects the level of development of indigenous philosophy, and establishes a link between traditional and modern viewpoints. In the modern era of globalization, where spiritual and cultural directions increasingly intersect, ethical issues have come to the forefront. In this context, the need for an in-depth study of the place and interrelation of morality and religion within Kazakh philosophy is gaining special relevance. Analyzing the relationship between morality and religion provides a pathway to understanding national identity and historical-cultural distinctiveness. This issue is regarded as one of the key factors contributing to social stability and unity.

Morality and religion play a crucial role in shaping and regulating human behavior. According to A.P. Skripnik, “attention to the interrelation of these phenomena reveals their functional unity and the correspondence in their regulatory means: religion governs human life by contrasting the sacred with the sinful, while morality regulates it by opposing virtuous and evil deeds” [1; 407, 408].

In contemporary society, morality is often regarded as a component or extension of religion; however, this has not always been the case. The transformation of religious values into moral norms within society represents a distinct process, one that can and should be the subject of scholarly investigation.

With the advancement of technology, moral issues in human relationships have begun to appear in new dimensions. Considering the distinct characteristics of moral and religious concepts in the Kazakh philosophical tradition, as compared to those of Western philosophy, it is increasingly important to evaluate moral values and religious beliefs through the prism of Kazakh philosophy in the context of contemporary globalization. Moreover, studying the relationship between morality and religion within the framework of Kazakh philosophy can also contribute to the spiritual renewal of modern society.

Legends constitute the historical prerequisite for the emergence of philosophy. In the context of Kazakh society, the formation of moral concepts as philosophical notions during the period when legends were creat-

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ed was evidently rooted in the nomadic way of life, traditional upbringing, and, in later periods, influenced by Zoroastrianism, the worship of Mithra, as well as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam [2]. Since the spread of Islam in Kazakhstan, the oral literature of the Kazakh people—including proverbs, sayings, and epic narratives—has not only been grounded in moral principles but has also begun to serve religious purposes. In epic works such as “Qoblandy Batyr”, “Er Targyn”, and “Alpamys”, which have been passed down from ancient times, one can observe the gradual interweaving of moral values and religious principles. Moreover, these epics also depict the tensions between religious morality and traditional moral norms. For instance, the notion of *fate*, representing an aspect of deterministic morality, is portrayed in the epic “Qalkaman-Mamyr” within the framework of the conflict between the religious beliefs of that era and the traditional moral values of the Kazakh people.

In contemporary Kazakh philosophy, the study of the relationship between morality and religion requires new approaches and methodologies. Such research aims to re-examine the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Kazakh people, to reveal the philosophical significance of folklore, and to adapt it to the spiritual needs of modern individuals. Investigating the influence of religion in addressing current moral and ethical challenges is particularly relevant for society today. Even in the earliest periods—among the ancient proto-Kazakhs and later during the early Turkic era—the profound understanding of morality’s importance and its role in shaping the moral landscape of society can be observed in the writings of Yusuf Balasaghuni, particularly in his work “Qutadgu Bilig” (“Wisdom of Royal Glory”) [3]. If we consider the Ancient Turkic Khaganate, it is evident that they, too, possessed a profound understanding of the significance of morality. This can be observed in the inscriptions carved on the Orkhon monuments dedicated to Kul Tegin [4].

In the context of Kazakh philosophy, the great Kazakh thinker Abai Qunanbaily profoundly analyzed the relationship between morality and religion in his works. His “Qara sozder” (“Words of Wisdom”) serves as a significant source in this regard [5]. Abai’s concept of the “tolyq adam” (“complete human being”) was developed on the basis of the interconnection between morality and religion. In his writings, Abai addressed the issues of virtue and piety, striving to reveal the educational and moral significance of Islam in human life. His spiritual successor, Shakarim Qudayberdiuly, in his work “Musylmandyq Sharty” (“Muslim covenant”), further elaborated on the influence of Islam on moral values, successfully linking it to the everyday life of the Kazakh people [6]. Furthermore, Shakarim’s work “Ush Anyq” (“Three Truths”) elevated the issue of “ar-uzhdan” (conscience) to a profoundly significant level in the intellectual consciousness of the Kazakh people [7]. Although the works of both Abai and Shakarim are characterized by a certain degree of syncretism, they continue to serve as fundamental theoretical foundations for studying the relationship between morality and religion in the context of contemporary Kazakh philosophy. The tradition of exploring the interrelation between religion and morality has been preserved in Kazakh philosophy for centuries. This continuity, rooted in the proto-philosophical worldview of the ancient Kazakhs, has been thoroughly examined in the works of M.S. Orynbekov [8].

As previously noted, the connection between religion and morality originated from myths, which served as the early moral-philosophical phenomena. The transformation of moral concepts—now established as fundamental philosophical categories—occurred through a gradual process of emancipation from religion. The formation of morality as an independent object of philosophical inquiry began in Ancient Greece, where the term *ethos* (ethics) came to denote the study of human character and habitual conduct. This was most notably articulated by Aristotle in his renowned “Nicomachean Ethics” [9]. In classical philosophy, the idea that moral principles originated from the generalized forms of myth—namely, the epic tradition—belongs to F.M. Cornford [10]. He argued that the moral principles of the ancient Greeks were formed through a process of emancipation from religion, evolving out of the Homeric epics “The Odyssey” and “The Iliad”. Cornford elaborated on this view in his work “Principium Sapientiae. The Origins of Greek Philosophical Thought” [11]. According to Cornford, moral concepts underwent two major transformations: first, from myth to religion, and second, from religion to moral notions.

An analysis of the sacred scriptures reveals that the interrelation between morality and religion is addressed in the Old and New Testaments, in the Epistles of the Apostles, in the Qur’an, and in the Hindu Vedas. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, this relationship was explored by prominent philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Al-Kindi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Ibn Rushd (Averroes). In his treatise “The Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City”, Al-Farabi explicitly emphasized that human beings might achieve a virtuous life only by adhering to religious moral principles.

The purpose of this article is to examine the concepts of morality and religion within the context of Kazakh philosophy; to analyse their interrelation from an ethical and philosophical perspective; to explore and

demonstrate their mutual influence; to investigate the distinctive features of this relationship; and to seek possible solutions to the contemporary issues arising between Kazakh philosophy and religion within the framework of religious studies discourse.

To achieve this goal, the following objectives have been set:

- to investigate the genesis of the concept of morality in Kazakh philosophy;
- to identify the influence of ancient beliefs—such as totemism, animism, shamanism, and Tengrism—as well as religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, Buddhism, and Islam, on the morality of early Kazakh society, and to evaluate the moral contribution of each;
- to study the interrelation between morality and religion throughout the history of ethical thought within the framework of Kazakh philosophy;
- to analyse the mutual influence of morality and religion in Kazakh philosophy and to determine the distinctive features of their relationship.

The belief systems of the peoples considered proto-Kazakhs—such as Tengrism, shamanism, Mithraism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam—each contributed differently to the worldview that is regarded, within this research context, as proto-Kazakh philosophy. Overall, in the very beginning the philosophical universalities rooted in the nomadic Tengrism worldview interacted and merged with the perspectives of sedentary civilizations [8; 12-13]. According to M.S. Orynbekov, the Tengrism of the ancient Kazakh tribes formed the foundation of the Kazakh people's later mentality [12; 51].

Among the nomadic peoples, faith in Tengri later became intertwined with the cult of Mithra, while among sedentary populations, Tengri beliefs merged with the fire-worship traditions promoted by Zoroastrianism. The veneration of Mithra emerged as a synthesis that combined elements of the ancient Tengri faith with aspects of contemporary Zoroastrian doctrines. The sedentary peoples who are regarded as the early Kazakhs coexisted within a worldview shaped by both Tengrism and Zoroastrian beliefs.

Originally, Zoroastrianism was founded upon faith in the single Creator, Ahura Mazda [13; 42, 43] and sought to explain life and existence through a dualistic cosmology opposing Good and Evil — Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu. During the proto-Kazakh era, Zoroastrianism assimilated local religious notions associated with the worship of Tengri, Yer-Su (Earth-Water), and Umai, thereby incorporating elements of polytheism. Moreover, despite their shared proto-Iranian roots, these communities' beliefs were largely grounded in animism [13; 24]. The dualistic concept within Zoroastrianism exerted a profound influence on the early Kazakh worldview, particularly manifesting in oral literature and mythological narratives. Among the proto-Kazakhs, conceptions related to the animation of the surrounding world, the eternal struggle between Good and Evil, and the existence of spirits serving the Sun and demons serving the Night reflected a worldview grounded in animism and dualism. These notions—that all things possess a soul and that the universe is governed by fundamental opposition—had a profound impact on the formation of the corpus of ancient Kazakh myths and legends. The religion of Zoroastrianism was widespread in the territory of the ancient Kazakhs prior to the arrival of Islam in the 8th century. In the early stages, the relationship between Zoroastrianism and Islam developed largely in the form of synthesis. However, the acceptance of the results of this synthesis was not reciprocal, as Islam, being a newly introduced religion, tended to absorb and appropriate more of the existing syncretic elements. This process was not uniform. Islam, which adopted asceticism and detachment from worldly life as its spiritual foundations, stood in contrast to Zoroastrianism's emphasis on the enjoyment of life and its opposition to fasting [12; 78–82]. Nevertheless, in accordance with the dialectical law, the relationship between these two religions passed through stages—from initial rejection to mutual acceptance and eventual synthesis. As a result, Islam assimilated several Zoroastrian practices as part of its own doctrine: the daily prayers performed five times a day, the ritual of animal sacrifice in the name of God, the prohibition of depicting human and animal images, and the tradition of almsgiving. Even the concepts of paradise and hell, the apocalypse and the Last Judgment, as well as the notion of a savior, are known to have been adopted by Islam, Christianity, and Judaism from Zoroastrianism [13; 53, 54]. Ultimately, Zoroastrianism, as “the ancient religion of the Kazakhs, formed the foundational spiritual archetypes embedded in the collective unconscious of the people... shaping the mentality of society at the individual level” [12; 80].

If the Tengri faith laid the foundation for the mentality of the early Kazakh peoples, in our view, the practical aspect of this belief—shamanistic practices—had relatively little effect on the development of their worldview and philosophical consciousness, particularly in forming the capacity for reasoning and reflective judgment in the modern sense. According to Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, the logic of perception and cognition in primitive societies was fundamentally different from, and incomparable to, that of modern thought [14]. Therefore, although belief in Tengri, shamanism, and Zoroastrianism played a central role in shaping the

worldview of the peoples of Central Asia [12; 100], each belief contributed differently to their methods of understanding and philosophical reflection. Some beliefs had a barely impact on these processes. The present study sets as its objective to determine the degree to which these religions influenced the worldview, and consequently, the moral principles, of ancient, early, and modern Kazakh societies.

In conclusion, the Tengri faith and shamanistic practices became deeply embedded in both the collective and individual unconscious of the people. Among the nomads of the steppe—and later their descendants, the Kazakh people—ancient, early, and subsequent belief systems have, to varying degrees, been preserved within the modern Kazakh mentality and collective unconscious. These enduring spiritual and symbolic layers continue to exert a profound influence on contemporary Kazakh philosophical thought.

#### *Methods and materials*

To understand the fundamental concepts of moral philosophy, such as morality, religion, ethics, virtue, faith, and spirituality, as well as to explore their interrelations within philosophical discourse, a philosophical and theoretical analysis is employed. This study conducts an in-depth theoretical examination of these concepts within philosophical, religious, and cultural interpretations, particularly within the framework of the Kazakh traditional worldview.

The historical-philosophical methodology, which is considered fundamental in the philosophical domain, is employed to study the development of moral and religious concepts in the history of Kazakh philosophical thought.

Comparative philosophical methodology is applied to analyze the Kazakh moral and religious tradition in comparison with similar aspects found in other philosophical schools and religious systems.

The hermeneutical methodology is directed toward the interpretation of texts and meanings contained in religious and philosophical sources.

The structural-functional analysis is utilized in the study of mythological thinking, considering that people in ancient societies were distant from scientific reasoning; this method proved to be the most suitable for examining their customs and religious beliefs.

#### *Results*

As a result of the research, the genesis of shared religions and moral principles was examined, beginning from ancient societies and continuing through the early Turkic peoples who shaped the proto-Kazakh identity, as well as among the nomadic and sedentary communities considered to be the ancient Kazakhs. Consequently, within the research context, the concept of “Kazakh philosophy” was clarified, demonstrating the extent to which philosophy has been embedded in the moral and religious worldview of the Kazakh people.

According to Z.A. Kamensky, “As a philosophical tradition, we should understand the transmission of philosophical ideas from one thinker to another, their transition from one philosopher to the next, that is, the continuity of ideas within a certain framework of connection” [15; 232]. Such a tradition can indeed be observed throughout the history of the Kazakh worldview. Since the period under consideration begins with the archaic era, it is important to note, as K.V. Chistov points out that “... folklore, among the vast majority of an ethnic group, served as a unifying element within its traditional culture, representing not only a part of its spiritual heritage but also, to a certain extent, an aspect of its material and especially socio-normative culture” [16; 6]. From a scholarly standpoint, this indicates that folklore functionally was not merely a component of culture but also an instrument of socio-normative regulation, that is, a mechanism for maintaining moral principles within society. Of course, it is difficult today to perceive folklore as a regulator of moral principles or as a means of shaping a people’s philosophy of life, since in the modern world there exist codified legal systems that regulate all aspects of life, as well as artistic and philosophical texts that express moral values. It is, therefore, hard to imagine folklore performing such functions in contemporary society. However, this becomes understandable if we consider that folklore “in the course of its historical development, has acquired or lost certain functions within the overall structure of spiritual culture” [16; 4]. Naturally, the ethnogenesis of the Kazakh people is extremely complex; therefore, it is not always possible to regard the Kazakhs as a single, homogeneous ethnic group, as the Kazakh ethnos is known to have been formed from various peoples. Nevertheless, evidence that the Kazakh ethnos originated from a single ethnic group or a unified community lies in the existence of a shared folklore, since “folklore functions (or has functioned) as a corpus of oral texts (structures) within the daily life of any ethnic group, or within any of its local, confessional, professional, or other primary groups of association” [16; 6]. Therefore, it would be accurate to say

that the wisdom and philosophy of the Kazakh people in the very beginning were created, shaped, and developed by the people who formed Kazakh ethnoscience. In fact, the heritage regarded as the wisdom of the Kazakh nation was produced by its forgotten and unnamed thinkers; these wise sayings were preserved as the people's own wisdom—folk wisdom—and later as legends that have survived to the present day. When analyzing the sayings of ancient sages, it becomes evident that their words are, in essence, rooted from the context of ancient folk myths.

### *Discussion*

According to contemporary Kazakh scholars, the distinctive feature of the formation of Kazakh philosophy lies in its development within the framework of an Eastern-type society, that is, Kazakh philosophy evolved in the manner of Eastern philosophical traditions. Eastern philosophy developed along three independent lines — Indian, Chinese, and Arab-Islamic philosophy [17; 3]. As M.S. Orynbekov notes, “The peculiarity of Eastern societies is that they regard their enduring spiritual heritage in close unity with social wealth” [17; 6]. As a philosophy of an Eastern-type society, Kazakh philosophy emphasized the cultivation of a harmonious relationship between humans, nature, society, and the spiritual world, while giving particular importance to the moral and ethical evaluation of social values. If we accept that philosophy is “...a reflection of human culture and the ultimate foundation of its worldview universality” [17; 9], then the Kazakh tradition of philosophical thought can be understood as a culture of orally transmitting the wisdom produced by the people from one generation to the next. The purpose of transmitting this embodied form of philosophy lies in refining the layers of philosophemes, i.e. instruments of philosophizing through the unconscious emergence of universals, thereby transforming them into a non-philosophy yet conscious form, and preserving and passing down an unshakable, embodied philosophical heritage to future generations. Its primary function, therefore, is to ensure the faithful transmission of this philosophy to subsequent generations.

This form of philosophical environment takes shape through customs, rituals, works of art, epic narratives, and legends. In such cultural traditions, “...philosophical reflections exist in non-philosophical forms”, and the expression of ideas often occurs “...through artistic or religious texts” [8; 11, 12]. In other words, the conscious elements of life, in their generalized form, influence the unconscious sphere and reprocess the “forgotten” universals anew. Therefore, philosophy can be regarded as the reflective elaboration of the cultural foundations of one's worldview, while philosophical activity itself is the process of bringing forth and interpreting universal concepts from the unconscious realm of human consciousness. The consciousness of the Kazakh people is inherently collective, and their wisdom is distributed within this collective consciousness. From this perspective, the vast body of Kazakh folklore literature preserved today must be seen as evidence that, at a certain stage of historical development, there existed a distinctly Kazakh form of philosophy.

Indeed, once the culture of written expression emerged in Kazakh society, this form of philosophy—the production of philosophemes through folklore—began to manifest in the works of renowned Kazakh thinkers. It can be observed, for instance, in Abai's “Words of Wisdom” and his poem “Masgut” [18; 68–73]; in Shakarim Qudaiberdiuly's “Three Truths”, “Muslim covenant”, and his epic “Qalkaman-Mamyr” [19; 180–191], as well as in the poetry of Magzhan Zhumabayev [20].

When examining the distinctive features of Kazakh philosophy in relation to lifestyle, particularly its harmony with nature, it becomes evident that the worldview shaped by the nomadic-sedentary mode of life regards nature as an inseparable part of human existence. For people engaged in animal husbandry and agriculture, nature was not merely the source of sustenance, but also a wellspring of spiritual inspiration and wisdom. Kazakh philosophy did not perceive nature as an external environment; rather, it developed through an understanding that connects it to the inner world of the human being. This characteristic emerged from the nomadic-sedentary symbiosis of Kazakh society [8; 13], and in Kazakh cognition—at an existential level—it consistently evokes the notion of the human being as an integral part of nature.

The principal feature of the Kazakh philosophical tradition lies in its oral transmission. Ethical values such as humaneness, justice, benevolence, and respect were expressed and reflected upon through oral means within the philosophical consciousness of the Kazakh people. These moral concepts were passed down from generation to generation through epic poems, proverbs, sayings, legends, and myths. Although these wise expressions were transmitted orally and were not presented in the classical written-philosophical form, they constitute an inseparable part of folklore, specifically, the Kazakh tradition of philosophical epic poetry. The role of preserving these philosophical principles and conveying them unaltered to subsequent generations was carried out by experienced and wise individuals, typically elders. Hence, within the Kazakh tradition, the elderly have always held a position of special respect and reverence.

As previously noted, Kazakh philosophy is grounded in collective consciousness. The nomadic way of life required communal unity, mutual support, and shared responsibility, while among the sedentary Kazakhs, the practice of land ownership reinforced the clan-tribal institution, ensuring social cohesion and oversight of everyone within the tribal system. Thus, the philosophical thought of the Kazakh people was oriented not toward the individual but toward the welfare of the entire community. The interests of the collective were placed above personal concerns, and particular emphasis was given to the mutual responsibility of every member of society toward one another.

After the spread of Islam among the Kazakhs, it began to establish a close connection with the Islamic worldview, while also finding ways to harmonize with the preexisting Turkic beliefs. On the one hand, the introduction of Islam brought a new momentum to the spiritual life of the Kazakh people; on the other hand, long-standing customs and emerging Islamic traditions needed to coexist in a synthesized form. This synthesis, in terms of content, continued the tradition of syncretic development within Kazakh philosophy. According to M.S. Orynbekov, the advance of Islam coincided with a period of decline for older, archaic beliefs in Kazakh society and served as a significant unifying factor within a social system based on clan-tribal structures [12; 158]. Although Islam began to enter the Kazakh steppes through its missionaries in the early 10th century, the content, form, and character of Kazakh philosophy did not immediately transform into a purely Arab-Muslim framework. At the same time, the forms of oriental poetry began to displace the traditional heroic epic poetic forms of the Kazakhs [21; 91].

The spread of Islam between the 8th and 10th centuries across the territory of present-day Kazakhstan brought significant changes not only to the external forms of Kazakh culture but also to its moral values. The ethical norms of Islam placed primary emphasis on virtues such as justice, honesty, and patience. Among the nomads of the Kazakh steppes, Islam, particularly in its Sufi form, found fertile ground for development, like among the Afro-Asiatic nomads of the Arabian Peninsula. Several factors contributed to this: first, the shared ethnolinguistic foundation and the high regard for clan-tribal values among both the Afro-Asiatic and steppe nomads facilitated the successful dissemination of Islam in the Kazakh steppes. Second, the spread of Islam coincided with a period of decline for preexisting belief systems among the nomadic population. Additionally, this era demanded a more developed ideological framework than that provided by the tribal-clan concept, which aligned with the ideology promoted by Islam. Under the influence of Sufi teachings, ideas of spiritual purification, self-knowledge, and establishing a connection with Allah began to take root in Kazakh consciousness. Although Sufi tariqas are not theoretical doctrines, they functioned as practical frameworks for conveying mystical experience at the subconscious level and for facilitating the attainment of religious ecstasy. For the steppe peoples, whose earlier Tengri beliefs and shamanic practices were familiar with mystical elements, the mystical dimensions of Islam were readily accepted. In fact, historically, shamans who had held a position of respect among the people were later incorporated into the ranks of Muslim saints following the arrival of Islam [12; 109].

Legends constitute an integral part of Kazakh philosophy. Early legends served not only as explanations of the surrounding life and as guidelines for navigating it, but also carried regulatory functions, organizing people within ethnic groups, clans, and other social structures. The act of narrating a legend involved orally transmitting past events from generation to generation, filtering empirical knowledge through a reflective process akin to philosophical methodology. Typically, ancient civilizations—such as the Greeks, Indians, and Chinese—developed their own philosophical systems to resolve contradictions between legend and nature, legend and humans, or legend and society, and these philosophical systems, in turn, gave rise to various schools and intellectual currents within those traditions. In the civilizations of the steppe nomads, the people preserved a holistic view of the world in the legends of the ancient Kazakh worldview, narrating events without disregarding contradictions. Consequently, later Kazakh philosophical thought often developed in a syncretic manner, retaining elements derived from legends, with the concepts employed originating from diverse sources. Within this philosophy, legendary, allegorical, artistic, symbolic—both religious and concrete—scientific forms of thought were constructed from these various elements. This syncretism can even be observed among Kazakh thinkers of the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, such as Abai Qunanbaiuly and Shakarim Qudaiberdiuly. Their perspectives frequently drew from different foundations, and their philosophical positions developed syncretic. Abai, while engaging with the materialist views of Russian Enlighteners, Western, and Greek philosophers, analyzed human existence through the prism of Islam. In 38th Word of his “Words of Wisdom” he addresses ethical issues from an Islamic perspective [5; 29–38]. Shakarim Qudaiberdiuly, in his work “Three Truths”, sought to explain the indivisible component of matter named by ancient Greek philosopher as atom via “madda” (matter) as a substance uniting

quantity, quality, and motion [7]. Similarly, Al-Farabi used this word in his “Socio-Ethical Treatise” to mean matter, and apparently this tradition comes from this work of Al-Farabi [22; 57].

After the formation of ancient societies, the moral principles preserved in the collective unconscious of ancient tribal groups were transmitted and cultivated through legends. In his essays, G. Potanin wrote: “The Kazakh people have not yet been overshadowed by religious textual legends that place national spiritual life in a secondary position. Their code of conscience and exemplary ideals in life are clearly articulated in the people’s legends, customs, and genealogies. They do not turn to sacred books written in foreign languages, nor do they bow to some holy figures without a homeland; rather, they can find all the guidance they need for the soul in the deeds of their heroes and esteemed champions, and in the policies of their clan leaders and elders” [23]. If a legend aims to convey a holistic vision of the world by “referring to Tengri or a mysterious supernatural force”, then the philosophies of the storytellers attempt “to reveal the essence of things, phenomena, and events, to employ rational thinking in debates, and to recognize and resolve contradictions in understanding the world” [24; 32]. Therefore, among the people, the epic functioned as “...the artistic-imagery representation of truth in the popular consciousness” [25; 105], as summarized by O.A. Segizbayev. Since legends were based on religious-mythological elements, customs, and authority, in later times, during the era of poets and bards, this process, under the influence of Islam, evolved into conveying these truths “...in a religious context, rationalizing them, and promoting them in a moral-ethical manner” [26; 38]. In turn, this rationalization of legends contributed to the establishment of Islamic literary schools in the territory of Kazakhstan.

A legend represents the earliest manifestation of humanity’s understanding of the world. Its grounding is in religious-mythological elements, customs, and authority positions. In proto-Kazakh corps of legends nature is the initial active subject of the legend, serving a role of “humanization”, and humanization occurred like in Greek mythology through anthropomorphizing as well. Nevertheless, in this regard Cicero’s words “Homer in these fictions transferred to the gods what belongs to human” [27; 48] the best explanation of evolution of morality in its classical understanding. In the ancient Greek mythological texts that have reached us in written form, legends attribute all human virtues and vices to the gods and in Greek mythology, the initial active subject is the human rather than nature.

Among the steppe nomads, however, the situation is different. In Kazakh fairy tales, for example, gods acting as active subjects on behalf of the stone world are physically as hard as stone and possess hearts that are stern and cruel. In the mythological consciousness of the ancient Kazakhs, humans were not separated from nature; they derived their qualities from it and were perceived in unity with the natural world. During the mythological period, humans were considered as a whole, and “the unity between humans and nature was especially highly esteemed” [24; 441]. Manifestations of this relationship can be observed in the artifacts of the Scythian-Saka tribes, whose civilization contributed significantly to the ethnogenesis of the ancient Kazakhs. In the depictions of this “animal style”, humans are represented as integral parts of nature, while divine forces also exhibit natural characteristics.

French ethnographer L. Lévy-Bruhl, while studying societies that have remained at a primitive level on the Polynesian islands, clarified to some extent what humanity was like in ancient times. During the study of the myths of these societies, it was found that the structure of the myths was particularly distinct. L. Lévy-Bruhl called this structure participation [14]. According to this structure, everything in nature is brought into cause-and-effect relations, and in primitive societies, each object and its actions interact with completely different objects. In ancient societies, humans even considered the entire surrounding environment alive and believed that every object in nature had a soul; early scholars, imitating E. Tylor, called this animism [25]. However, E. Tylor was unable to uncover the internal cause of animism, which was only the external manifestation of primitive societies. From the standpoint of modern science, the cause of animism can be understood through homeostasis theory. From this perspective, the environment achieves its stability through homeostasis — continuous change. As a result, according to L. Lévy-Bruhl, a person’s relationship with the environment is formed through the structure of participation. Regarding the individual’s being, within the participation structure, depictions of a person—whether carved in stone or cast as a shadow—are not merely inanimate images but are considered inseparable parts of the person, integral to their very essence. According to this logic, if someone were to step on another person’s shadow, it would be as if they were harming the person directly. Lévy-Bruhl referred to this reasoning as “primitive logic” and called the underlying structure “participation” [14]. In our view, through homeostasis, such “primitive logic” was common to all early societies and provided the foundation for superstitions and belief systems. Over time, this led to the fundamental divergence between religion and myths in terms of logic. Religion, in seeking to construct an understand-

ing of the divine, appeals to a transcendent, metaphysical realm beyond ordinary logic, whereas myths, in maintaining the homeostatic state of the living world, operate according to a cause-and-effect logic, with humans as subjects understanding the world as objects while simultaneously apprehending its mystical dimensions.

### *Conclusion*

Myths are products of archaic consciousness and served a regulatory role in the worldview of ancient Kazakh society, whereas today they are recognized not as regulators but as cultural relics. Over time, myths formed concepts based on primitive logic and entered the archetypes of human psyche. Myths were tools for mastering the world and time when written records about life were unavailable, and they also acted as upholders of moral norms. Myths had not any concept of dead nature; all phenomena—earth, water, wind, sky, animals—possess sacred guardians that depicts qualities of earth, water, wind, sky, animals etc. It helped people discern the good and bad aspects of the world. Initially, these figures embodied only physical qualities of phenomena both – positive and negative to human, but after the arrival of religions, they began to be characterized only with negative connotations [28].

After the 6th century CE began the “era of demythologization” marked by the increasing influence of new religions (Manichaeism, Nestorianism, Buddhism, Islam) across various regions of the Turkic-speaking world. From this period onward, mythology, which had not been separated from folklore, began to enter the consciousness of the people as a heritage and not as a tool with which people understood and explored the world.

Moral norms in prehistoric era were transmitted via folklore. Folklore in its turn became a folklore - a transmitter of the most valuable and accomplished form of moral values after many and many interactions because served to keep and learn the values without which the existence of that ethnic group would be under danger. Folklore emerged during the prehistoric period of primitive communal structures within specific historical and social contexts, in very close ethno-geographical spaces, or, in other words, within any community—that is, among groups with close internal relations [16]. Folklore was transmitter of moral values created peculiar Kazakh philosophy in the sense of the way of thinking. Folklore, as the primary form of myths, functioned as an instrument for transmitting and preserving the manifestations of collective unconscious among the matured structures of ancient tribal clans—societies in which everyone consciously recognized themselves as a member of the community. Later, the task of consciously conveying this knowledge began to fulfill epics.

During the process of forming ancient Kazakh philosophy as the way of thinking, animism, totemism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, the Nestorian branch of Christianity, shamanism, and their ethical norms significantly influenced the formation of a syncretic system of beliefs. These beliefs corresponded to the shared values of a society whose lifestyle was based on animal husbandry [17, 7–8]. Respect for nature, the perception of animals and fire as sacred, and similar ancient beliefs shaped the moral image of humans. Traces of each religion can still be observed in contemporary Kazakh customs and traditions, human values, and moral norms, particularly in relation to shamanism, belief in Tengri and Zoroastrianism. In contrast, belief in Mithra, Manichaeism, Buddhism, and the Nestorian branch of Christianity had only a minimal influence on the Kazakhs’ philosophy. As a result, the Kazakh people’s historical capacity to embrace various religions voluntarily is not surprising. Moreover, this religious tolerance in the Kazakh context is not merely a rhetorical statement but reflects an integral aspect of Kazakh character [28, 189].

In Kazakh philosophy, morality and religion are not positioned in opposition to one another; on the contrary, they complement each other: religion reinforces morality, while morality is understood as the path leading to Tengri. History has shown that ignoring the influence of religion on morality can result in ethical relativism and nihilism. God never “died” in such philosophies, because the Nature can’t die. Conversely, failing to properly acknowledge the primacy of morality within religion, or not recognizing that morality occupies a central place in religion, can reduce religion to mere idolatry. In this context, Shakarim’s concept of “ar-uzhdan” (conscience) in the Sufi tradition of Islam, developed within the framework of Kazakh philosophy, functions as a universal bridge between moral and religious principles.

Contemporary Kazakh society, not exempt from the processes of globalization, faces challenges regarding the relationship between religion and morality as a factor of spiritual stability, particularly amid the fragmentation of prevailing moral guidelines. It is crucial to provide an adequate response to these global challenges. Traditionally, Kazakh moral norms were transmitted from generation to generation through customs and rituals. Qualities such as hospitality, respect for elders, and adherence to one’s word constitute the

core moral principles within society. In Kazakh wisdom, a significant portion of moral values, which belong to the category of collective unconscious, found expression and served to guide people toward the right path and provide ethical education, remaining closely tied to the people themselves.

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Н.Ш. Ыбырай

## Қазақ философиясы контексіндегі мораль мен дін

Мақала «Қазақ философиясындағы мораль мен дін арақатынасының мәселесі» атты диссертациялық зерттеу тақырыбы аясында жазылған. Бұл зерттеуде қазақ философиясы контексіндегі мораль мен дін мәселесі терең талданған. Автор бұл тақырыптың өзектілігін қазақ қоғамының рухани қажеттіліктерімен, мәдени ерекшеліктерімен және тарихи тәжірибесімен байланыстырып отыр. Зерттеу қазақ дүниетанымының рухани негіздерін түсінуге, маңызды тақырыптарды көтеруге бағытталған. Сонымен қатар қазақ философиясының шығыс дәстүрлеріне тән рухани мұра мен моральдық-этикалық құндылықтарға негізделгеніне ерекше көңіл аударады. Ауызша дәстүр, фольклор элементтері, жыр-дастандар мен аңыздар философиялық ойлаудың басты құралдары ретінде сипатталған. Қазақ халқының ұжымдық санасы мен табиғатпен үйлесімді өмір сүруі философиялық дүниетанымының іргетасы болып қарастырылған. Қазақ жеріне ислам діні келгеннен кейін сопылық ағым қазақ философиясында рухани тазару мен моральдық кемелдену идеяларын күшейтіп, қазақ философиясының синкретті сипатта — шамандық, исламдық және рационалдық элементтердің тоғысуына алып келді. Автор бұл ерекшелікті қазақ философиясын рухани-мәдени құбылыс ретінде бағалай отырып, оның мәнін ұрпақтан-ұрпаққа берілетін өмірлік даналықпен байланыстырады.

*Кілт сөздер:* рух, этика, сабақтастық, руханият, зороастризм, тәңіршілдік, сопылық, синкретизм, ислам.

Н.Ш. Ыбырай

## Мораль и религия в контексте казахской философии

Статья написана в рамках диссертационного исследования по теме «Проблема соотношения морали и религии в казахской философии». В исследовании глубоко анализируется проблема нравственности и религии в контексте казахской философии. Актуальность данной темы автор связывает с духовными потребностями, культурными особенностями и историческим опытом казахского общества. Исследование направлено на понимание духовных основ казахского мировоззрения и постановку актуальных тем. Автор обращает особое внимание на то, что казахская философия базируется на духовном наследии и морально-этических ценностях, присущих восточным традициям. Устная традиция, элементы фольклора, эпоса и легенд рассматриваются как основные инструменты философского мышления. Коллективное сознание казахского народа, его гармоничное существование с природой считаются основой его философского мировоззрения. После прихода ислама на казахские земли суфийское движение усилило в казахской философии идеи духовного очищения и нравственного совершенства, что привело к синкретическому характеру казахской философии — слиянию шаманских, исламских и рационалистических начал. Автор, оценивая эту особенность казахской философии как духовно-культурный феномен, связывает ее суть с мудростью жизни, передаваемой из поколения в поколение.

*Ключевые слова:* дух, этика, преемственность, духовность, зороастризм, тенгрианство, суфизм, синкретизм, ислам.

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